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19 February 2023

Local Government Board

GPO Box 123

HOBART TAS 7001

By email: [Submissions.LGBoard@dpac.tas.gov.au](mailto:Submissions.LGBoard@dpac.tas.gov.au)

Dear Local Government Board,

**RE: The Future of Local Government Review – Comment on the Options Paper and Appendix**

The [Planning Matters Alliance Tasmania](#) (PMAT) thanks you for the opportunity to comment on the [Options Paper Review Stage 2](#) (December 2022) and [Options Paper: Appendix Review Stage 2](#) (December 2022), feedback for which closes on the 19 February 2023.

Our submission covers: 1) What is PMAT; 2) Local Government Review Timelines; 3) PMAT's Position; 4) Key Concerns; 5) Major elements required for successful amalgamations and 6) links to peer reviewed academic literature and related media.

**Our key concerns/issues relate to:**

- 1. A flawed consultation process.** Given the magnitude of the proposed changes, community meetings should be held in all local Council areas across Tasmania. To date community meetings have been held in only eight of Tasmania's 29 Council areas. It is also unclear who and how many people and councils have asked for forced amalgamations and the removal of Councils as a Planning Authority to be considered as reform options. All submissions and surveys should be made public since phase 1 of the Local Government's Board review in 2018. There has been a lack of genuine consultation.
- 2. Councils must retain their role as a Planning Authority, ensuring local representation and accountability.**
- 3. Forced amalgamations.** PMAT is not against amalgamation per se - we accept amalgamation of some Councils may be advantageous. However, we are particularly concerned with forced amalgamations, which are undemocratic. Interstate experience demonstrates that forced amalgamations can have disastrous financial outcomes as well as devastating outcomes for residents, ratepayers and democracy, including local representation being lost.

Removing councils as a Planning Authority and forcing amalgamations could kill Local Government in Tasmania and with it local representation, accountability and core services. It would appear that this is the intent of the Local Government Board. Given the poor track record of both forced amalgamations and the creation of planning panels on the mainland, this is an alarming position.

If amalgamations are to happen in Tasmania it is strongly recommended that the major elements required for successful amalgamations, as outlined in Section 5 below, be adopted.



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We would be happy to meet to discuss our submission further.

Yours sincerely,

Sophie

Sophie Underwood  
State Coordinator - PMAT



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## 1. WHAT IS PMAT

The [Planning Matters Alliance Tasmania](#) (PMAT) is a growing network of [almost 70 community groups](#) from across *Iutruwita* /Tasmania which is committed to a vision for Tasmania to be a global leader in planning excellence. Our Alliance is united in common concern over the new Tasmanian state planning laws and what they mean for Tasmania's future. The level of collaboration and solidarity emerging within the advocacy campaign of PMAT, as well as the number of groups involved is unprecedented in Tasmania and crosses community group genres: recreation, environment, urban/local community associations, European built heritage, ratepayers and 'Friends of ' groups.

Land use planning impacts every inch of Tasmania. We hold that good planning is fundamental to our way of life and democracy. PMAT works to raise community awareness about planning and encourages community engagement in the planning process.

PMAT is an independent, apolitical, not-for-profit [incorporated association](#), governed by a [skills-based Board](#). PMAT is funded entirely [by donations](#).

In 2020 PMAT was named Australia's Planning Champion, a prestigious honour awarded by the Planning Institute of Australia that recognises non-planners for their advocacy and for making a significant contribution and lasting presence to the urban and regional environment. PMAT was awarded the Tasmanian Planning Champion title in 2019.

**PMAT's purpose is to achieve a values-based, fair and equitable planning scheme implemented across Tasmania, informed by [PMAT's Platform Principles](#) and delivering the objectives of the *Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993*.**

As outlined in [PMAT's Strategic Plan 2021–2023](#), '*PMAT's vision is for Tasmania to be a global leader in planning excellence. We believe best practice planning must embrace and respect all Tasmanians, enhance community well-being, health and prosperity, nourish and care for Tasmania's outstanding natural values, recognise and enrich our cultural heritage and, through democratic and transparent processes, deliver sustainable, integrated development in harmony with the surrounding environment.*'

**Planning schemes must offer a balance between development, individual rights and community amenity, and not just make it easier for development and growth at the cost of community well-being and natural and cultural values.** PMAT aims to ensure that Tasmanians have a say in a planning system that prioritises the health and well-being of the whole community, the liveability of our cities, towns and rural areas, and the protection of the natural environment and cultural heritage. PMAT considers that the incoming Tasmanian Planning Scheme will weaken the protections for places where we live and places we love around Tasmania.



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## 2. LOCAL GOVERNMENT REVIEW TIMELINES

The Tasmanian Government is conducting a major review of the future of Local Government in Tasmania. The review started in 2018 and is still underway. The latest round of public consultation closes on the 19 February 2023.

Information about the review can be found on two main websites:

- [www.futurelocal.tas.gov.au](http://www.futurelocal.tas.gov.au)
- [www.dpac.tas.gov.au](http://www.dpac.tas.gov.au)

The below is a broad summary of the review process as at February 2023. Also see a Summary of Phases 1 to 3 *'The Journey so far –Engagement on the Act Review'* [here](#).

### 2018 – Phase 1

- The Review was announced in June 2018.
- From the 7 December 2018 to the 1 March 2019 the Tasmanian Government released a *'Discussion Paper: Review of Tasmania's Local Government Legislation Framework'*.
- The Discussion Paper focused on what principles should underpin 'a contemporary legislative framework for local government'.
- **382 submissions were received. PMAT made a submission.**

### 2019 – Phase 2

- The Review Reference Group was appointed in February 2019. PMAT asked to be part of the reference group but our application was unsuccessful.
- In July 2019, a *'Reform Directions Paper Phase 2'* was released for public comment until 30 September 2019. This Paper outlined 'Major Reform Areas', 'Considerations of other key issues raised'; and 'Out of Scope' issues which included two topics only: 'Councils Role as a Planning Authority' and 'Amalgamations'. **At this stage, as per page 49 of the Directions Paper, 'The Government's position is no forced amalgamations'**.
- The proposed Reform Directions sought to address issues during Phase 1.
- **This consultation period received almost 800 survey responses and 75 written submissions.**
- The submissions and feedback on the proposed Reform Directions was provided to the State Government to inform its legislative drafting process.

### 2020 Phase 3

- On 22 April 2020 the Government released the [Approved Reforms for the Local Government Legislative Framework Review](#). This included a total of 51 reforms.



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- The reforms were developed following extensive consultation during 2018 and 2019 with the local government sector, key stakeholders, and the broader community and generated almost 800 survey responses and 75 submissions. See the Ministers media release [here](#).
- Only 48 reforms were to be implemented after receiving broad support from the public, councils and stakeholders.
- Only three of the 51 reforms were **strongly opposed** in the consultation feedback and accordingly will not be progressed. These were:
  - changing the way mayors and deputy mayors are elected;
  - introducing a candidate nomination fee; and
  - **establishing Regional Councils.**
- **‘#48 – Introduce the option to create Regional Councils (Not proceeding). This proposal will not proceed. The option to create Regional Councils will not be introduced.’**
- **Note at this point forced amalgamations were not on the table:**
- **‘#51 – Voluntary amalgamations: Voluntary amalgamations of two or more councils will be able to occur, without the need for a Local Government Board review. Councils will need to develop a business case to explore amalgamations but will no longer require a report from the Local Government Board, which is time and resource intensive.’**
- At this point, the Tasmanian Government also announced the creation of two new Bills:
  - a new Local Government Bill
  - Stand-alone Local Government (Elections) Bill
- Timelines for final drafting, exposure bill consultation and progress through the Parliament were impacted by the coronavirus pandemic.

### 2021

- The Tasmanian Government commissioned the Local Government Board to review the Future of Local Government in Tasmania.
- On the 15 December 2021, the Minister for Local Government and Planning [announced](#) the six members of the Local Government Board to oversee the review of local government in Tasmania.
- See information about the Review Board [here](#) and the Review Terms of Reference [here](#).

### 2022

- The Local Government Review Board commenced the Review in January 2022.
- The **first stage** of the Review, which commenced in January 2022, focused on community level consultation, where everyone was apparently given the opportunity to describe the services they expect from councils to meet current and future needs, access opportunities and meet challenges.



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- The **second stage** will involve the development and testing of reform opportunities.
- **Third stage** the Board will develop recommendations for Government, along with practical transition plans.
- On 14 December 2022, the Local Government Review Board released an options paper for public comment: [The Future of Local Government Review Options Paper – review Stage 2 December 2022](#) and appendix [Future of Local Government Review Stage 2 Options Paper Appendix – Reform Options \(December 2022\)](#). Public comment closes on the 19 February 2023.
- See media release here: '[Options Paper – Department of Premier and Cabinet, 14 December 2022](#)'
- A community update was also published: [Future of Local Government Review Stage 2 Options Paper Community Update \(December 2022\)](#).
- A series of other reports were also released in July and October 2022:
  - [Future of Local Government Review Stage 1 Interim Report Engagement Overview \(October 2022\)](#)
  - [Future of Local Government Review Stage 1 Interim Report Public Submissions Analysis \(October 2022\)](#)
  - [Future of Local Government Review Stage 1 Interim Report Council and Peak Organisation Submissions Analysis \(October 2022\)](#)
  - [Future of Local Government Review Stage 1 Interim Report \(July 2022\)](#)
  - [Future of Local Government Review Stage 1 Interim Report Executive Summary \(July 2022\)](#)
  - [Future of Local Government Review Stage 1 Interim Report Appendices \(July 2022\)](#)
  - [Future of Local Government Review Stage 1 Community Update \(July 2022\)](#)

## 2023

- [The Future of Local Government Review Options Paper – review Stage 2 December 2022](#) and [Appendix](#) outlines three potential pathways for redesigning Local Government in Tasmania: 1) mandated sharing and consolidation of services, 2) forced amalgamations (i.e. '*boundary consolidation to achieve fewer larger councils*' or 3) a mix of both.
- The Local Government Board is required to provide its Interim Report for Stage 2 of the Review to the Minister for Local Government at the end of March 2023.
- The Board will apparently be providing further opportunities for engagement on the Options in **Stage 3** of its Review, which commences in April and ends in June 2023.
- Note that the Review's [Terms of Reference](#) also outlines the *Staging and Timeframes*.



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### 3. PMAT'S POSITION

The [Options Paper](#) and [Appendix](#) includes major reforms for consideration: Council's role in development decisions, significant (mandated) sharing and consolidation of services and forced amalgamations.

These proposed reforms would, if implemented, fundamentally alter Local Government and planning, local service provision and how the community has a say on future developments.

PMAT's position is that we should retain councils as a Planning Authority; core Services should not be outsourced away from Councils; and amalgamations should not be forced.

#### **Retain Councils as a Planning Authority**

PMAT's position is for Councils to retain their role as a Planning Authority.

This position is consistent with Principle 6 of PMAT's founding platform [here](#) that states '6. **Implementation:** *Consistent with the above principles, planning to be shared between state and local government, with local government to retain primary responsibility for local planning and development decisions through community consultation.'*

Removing planning from Local Government, and reducing Councils to managing only rates, road and rubbish, would be contrary to the Review's objective 'to create a more robust and capable system of local government that is ready for the challenges and opportunities of the future.' It is inconsistent too with the stated intent of supporting wellbeing as the 'core business' for local government.

The principal legislation establishing the powers and functions of councils is the [Local Government Act 1993](#). Removing Council's as a Planning Authority would be contrary to the [Local Government Act 1993](#) Section 20 which describes the role of councils as:

- to provide for the health, safety and welfare of the community;
- to represent the interests of the community; and
- to provide for the peace, order and good government of the municipal area.

#### **Core Services should not be outsourced away from Councils**

While there may be advantages for local Councils to share services, we do not support recommendations that would see core council services outsourced away from councils and provided by central or regional providers.



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## Voluntary Amalgamations

PMAT is not against amalgamation per se - we accept amalgamation of some Councils may be advantageous. However, we are particularly concerned with forced amalgamations, which are undemocratic.

Local communities/ratepayers would be denied a say with no opportunity to participate in Tasmanian Electoral Commission elector Polls.

### **Our position is for voluntary amalgamations.**

Interstate experience demonstrates that forced amalgamations can have disastrous financial outcomes as well as poor outcomes for people and democracy with local representation being lost.

This position is consistent with Principle 3 and 4 of PMAT's founding platform [here](#) that states Principle '**3. Transparency & Independence:** *Ensure that planning and decision-making processes are open and transparent...*'; and Principle '**4. Community Involvement:** *Provide opportunities for informed community input in planning matters and decisions.....*'





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#### 4. KEY CONCERNS

Our key areas of concern with regards to this phase of the Local Government Review relate to the:

1. Flawed consultation process;
2. Removing Councils as a Planning Authority; and
3. Forced amalgamations.

Any problems with the current system do not justify the dramatic action of taking planning decisions away from councils or undemocratically forcing amalgamations.

Removing councils as a Planning Authority and forcing amalgamations could kill Local Government in Tasmania and with it local representation, accountability and services.

##### **Flawed Consultation Process**

In PMAT's [media release](#) dated 16 February 2023, we called for a three-month extension to the Tasmanian Government's consultation process over reforms to Local Government, citing the scale of changes (forced amalgamations and removing planning decisions from local councils) and the style of consultation as key reasons for the community to have more time. **We suggest that there has been a lack of genuine public consultation.**

Major proposals such as removing planning decisions from local councils and replacing them with State Government appointed 'independent assessment panels' are buried in the appendix of the consultation document; meetings have been convened in only eight of Tasmania's 29 Local Government areas (and none in city centres) and consultation commenced 11 days before Christmas, a notoriously poor time to engage community on large scale change.

We are deeply concerned about the openness, transparency and timing of the current round of public consultation. Highly contentious options were not discussed at the community meetings and are buried in the documentation and not declared openly for all to consider and discuss.

Community meetings should be held in all local Council areas across Tasmania, with all options discussed openly. Community meetings have only focused on the three potential pathways of redesigning Local Government in Tasmania and not on the other highly contentious proposal of removing Councils as a Planning Authority.

It is also unclear who and how many people and councils have asked for forced amalgamations and the removal of Councils as a Planning Authority to be considered as reform options. All submissions since Phase 1 of the Local Government Review in 2018 should be made publicly available.



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Recent advice also indicates that the proposed changes, despite their scale and significant impact on the way development decisions are made in Tasmania and the future of Local Government, **may not be required to pass both houses of Parliament**, further diminishing scrutiny and the integrity of this reform process. **We ask the Local Government Board to clarify this process and the role, if any, of both houses of Parliament.**

### **Removing Councils as a Planning Authority**

PMAT's position is for Councils to retain their role as a Planning Authority. If this role is removed it would see Councils (and ultimately the community) shut out of development decisions in their local area.

Our legal advice confirms there is no conflict between Councils representing their communities and acting in the best interests of the community when making decisions on development applications as a Planning Authority. **We suggest that Tasmanian Government appointed independent assessment panels would present a far greater conflict of interest.**

We maintain it's best to keep local Councils local – looking after local issues for local people and who are locally accountable. We want Councils to continue their vital role as *'place shapers'* underpinning community well-being and enriching our cultural and natural heritage, lifestyle and democracy.

During the 2022 Local Government elections (see [here](#)) PMAT surveyed 398 of the 505 Local Government candidates. Of the 398 candidates, 169 completed our survey. **The overwhelming majority of local council candidates, who took part in our survey (99.4%), believe councils should retain their role as a Planning Authority.**

Any problems with the current system do not justify the dramatic action of taking planning decisions away from councils. These problems could be addressed with more funding, including for councillor training, planners and other expert advisors.

### **Concerns with 'independent assessment panels'**

In most jurisdictions where 'independent' development assessment panels have been introduced, decisions by panels are triggered for a development over a certain value or have received a certain number of representations.

Thus many of the most contentious large scale developments, which potentially have the most impact on our daily lives, will be removed from Councils. Councillors would be unable to vote on developments that have the greatest impact on local communities, residents and ratepayers.

Following the 2022 controversy over Ministerial appointments to the Tasmanian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (the Minister overlooked an independent panel's recommendations and



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instead appointed personal picks), serious questions may exist over the independence of any new assessment panels established by the Tasmanian Government.

Another key question is how well are these panels working in other jurisdictions? A recent Sydney Morning Herald article, published in August 2021, entitled [‘How ‘unelected faceless men and women’ keep approving NSW developments’](#) states local planning panels were created to stamp out corruption, but councillors from across the political spectrum say they favour developers and undermine democratic accountability.

Liberal mayors joined Labor and Greens councillors in criticising the NSW planning system. Quotes from elected representatives include *‘As a councillor it is frustrating to not be able to support our community and advocate on their behalf with regards to concerns related to development applications’*, *‘As locals we understand our community better than anyone and we are acutely aware of the impact of poor planning outcomes’*, *‘I am mindful that they do represent a further erosion of the authority of our elected officials who represent our residents’* and the panels *“...tend to be drawn from the development industry in the form of lawyers, planners and architects, and this favours developers over residents”*.

### **Undermines Democracy and Local Representation**

Councillors are elected to represent the people of the municipality and the community expect them to have a say over developments in their municipality. When they are acting as the Planning Authority, they are bound to apply the requirements of the planning scheme. However, there is still some scope or discretion for councils to represent their constituents on a particular proposal. Many rules in planning schemes are open to interpretation e.g. performance criteria, and council planners’ advice cannot always be taken as being beyond challenge. Councils are also responsible for the provision of many services to their constituents and they are therefore best placed to judge whether a development will be sustainable over the long term.

Elected Councillors with advice from expert planners employed in council are best placed to make local decisions about local planning and developments in their municipalities. Local Councils have the appropriate skills, experience and understanding of their local areas, communities and municipalities.

Many of the most controversial developments are discretionary in planning schemes meaning they are potentially allowable but require a vote of elected councillors to be approved. A development can be refused or approved with conditions. This is a fair process where the elected representatives get a vote on developments that are of most interest to their communities. In recent times councillors have had a vote on Lake Malbena, Rosny Hill tourism development, kunanyi /Mt Wellington cable car, Cambria Green, Robbins Island wind farm and others.



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This fair and democratic process is under threat.

If communities are unhappy with how councillors have voted on developments they can vote them out at the next election.

### **Increased land use conflict**

Removing planning from Local Government has the potential to increase land use conflict as we have seen with other land use approval arrangements that either totally sit outside or largely sit outside Tasmania's planning system.

Aquaculture largely sits outside the planning system where 'Independent' fish farm panels for example are making decisions which arguably deliver unsustainable outcomes with very contentious outcomes. Forestry and dams sit completely outside the planning system – where we have seen decades of conflict. Mining largely sits outside. Again we have seen repeated examples of land use conflict associated with dam construction in Tasmania.

### **Tasmania is at risk of becoming homogenised**

If local communities are unable to express how they want their local places to be and maintain their unique values, Tasmania is at risk of becoming homogenised and industrialised. It is these unique values which attract people to Tasmania and are our point of difference to the rest of the world. Tasmania's 'brand' would be under threat.

### **Forced amalgamations**

We are very concerned about restructuring local Councils via forced amalgamations.

PMAT is not against amalgamation per se - we accept amalgamation of some Councils may be advantageous. However, we are particularly concerned with forced amalgamations, which are undemocratic.

Our position is for voluntary amalgamations.

Interstate experience demonstrates forced amalgamations can have disastrous financial outcomes as well as devastating outcomes for people and democracy with local representation being lost. Local communities would be denied a say in amalgamations with no opportunity to participate in Tasmanian Electoral Commission elector Polls.

In 2020, informed by extensive consultation during 2018 and 2019, the Government released a list of 51 Local Government approved reforms. This included **no forced amalgamations** and, due to strong opposition, **no establishment of larger, regional councils**.



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Fast forward to 2023, and the story has changed dramatically.

Three options are now on the table for restructuring local Councils: 1) mandated sharing and consolidation of services; 2) forced amalgamations with fewer, bigger councils and/or 3) a mix of both.

Critical questions need to be answered before Tasmania goes down any of these pathways. To date the Local Government Board has not provided a convincing case for forced amalgamations. No detailed analysis of the available data or modelling to demonstrate how boundary changes might provide benefits to the community has been provided. This work is essential when proposals are being put forward to force such major changes to local government in Tasmania.

Devastating impacts on local communities, Councils and staff from forced amalgamations have occurred in QLD, NSW and Victoria. **Tasmania should learn from the mistakes of mainland states and not force amalgamations.**

#### **A case study of the effects of the 2016 NSW forced amalgamation program**

In NSW, small local communities have declared they have been disenfranchised and experienced severe psychological distress due to forced amalgamations.

Peer-reviewed academic research (see below) shows alarming impacts of the 2016 forced amalgamations on NSW local Councils including reduced efficiency, increased costs for councils by over 11%; significantly increased property rates e.g. Cootamundra-Gundagai increased rates by 53.5%; and forced amalgamations contributed to councils financially failing. For example, NSW's Central Coast Council is now under administration; with fear other Councils may suffer the same fate.

See [Fiscal outcomes arising from amalgamation: more complex than merely economies of scale](#) by Joseph Drew, Dana McQuestin & Brian Dollery. January 2023.

See [recent empirical peer reviewed research in the scholarly literature on the effects of the 2016 NSW forced amalgamation program](#): This is a short summary on the findings of empirical research in the scholarly literature on the effects of the 2016 NSW forced amalgamation program. And as quoted 'you will see, it paints a damning portrait of the outcome of the municipal mergers'.

See [Did Amalgamation make local government more fit for the future?](#) by Drew, McQuestin and Dollery, November 2021.

The Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council is the first Council in NSW to de-amalgamate. The current Mayor, although not opposed to mergers, offers this advice: *'There must be a true and proper community consultation, with an overwhelming acceptance to agree to a merger, there must be real commitment from the communities and the elected representatives for a positive outcome, costs involved to implement a merger are very high, as are the costs to demerge. If not initiated and*



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*implemented properly the true costs of a failed merger are not just financial but there are enormous social costs involved impacting on staff, community organisations, elected councillors, local businesses, and the public. But to try and force the process is fraught with danger, as has happened in Victoria, Queensland and now NSW. '*

See a related recent media article here: [Roadmap for "complex" council demerger revealed](#), Inside Local Government, 6 February 2023.

Another big issue in NSW was that so called expert consultants made inaccurate projections regarding amalgamations, with devastating consequences. How do we ensure projected savings, from municipal mergers, made by commercial consultants are correct? In NSW, consultants were engaged to inform the Government about which Councils should be forced to amalgamate. Academic research later determined that these projections were unfounded. The consequences have been devastating for local communities and councils.

#### **A case study of the effects of forced amalgamations on Philip Island, Victoria**

Philip Island, Victoria, also demonstrates the immense devastating financial, social and environmental impacts forced amalgamations can have on island and rural communities. Once a successful stand-alone Council – declining municipal services and rising rates have been the hallmarks of forced amalgamation.

Since Philip Island's amalgamation, those who initially embraced amalgamation have become disillusioned; municipal services have declined, infrastructure is not maintained or renewed, savings promised via reduced rates and economies of scale never eventuated and a large percentage of money raised through rates is spent elsewhere. Communication between the Council and community diminished, there were significant job losses with '*unbearable pressure on staff and their families*' and impacts on the local economy. Social services were cut (e.g. maternal and child health and the tip closed) and the island saw the sale of Council assets of land, building, equipment and machinery.

With discontent reaching breaking point locals were forced to call a public meeting. In unprecedented scenes, 800 people turned out with 150 apologies. A vote of no confidence in Council administration was passed and a resolution asked the Minister for Local Government to review the municipal boundary and re-establish the Shire of Phillip Island. A commitment was elicited from the State Government that the request had to come from Council. Pro de-amalgamation candidates contested all seats across the shire, defeating all sitting Councillors opposed to the review. At the first meeting of the new Council a motion was passed to request the Minister to conduct a municipal review. But then the State Government reneged on its promise. Their fight for self-determination and disenfranchisement continues.

**Read further about Philip Island's forced amalgamation disturbing case study [here](#) and [here](#).**



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#### 4. MAJOR ELEMENTS REQUIRED FOR SUCCESSFUL AMALGAMATIONS

It is recommended that the Local Government Board consider the recommendations in *Saving Local Government Financial Sustainability in a Challenging World* by Joseph Drew, Springer, 2022.

As per the online description, *'This book focuses squarely on the problem of saving local government in the context of extraordinary financial challenges being faced across the globe. Saving Local Government is written principally for practitioners and employs a 'conversational' tone which makes complex theory both engaging and accessible. It augments world-best scholarship with Professor Joseph Drew's extensive practical experience in guiding local governments away from the brink of financial insolvency. It is thus a 'must read' for local government executives, Mayors, Councillors and the regulators that oversee the sector.*

*In Saving Local Government Professor Drew also makes a number of important contributions to address significant gaps in the scholarly literature. In particular, the book includes extensive treatment of de-amalgamation, applied natural law philosophy, Aristotelian epistemology for evaluating public policy success, as well as alternatives to financial administration. The work is therefore also compelling reading for scholars.'*

The book outlines six major elements required for successful amalgamations. These elements include:

1. *Those wishing to implement reforms must give good reasons and good evidence for acting.*
2. *Alternate treatments should be practised prior to more radical interventions.*
3. *Proposed amalgamations must be designed by bona fide experts, supported by evidence.*
4. *Community consultation must be focused on people, and be conducted in a thorough and genuine manner.*
5. *Amalgamations must be conducted in a morally licit manner. This means that the consent of (at least) the majority of citizens must be given before proceeding. It also means that grants should be made to ensure that no nett debt is transferred to taxpayers as a consequence of amalgamations.*
6. *Adequate post-implementation support and review must be considered essential elements to amalgamation success.*

See *Saving Local Government Financial Sustainability in a Challenging World* by Joseph Drew, Springer, 2022 for further details about each element.



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## 5. PEER REVIEWED ACADEMIC LITERATURE AND RELATED MEDIA

### PMAT in the Media

- PMAT's Talking Point: [Changes to Council Requires Care, The Mercury, 16 Feb 2023](#).
- PMAT's media release: [Scale of changes and dubious consultation prompts call for more community engagement on Local Government reform, 16 February 2023](#).
- Listen in to PMAT State Coordinator Sophie Underwood's ABC radio interview with Leon Compton regarding the Local Government Review [here](#) (1:08 mins), Tuesday 14 February 2023.
- PMAT's Talking Point: [Vital to keep planning matters local](#), The Mercury, September 23 2022.

### A case study of the effects of forced amalgamations on Philip Island, Victoria

- Read about Philip Island's forced amalgamation disturbing case study [here](#) and [here](#).

### Effects of the 2016 NSW forced amalgamation program

- [Fiscal outcomes arising from amalgamation: more complex than merely economies of scale](#) by Joseph Drew, Dana McQuestin & Brian Dollery, January 2023.
- [Recent empirical peer reviewed research in the scholarly literature on the effects of the 2016 NSW forced amalgamation program](#): This is a short summary on the findings of empirical research in the scholarly literature on the effects of the 2016 NSW forced amalgamation program. As outlined in the attached 'it paints a damning portrait of the outcome of the municipal mergers'.
- [Roadmap for "complex" council demerger revealed](#), Inside Local Government, 6 February 2023.

### Removing Councils as a Planning Authority in NSW and replacing them with planning panels

- [How 'unelected faceless men and women' keep approving NSW developments](#), Sydney Morning Herald, August 15, 2021.