

31 July 2023

Our ref.: Government Relations/ State  
Liaison/ Government  
Departments; bwco;dgk

Doc. ID:

Local Government Review  
Email: [submissions.LGBoard@dpac.tas.gov.au](mailto:submissions.LGBoard@dpac.tas.gov.au)

Dear Board Members

### SUBMISSION TO STAGE 3- FUTURE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT REVIEW – AUGUST 2023

We submit our considerations and suggestions in this the third and final submission period of the Future of Local Government Review process.

During the finalising of this submission the Premier announced there would be no forced amalgamations and whilst we believe that this was not the right approach to ensure the 'much needed reform across the state' previous touted, this essentially makes no difference to the Central Coast's approach to this submission.

#### *Background*

The Central Coast Council have engaged with the interim reports, the Community Catchment Information Packages for the Cradle Coast Catchment and have had staff and elected representatives attend all available meetings and workshops. We are proud of our level of engagement on this important issue during this time. We have provided feedback to the Board and workshop facilitators regarding our concerns about the process and the engagement approach and we trust this feedback will be considered for future engagement opportunities.

Council presents its submission to the *Cradle Coast Catchment* proposals in two parts, one from the Councillor's perspective and the other from the Staff's perspective, after both groups were asked to consider the Opportunities (Pro's) and Disadvantages (Cons) to each scenario. That feedback is listed below, however firstly we would provide overarching comments on the reform opportunity as a whole.

Council's primary frustration is that the original context of the reform opportunity has been lost.

Many Councillors were excited to be able to engage in a conversation about the roles of local government and how our structure would best achieve those roles. Disappointing the Catchment process has resulted to date, in what could best be described as a 'land grab' with no focus at all on the functions of local government and what forms it should take.

PO Box 220 / DX 70506  
19 King Edward Street  
Ulverstone Tasmania 7315  
Tel 03 6429 8900

[admin@centralcoast.tas.gov.au](mailto:admin@centralcoast.tas.gov.au)  
[www.centralcoast.tas.gov.au](http://www.centralcoast.tas.gov.au)

There has been no opportunity to discuss funding models that might serve the entire state more effectively. No opportunity for facilitated discussion of shared services. No discussion about a change to ensure that all Councils are using like-for-like depreciation or life of asset accounting tools so that we can really compare apples with apples. No questions asked about the 'Not Negotiables' for any Council, that would allow us to even frame the alternatives.

The recommendations of the Premier's Economic and Social Recovery Advisory Council report March 2021 concerning Local Government Reform called on the Government to implement 'structural reform' and to 'commit to implementing the recommendations without material modification.'

In our opinion the focus on the words 'structural reform' has resulted in working on the 'form' not on the functions and roles that enable best delivery for our communities.

The directive that the Government implement the recommendations without material modification, causes great concern as we do not believe that the current process will provide the Minister with the best recommendations.

There is no overarching measurement or indicators for success. For example, the United National Sustainability Goals are being quickly adopted by government entities and corporations everywhere and would provide an established set of criteria and targets not only for local government, but dare we suggest, the State government, allowing for targets to be aligned and success or otherwise measured and agreed upon.

Instead of the upheaval of boundary adjustments without rationale, with its political risk, the State could have chosen the path of cultural reform arrangements modelled elsewhere. Arrangements could be mandated, recommendations implemented and progress reported in an agreed time. Where unsatisfactory progress in the majority of councils would result in mergers/ significant reduction.

The Minister's statement that 'the status quo is not acceptable' should have been that 'the status quo is not acceptable everywhere'. If measures were in place to compare outcomes for our communities then we could have determined where and for whom, the status quo was no longer acceptable.

As outlined in our previous submission we agreed that some current council boundaries could be better defined to reflect contemporary demographics. Better alignment with other state services, such as education catchment areas, health services, port and freight would be beneficial if changes were to be made. Another priority would be to ensure there is a balance between urban and rural areas within boundaries - a mix of rural/urban communities allows more professional services to

be delivered through providing greater capacity. We did not see this reflected in many of the catchment scenarios.

Due to our current sized rate base and staff structure, we believe that Central Coast is already of an appropriate size and diversity to service our community to an agreeable service level. We do not believe the residents of Central Coast would benefit by any significant boundary adjustments but the current Council unanimously agree we would benefit from shared services arrangements.

The Stage 3 process did not provide any framework for a discussion on the 'mandated shared services' aspect of previous discussions. We acknowledge that the State has encouraged this work in the past and that Councils have (largely) failed to take up opportunities. Accordingly we believe that it is important that the Minister issue a directive to that effect. It is reasonable to expect that the findings from Stage 3 will inform this work and that this be a specific directive.

Central Coast did not facilitate any of our own Community Consultation sessions. Through our range of communications we encouraged people to participate in the opportunities provided by the Board, but did not feel there was any value to hosting events for people to view the Catchment Maps. We simply did not have the answers to any of their 'why' questions.

The one question that we do recognise is that relating to the recruitment and retention of professional staff. Our Directors responsible for this matter agree that no amount of boundary adjustment or amalgamation addresses the core issue of recruitment, which include the sector's inability to make itself appealing to relevantly qualified persons, the insufficient number of graduates in Australia for qualifications such as Engineering, compared with the number of Engineers Australia actually needs, and the self-fulfilling prophecy that the sector has now lost its ability to train new candidates as we don't have the diversity of responsibilities required to provide a full training experience. There needs to be a willingness from the sector to recruit the well qualified and willing overseas cohort, similar to our own recent appointment of 3 staff from Nepal.

We also believe that consideration has not been given to the learnings and outcomes of reform in other states. The opportunities for the creation of separate entities to manage specific services or the role of public / private partnerships have not been discussed.

The following is a summary of feedback on the 4 Scenarios provided and additional thoughts provided under Other.

*Feedback on Scenarios***Cradle Coast Catchment Scenario 1**

Scenario 1 establishes two new council areas within the Cradle Coast Community Catchment. The first (A) combines the existing Burnie LGA with areas of the existing Central Coast Council from the west of the Leven River along the Dial Range.

The second (B) combines existing Kentish, Latrobe and Devonport LGAs, and Central Coast Council areas east of Penguin and the Dial Range.

**Elected Representatives – Scenario 1**

| <b>Opportunities</b>  | <b>Disadvantages</b>  |
|---|---|
| Primary Health Delivery – Less service disruption<br>Dulverton already exists<br>Hospital in each area on 30 minutes max to each council admin hub<br>Emergency Services Existing Structure | Splits Community made over 30 years.<br>Still creates same issues – 1 big, 1 small<br>Imbalance of population<br>Penguin goes to Burnie<br>Devonport would most likely become a business hub and Central Coast would be on outskirts<br>Divisive – lack of community care<br>Bad policy<br>Burnies financial position<br>Penguin/Ulverstone relationship severed – bad for morale<br>Public participation |

**Staff Feedback; Scenario 1**

| <b>Opportunities</b>   | <b>Disadvantages</b>   |
|--|--|
| <p>Increased rate base for both A and B</p> <p>Some improvement in scale for b mainly</p> <p>Retain jobs and local services alignment and local communities of interest</p> <p>10% population growth</p> <p>Second highest housing supply infrastructure</p> <p>Third highest employment growth</p> <p>Second highest median age</p> | <p>Splits the Central Coast</p> <p>Parking meters for Penguin and Ulverstone</p> <p>Strengthens competition between Devonport and Burnie</p> <p>Divided community of interest of Leven River</p> <p>Uneven population size for A and B</p> <p>Loss of Dial Range – our iconic background landform</p> <p>Third highest increase in unsealed roads (B)</p> <p>Second highest increase in sealed roads (B)</p> |

### Cradle Coast Catchment Scenario 2

Scenario 2 would establish three council areas: (A) the existing Burnie LGA incorporating Somerset; (B) the existing Central Coast LGA extended to incorporate south of Cethana and Moina (currently in Kentish LGA); and (C) the combined existing Latrobe, Devonport, and eastern part of Kentish LGAs (minus the areas south of Gowrie Park).

### Elected Representatives; Scenario 2

| Opportunities  | Disadvantages  |
|--|--|
| <p>Best scenario but with area added – up the Forth river to Wilmot – manage with existing facilities</p> <p>Closest to status quo</p> <p>Manageable to change to</p> <p>Better Community Representation including demographics and can still utilise service sharing and better efficiency</p> <p>Best of all offerings for the residents</p> <p>Staff are committed to these areas and proudly so</p> <p>Mines – Moina employment</p> <p>Tourism and Accommodation</p> <p>Planning cohesion</p> <p>No Parking fees</p> | <p>More commitments with less rates base</p> <p>Barely changes anything</p> <p>Funding model doesn't seem fair for Councils</p> <p>Not enough motivation for shared services</p> |

**Staff Feedback; Scenario 2**

| <b>Opportunities</b>  | <b>Disadvantages</b>  |
|---|---|
| <p>Cradle to Coast + World Heritage Cradle Mountain</p> <p>Residential and rural character</p> <p>Maintains sense of place and local identity</p> <p>Lower transitional costs</p> <p>Still opportunity for work across the North West</p> <p>Best scenario for CCC and local representation identity</p> <p>Connected by highway</p> <p>More accurately reflect the local communities of interest</p> <p>Established admin/commercial hub</p> <p>7.9% population growth</p> <p>Youngest median age @ 41.6</p> <p>Highest younger communities 0-14</p> <p>Accommodation</p> <p>Tourism</p> <p>Residential</p> <p>Livability</p> <p>No Parking fees</p> <p>Maintain rural and residential</p> | <p>Competition for specialist staff</p> <p>Area C double the size of areas A and B</p> <p>Little real change - no justification</p> <p>Area B gain extra 53km of road</p> |

### Cradle Coast Catchment Scenario 3

Scenario 3 creates one new council area for the Cradle Coast Community Catchment, consisting of the existing Central Coast, Devonport, Kentish, Latrobe and Burnie LGAs. Under this scenario, the entire community catchment becomes a single LGA.

#### Elected Representatives; Scenario 3

| Opportunities  | Disadvantages   |
|--|---|
| <p>Ulverstone and CCC would be in the centre and a central hub</p> <p>Streamlined and no need for regional shared services, consolidation of regional bodies or reassessing roles.</p> <p>Better to advocate for whole region</p> <p>Can consider the way the whole region live work and play</p> <p>Would only work with local representation.</p> <p>No Cradle Coast Authority</p> | <p>If Devonport or Burnie became central hub it may disadvantage the other towns</p> <p>Too much too fast and too long to implement.</p> <p>No local voice and the scale is too distant</p> <p>Representation is lessened and may have a negative impact of residents.</p> <p>Lose Cradle Coast Authority expertise – risk is high.</p> |



**Staff Feedback; Scenario 3**

| Opportunities   | Disadvantages  |
|---|--|
| <p>Strategic alignment and infrastructure investments</p> <p>Take the big bite</p> <p>Greater opportunities for staff (career pathway attraction)</p> <p>Potential scale benefits including office location</p> <p>No need for Cradle Coast Authority</p> <p>Large revenue base</p> <p>No need for shared services arrangements</p> <p>Opportunity to create one culture</p> <p>Third largest council in Tasmania (as currently stands)</p> <p>Financial and political opportunities</p> <p>Best usage of specialist staff resources, best opportunity for IT improvements and least likely to need to resolve complex sharing arrangements.</p> <p>Support economy of scale to population on 98k</p> <p>Third lowest median age – 43.7</p> | <p>High risk unless scenario two is first</p> <p>Highest unsealed roads and highest sealed roads</p> <p>Large population</p> <p>Distance to travel and inspections</p> <p>Highest risk to bed down – would take considerable time</p> <p>Would create conflict of who was in charge</p> <p>Loss of identity and sense of place as well as local representations</p> <p>Difficult to create one culture</p> <p>More work / staff stress</p> <p>High cost of transition</p> <p>Average cost increase of 11.2%, average staff cost increase 15%</p> <p>Won't guarantee staff attractiveness – it is the region not the size that is likely the key driver</p> |

#### Cradle Coast Catchment Scenario 4

Scenario 4 creates two new council areas: (A) the existing LGAs of Burnie, Central Coast and Devonport are combined and (B) existing Kentish and Latrobe LGA's are combined. The two new council areas under this scenario combine existing councils into two groupings, with a dividing boundary further to the east than in Scenario 1.

#### Elected Representatives; Scenario 4

| Opportunities | Disadvantages  |
|---------------|--|
| Nil           | <p>Council B is predominantly rural and may be disadvantaged.</p> <p>Too big</p> <p>Imbalance in population</p> <p>Too imbalanced</p> <p>Unfair to council B - Unsustainable rate base</p> |

#### Staff Feedback; Scenario 4

| Opportunities | Disadvantages  |
|---------------|--|
| Nil           | <p>Latrobe / Kentish remains financially challenged</p> <p>Significant difference in population and revenue</p> <p>Unbalances - 1 big and 1 small</p> <p>Second highest unsealed roads</p> |

### Other Options

| Elected Representatives  | Staff   |
|--|---|
| Scenario 2 + boundary adjustment up through Forth river                  | Scenario 2 + Sheffield and Lake Barrington          |
| Rollout shared services before redrawing boundaries                      | Scenario 2 - Burnie to go west but CCC keep Penguin |
| Scenario 2 and boundary to Don River                                     | Scenario 3 + Burnie                                 |
| Status Quo   | Scenario 2 Join area A and B                        |
| Scenario 2 + Don, Sheffield, Lake Barrington, Wilmot and Cradle Mountain |   |
| Use the Legislative Council Boundaries                                   |   |

### *Opportunities*

In an exercise that considers boundary adjustments, based on communities of interest and our ability to improve regional service levels on ‘country’ roads, we are keen to explore the following:

Change part of the municipal boundary to the east, with either the Bass Highway or the Don River to form the boundary between Central Coast and Devonport. This would ‘tidy up’ the separation of Forth and Leith, which due to the agricultural activity and hamlets consistent with the rest of the municipal area, should form part of Central Coast not Devonport.

We would also seek to explore the suggested southern shift to bring Cradle Mountain into our municipal area. A new boundary of Wilmot Road and Cradle Mountain Road, bringing Wilmot, Moina and Middlesex into Central Coast would provide an valued opportunity to extend our well renowned tourism branding and fits with our demonstrated ability to serve and service roads and small townships.

Council is committed to playing a key part in regional leadership and in cross-council communication. Elected members have requested that we seek a meeting with all elected members of Devonport, Latrobe and Kentish and others to discuss boundary line changes where mutual benefit may be possible as well as shared services.

Staff have advised there is a significant lack of communication between Council professionals and accordingly we do not understand the capabilities of other

councils to properly evaluate the opportunities. We will undertake to use the structure of the Cradle Coast Authority to pursue this issue.

We trust that the Council's submission provides the Board with practical insights into the future challenges facing the sector and constructive comment on their proposed structural reform options.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Barry Omundson', with a stylized, looped end.

Barry Omundson  
GENERAL MANAGER

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cheryl Fuller', with a large, open 'C' and a trailing flourish.

Cheryl Fuller  
MAYOR