

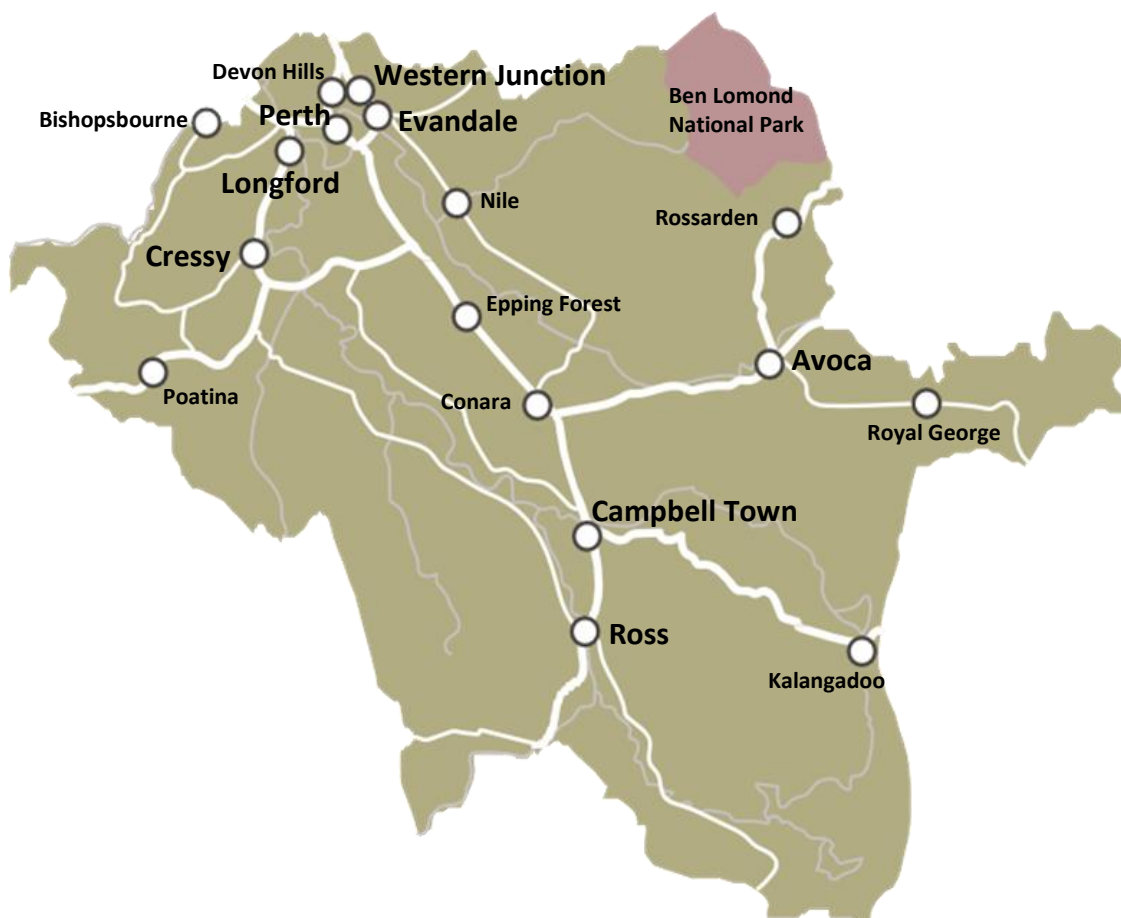


NORTHERN
MIDLANDS
COUNCIL

FUTURE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT REVIEW - STAGE 3

SUBMISSION TO STATE GOVERNMENT

LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOARD



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1 AUGUST 2023

1 August 2023

The Chairperson
Local Government Board
The Future of Local Government Review

Attention: Ms Sue Smith

Via email: lgboard@dpac.tas.gov.au

Dear Chairperson

Please find below the Northern Midlands Council (**NMC**) submission in response to the Local Government Board's (**Board**) Future of Local Government Review (**Review**) Stage 2 – Interim Report and the Community Catchment Information Packs.

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. NMC is capable of providing for community needs – presently and into the future. NMC has worked hard to establish and implement NMC's Strategic Plan and associated strategies (including Arts & Culture, Communications & Engagement, Economic Development, Domestic & Family Violence, Youth and Health & Wellbeing). Council is most appreciated in its local communities for its level of trust and public engagement.
2. NMC is impacted by all of the scenarios presented by the Board in the Central and Midlands Community Catchment Information Pack, and one scenario presented by the Board in the Tamar Valley Community Catchment Information Pack.
3. NMC has not supported forced amalgamations or boundary adjustments throughout the reform process. It wishes to retain all aspects of the municipality for existing residents, visitors, and investors.
4. NMC rejects all four scenarios presented by the Board in the Central and Midlands Community Catchment Information Pack as they pertain to changes to existing boundaries of the NMC.
5. NMC rejects all four scenarios presented by the Board in the Tamar Valley Community Catchment Information Pack as they pertain to changes to existing boundaries of the NMC.
6. NMC's position is that NMC boundaries remain as they presently are.
7. NMC is supportive of targeted local government reform, including voluntary amalgamations for council's who mutually agree to the amalgamation occurring. NMC does not currently support any voluntary amalgamation of NMC with any other Tasmanian council(s).
8. NMC is very concerned about the likely negative impact any changes to municipal boundaries would have on smaller, more rural communities located within the municipality if forced boundary adjustments are made.
9. The Review does not take into account the impact on the historic and cultural connections between NMC's townships, villages and rural communities which are integral to the current social capital and sense of belonging.
10. The provision of additional data by the Board which demonstrates the impacts of the proposed reform would have been beneficial to all councils, especially with regard to how economies of scale would deliver costs savings, the financial implications of proposed reforms (including impact on ratepayers) and business case scenarios for proposed reforms.
11. Council and especially Northern Midlands ratepayers must not bear the financial burden arising from any proposed reforms.

2 INTRODUCTION

On 16 July 2023, the Minister for Local Government and Premier announced they would not be forcing any amalgamations or boundary changes in response to the Review. Despite the State Government announcement, the NMC will continue to participate in the Review.

All scenarios in the Central and Midlands Community Catchment Information Pack propose changes to NMC's existing municipal boundaries. The proposed scenarios are:

- **Scenario 1-** Establishing two separate councils to the north and south. Council A combines the existing Brighton, Southern Midlands, and Derwent Valley LGAs and a proportion of the Central Highlands including Hamilton, Ouse, and Wayatinah. Council B captures the remainder of the Central Highland LGAs, Meander Valley (minus Hadspen, Carrick, Prospect Vale, and Blackstone Heights) and **Northern Midlands (minus Perth, Evandale and Longford)**.
- **Scenario 2-** Establishing a single Central and Midlands Council. The existing LGAs of Derwent Valley, Brighton, Southern Midlands, Central Highlands, **Northern Midlands**, and Meander Valley, **minus** Carrick, Hadspen, **Perth, Longford, and Evandale**.
- **Scenario 3-** Establishing three councils – a northern council encompassing the Meander Valley (minus Prospect Vale and Blackstone Heights) and **Northern Midlands**, a southern council encompassing Brighton and the Southern Midlands, and a western council encompassing the Derwent Valley and the Central Highlands.
- **Scenario 4-** Establishing three councils: a northern council capturing the Meander Valley, **Northern Midlands (minus Perth, Longford and Evandale)**, and the northern Central Plateau region; a south-western council incorporating the Derwent Valley and south-west of the Central Highlands; and a south-eastern council reaching into the Central Highlands.

The Tamar Valley Community Catchment Information Pack proposes:

- Scenario 1- Establishing one council area that incorporates West Tamar, George Town, and Launceston as well as commuting areas of Prospect Vale and Blackstone Heights.
- Scenario 2- Establishing one council area that incorporates West Tamar and Launceston but not including Lebrina.
- **Scenario 3-** Establishing **one council** area comprising the existing **West Tamar, George Town, and Launceston** LGAs, extended **to include** the commuting areas of Hadspen, Carrick, **Longford, Perth, Evandale, and immediate surrounds**.
- Scenario 4- Establishing one council area that incorporates West Tamar, George Town, and Launceston and extends west to Meander Valley (minus south-west SA1 around Lake Rowallan) but excludes the southern commuting towns of Evandale, Perth, and Longford.

Of the above Tamar Valley Community Catchment scenarios, it would appear Scenario 3 is the only one directly impacting on NMC present day boundaries, resulting in a loss of Longford, Perth, Evandale, TRANSlInk Industrial area at Western Junction and immediate surrounds to the future Tamar Valley LGA.

During initial consultation with the community, it appeared the community had little to no knowledge or understanding of the Review. In July 2023, NMC commenced an extensive information campaign for the municipality which outlined details of the Review, its 26 June 2023 decision and the rationale for that decision. This information campaign included media releases, press conference, talk back radio, media advertising, letter drops, social media saturation and local district community meetings.

NMC also engaged an independent marketing research firm to conduct community feedback surveys. The surveys were conducted between 17 – 29 July 2023. The results of the survey are expected to be received on 4 August 2023 and will be incorporated in NMC's verbal presentation to the Board at the community hearing on 10 August 2023.

3 NMC POSITION

On 26 June 2023, elected representatives resolved as follows:

MINUTE NO. 23/0206

DECISION

Cr Goss/Cr Brooks

That the Northern Midlands Council (NMC) rejects all the scenarios presented in the Local Government Review as they pertain to the existing boundaries of the NMC.

Carried Unanimously

Voting for the Motion:

Mayor Knowles, Deputy Mayor Lambert, Cr Adams, Cr Andrews, Cr Archer, Cr Brooks, Cr Goss, Cr McCullagh and Cr Terrett

Voting Against the Motion:

Nil

NMC opposes change to its boundaries or the loss of townships in Longford, Perth, Evandale, Western Junction, TRANSlink Industrial Hub and the surrounding areas. NMC considers these townships identify more strongly with, and perform as service hubs for, their more rural hinterland compared to the metropolitan area of Launceston.

NMC's responses to the Board's structural reform principles are as follows:

- 1 Be resolutely focused on future community needs (and not just tied to council's existing structures and current priorities)- As outlined further below, NMC has been at the forefront planning for and anticipation of future community needs, including a number of capital works projects, disaster recovery plans, strategies and strategic plans which will continue to provide for the needs of the community.
- 2 Retaining jobs and service presence locally- it is submitted proposed reforms will not impact on this criteria as staff retention is an issue broader than the local government sector. NMC seeks to employ staff locally where possible. Along with elected members, local staff know the local issues. Council has employee benefit expenses of **\$5.8 million**, representing 88 employees (74 full-time equivalent).

The Northern Midlands Business Association (**NMBA**) also plays a role in retention of jobs and services locally. The NMBA's vision of the Northern Midlands region is to be the most connected, resilient, and innovative business community in Tasmania. NMBA's stated purpose is to use its local knowledge, influence, and connections to the Northern Midlands business community continues to thrive and grow. The NMBA has 600+ registered members who it provides products and initiatives to. NMBA's major objectives are to collaborate with Council to foster economic activity in the Northern Midlands; enhance the environment for economic development in the Northern Midlands; promote collaboration between the NMBA, local businesses, agencies and organisations to facilitate economic development in the Northern Midlands; and to increase the profile of the NMBA.

REMPAN Economy states that in 2023, Northern Midlands supports 5,991 jobs and has an annual economic output of \$2.095 billion. Agriculture, forestry, and fishing are the Northern Midlands' largest employment sectors, supporting an estimated 1,134 jobs; followed by manufacturing which supports 782 jobs; construction is estimated to support 630 jobs; healthcare and social assistance 536 jobs; transport, postal and warehousing 526 jobs; wholesale trading 505 jobs; and retail trading 434 jobs. Many of the manufacturing and construction jobs are based in the thriving TRANSlink commercial, industrial and logistics precinct adjacent to the Airport at Western Junction.

- 3 Preserving and enhancing local voice- it is submitted NMC already effectively provides for local voice, including via Local District Committees, and via partnerships, including the Northern Midlands Economic Development Association, NMBA and Heritage Highway Association, as outlined further below.
- 4 Be supported by fair funding models that smooth financial impacts for communities- Council maintains a differential rating system to smooth valuation shocks in land use categories. Council has stable grant funding levels and has excellent asset condition ratios.

- 5 Be supported by dedicated and appropriate resourcing for the transition – not applicable as NMC does not support amalgamation.

NMC's responses to the Board's criteria for the Review are as follows:

- 1 Place and Representation – NMC's nine elected members have a close connection to the community and all areas are strongly represented across the municipal area.

Northern Midlands has a vast and rich historical heritage, including a large number of heritage listed infrastructure (Ross Bridge), buildings and villages (Ross, Evandale), including two UNESCO World Heritage Convict Sites (Brickendon and Woolmers Estates), in the municipality. NMC nurtures its heritage environment, cherishing and sustaining our landscapes while preserving and protecting our built heritage for the future. Our heritage villages and towns are high value assets. NMC's Heritage Incentive Scheme provides an incentive to improve the streetscape views of properties that are in heritage precincts, or heritage listed; and our Planning Scheme provides protections and instils these values through Local Provision Schedules.

The Review does not take into account the historic and cultural connections between NMC's townships, villages and rural communities which are integral to the current social capital and sense of belonging which if amalgamations occurred would be impacted.

Northern Midlands actively promotes its liveability and strong agricultural and industrial economic benefits to those that wish to live, visit, play, undertake business or just come to enjoy niche retail business and participate in recreational activities such as fishing, cycling, canoeing/kayaking and snow sports in our pristine natural environment.

- 2 Future Needs and Priorities – Council is well equipped to meet the future needs and priorities of its community. Council recognises the increasing importance of climate change on the community, with emphasis being on allocation of funds, or seeking grant funding assistance to further protect the community from flooding, protection of strategic infrastructure assets, as well as incorporating climate change in local planning regulations and assessments.

In the areas of health and wellbeing, NMC is active in providing excellent active and passive recreation facilities, including but not limited to three municipal pools, gym facilities, youth programs, walking/cycling pathways and access to pristine rivers to pursue leisure activities. NMC has also recently completed the Perth Early Learning Centre, having recognised a greater need for childcare in the municipality. Council actively advocates for the health needs of the community, including sourcing a general practitioner for the local residents in the Evandale area. Council is also lobbying for a Northern Midlands Community House at Longford to service those in need within the area.

Volunteers are important to NMC and are supported by working with community organisations to assist Council to be responsive to community needs.

- 3 Financial Sustainability- NMC is in a strong financial position to continue to deliver on community assets. NMC has a balanced long-term operating budget, cash to cover commitments/liabilities, and a capital works budget to expand and maintain infrastructure assets into the future. This is further addressed **below**.
- 4 Operational Capability- Council has proven over several years that it has the operating capacity to deliver and plan for major projects, such as the improvements to the majority of the recreation grounds in the municipality, development and upgrades to the Longford Recreation Grounds and Sports Centre, establishment of the Ross Village Green, construction of a purpose built multi-purpose regional recreation facility in Campbell Town, the Perth Early Learning Centre, Cressy Memorial Pool upgrades, stormwater planning and implementation in the Sheepwash Creek area and Longford Memorial Hall upgrades.

4 ANALYSIS AND RESPONSE

Community Connection and Representation

The Northern Midlands' is an enviable place to visit, work and live. People choose to live and work in the Northern Midlands because of the sense of pride of place and the space for participation in events such as rural shows, village fairs, the Penny Farthing races and New Years Day country race picnics.

There are concerns that if any of the proposed scenarios are implemented by the State Government, this would detrimentally impact on the Northern Midlands community identity.

NMC and the community also hold concerns about local representation being weakened or lost entirely, with the municipality losing its identity if amalgamations were to occur.

Council values and promotes community engagement and participation via NMC's District Forums/Committees across the municipality, including:

- Longford Local District Committee;
- Cressy Local District Committee;
- Evandale Advisory Committee;
- Perth Local District Committee;
- Campbell Town District Forum;
- Ross Local District Committee; and
- Avoca, Royal George and Rossarden Local District Committee.

The Local District Committee's play an important role for NMC, including provision of a focal point for information between the Council and the local community, to identify and prioritise the needs of the local community and to consider and provide feedback to Council in respect of key strategic issues for the local community. The Local District Forums/Committees promote community involvement and participation in Council functions.

NMC's Local District Forums/Committees have expressed concerns that any amalgamations may result in the loss of this important role, along with a loss of the community identity.

Infrastructure

Community infrastructure is recognised as the cornerstone of regional prosperity. Infrastructure creates jobs, enables sustainable growth, protects the environment, and fosters a thriving community by bringing people and business together.

Council recognises that too often infrastructure projects are planned and delivered in isolation, leading to unnecessary disruption to the community, inefficient delivery, and overall lack of coordination. To combat this, NMC has developed an Integrated Priority Projects Plan 2021 (**IPPP 2021**), which takes a fresh approach to infrastructure planning, using an integrated method to align with local, regional, state and federal plans. The investments identified in the IPPP 2021 will help to ensure NMC remains an enviable place to live, work and play.

NMC has a demonstrated history of maintaining and improving its infrastructure and assets.

Council's ratios for Buildings, Roads, Bridges, and Drainage have consistently over a four year period been above the established benchmark of 60%, indicating an appropriate level of investment in renewal of these asset classes.

In the past 5 years Council has purchased/constructed \$42 million of new and renewed infrastructure, including community facilities as follows:

- Campbell Town Recreation Ground Complex **\$5m**
- Cressy Swimming Pool & Cressy Recreation Ground upgrades **\$2.7m**
- Evandale Recreation Ground upgrades **\$1.1m**
- Longford Recreation Ground complex and Sports Centre/Gym upgrades **\$5.4m**
- Construction of an Early Learning Centre at Perth **\$4.2m**
- Ross Village Green establishment **\$1.1m**.

NMC's 2023/24 Budget is financially strategic and ensures it has money for the things the municipality needs. NMC's major projects for the next 12 months are:

- Extension and refurbishment of the Longford Memorial Hall **\$4.0m**;
- Commence Main Street Improvement works of Campbell Town, Longford and Perth **\$5.8m**, (in addition to the \$8m commitment of the Labor federal government towards the continued improvement to the Campbell Town and Perth main streets);
- Replacement/upgrade of 3 concrete bridges on Liffey Road, Jones Road and Blackwood Creek Road after October 2022 flood damage **\$1.1m**;
- Reconstruction of sections of Bishopsbourne Road near Toiberry rail crossing, and Ashby Road at Ross **\$1.0m**;
- Development of a new public reserve at the corner of Laycock/Pultney/Wellington Streets at Longford **\$0.5m**;
- Continuation of the urban street footpath program (Campbell Town, Cressy, Longford, Perth & Ross) **\$0.9m**;
- Construction of new amenities at the Longford Caravan Park **\$0.45m**;
- Road reconstruction, kerb and footpath for Youl Main Road, Perth **\$0.35m**;
- Provision of an entrance statement on the Illawarra Road roundabout to Longford **\$0.2m**;
- Playground Equipment upgrades at the Train Park at Perth, Pioneer Park at Evandale, and Bartholomew Park at Cressy **\$0.5m**; and
- Provision of larger street bins and purchase of a small waste compactor vehicle **\$0.3m**.

Urban Growth

Northern Midlands enjoys a balanced mix of industrial, business, agricultural, community, environmental and residential zones.

Northern Midlands is growing rapidly and is attractive to residents who want the benefits of a residential/rural lifestyle while still being within commuting distance of a larger urban area.

Northern Midlands has a number of recognised future urban growth areas, including in South and West Perth, South Longford, and North and East Evandale.

The following is a summary of planning and building applications approved, indicative of anticipated future growth in the municipality:

Financial Year	Planning				Building
	Single Residential	Multiple Residential	Subdivisions	New Lots Approved	New Dwellings Approved
2020/21	48	42	27	27	135
2021/22	36	92	37	91	114
2022/23	48	31	34	203	93
Total	132	165	98	321	342

Of the above data, the subdivisions include larger scale developments across a variety of zoning and lot sizes, including but not limited to a 116-lot 19.14ha subdivision on Napoleon Street, West Perth (including a new municipal park and stormwater detention area), a 17-lot 1.23ha subdivision at Laycock Street, Longford (including new municipal park), a 44-lot 6.254ha subdivision on Marlborough Street, South Longford, a 28-lot 1.763ha subdivision on Catherine Street, South Longford and a 26-lot 23.3ha subdivision on Haggerston Road, Perth. The variety of lot-sizes and zoning will cater for a wide variety of residential needs, including first home buyers, family homes, homes in more rural settings with larger lot sizes and downsizers.

Council is also aware of proposed planning applications from developers which are yet to be lodged involving large scale subdivision and development, including a 200-lot subdivision on Logan Road, Evandale, and a 110-lot subdivision at Cambock Lane/Barclay Street, Evandale.

In response to expected growth within the Perth area, consultants were engaged to prepare the Perth Structure Plan, including an Outline Development Plan for two strategic areas of the South Perth emerging community area, being a 60ha large greenfield site located south of Drummond Street, and future urban zoned land within the western part of Perth.

Commercial and industrial growth in Northern Midlands is also projected to expand in the TRANSlink Industrial area of Western Junction. Council has received a funding commitment of \$5million from the Federal Government for the planning process of an Intermodal Facility, with further funding commitment of \$30million for the implementation and delivery of infrastructure for that development. Furthermore, Council has recently approved planning applications for the expansion of the existing Translink Avenue industrial area, including a 41-lot 33.32ha subdivision to the southern end of Translink Avenue, and a 29-lot 13.41ha subdivision joining the northern and southern ends of Translink Avenue.

Furthermore, NMC has a number of renewable energy planning applications including the Northern Midlands Solar Farm and the Great Lakes Battery Projects.

- The Solar Farm is expected to benefit the Northern Midlands by delivering a clean source of energy generation (288MW) and reach Tasmania's renewable energy targets, creation of approximately 300 direct construction jobs and 10-15 direct ongoing jobs, powering approximately 45,000 Tasmanian homes, contributing to reduced electricity prices, continued agricultural use of the land through 'agrisolar' and increase in Council land rates for the solar farm area.
- The Great Lakes Battery Project to be located within the municipality near Poatina is anticipated to benefit the municipality by creating construction jobs over an approximate 18 month period, boosting accommodation needs during the construction period, increased spending in local businesses within the region during the construction period, boosting tourism in the municipality as Tasmania's first utility-scale battery and educational opportunities (e.g. school excursions, presentation) the proponent will be part of. There are financial benefits anticipated to the region.

Northern Midlands has a strong agricultural presence, with irrigation schemes providing for more intensive agricultural production. This is anticipated to expand with a further planning application for the Northern Midlands Irrigation Scheme having recently been approved, which is expected to provide high-surety irrigation water to horticultural, viticultural, orchard and other high value uses in the Macquarie, Barton, Conara, Campbell Town, Ross and Lower Isis Valley areas of Northern Midlands.

NMC is one of seven Council Members of the Northern Tasmania Development Corporation (**NTDC**). The NTDC seeks to facilitate significant improvement in prosperity in North and North-Eastern Tasmania. There is a commitment to collaborative, innovative and sustainable economic growth in the region, including strategic planning. Council's, facilitated by NTDC, have been key in enabling projects such as the Northern Tasmanian Residential Demand and Supply Study, that will inform the upcoming review of the Northern Regional Land Use Strategy. NMC is committed to this process and improving the strategy and policy basis to facilitate and manage change, growth, and development. As active members of NTDC the Mayor and General Manager have travelled to Canberra with other NTDC members to successfully lobby for funding for major Northern Tasmanian infrastructure projects such as the Bell Bay hydrogen project \$120 million, UTAS Stadium upgrade \$65 million and \$35 million for NMC's TRANSlink Intermodal Facility project.

NMC's IPPP 2021 provides for a number of foundation projects and enabling projects covering recreation, community, transport and subdivisions and related infrastructure. These projects are anticipated to provide for and meet anticipated future community needs due to growth. Projects include Perth Sports Precinct and Community Centre, Recreation Ground upgrades (Cressy, Morven Park), shared pathways and road upgrades at Illawarra Road and Evandale Main Road, Sheepwash Creek Corridor for stormwater planning and open spaces, TRANSlink Intermodal Facility and Perth South Esk River Parklands to name a few. This is indicative of Council's capacity to anticipate, plan, fund and to provide for future community needs.

Financially Sustainable

NMC has the following:

- Underlying Surplus Ratio **9%** (4.4% calculated by Consolidated Data Collection)
- Operating Revenue **\$22.8 million** – including Rate Revenue \$12 million (7,460 rateable properties)
- Cash & Investments **\$26 million** (Non-interest bearing borrowings \$4.05 million)
- Property, Infrastructure, plant & equipment **\$535 million** (written down value of \$390 million).

NMC has adopted a strategic approach to the renewal and replacement of community assets and infrastructure and has completed many projects by applying for and successfully receiving many external funding grants. For example, recent funding successes include:


- An application to the Federal Government to jointly fund a \$3,732,014 project to improve stormwater infrastructure in western Perth along Sheepwash Creek. Without the Federal Government’s grant contribution of \$1,868,500, the community would have needed to fund these vital community infrastructure works in their entirety.
- As stated above, a further success story is the successful lobbying of the Labor Federal Government for a \$5million commitment to commence the planning process for the proposed TRANSlInk Intermodal Facility, and the commitment of a further \$30million to deliver enabling infrastructure to the site once the planning work is completed.
- Funding for upgrades to Perth and Campbell Town streetscapes of \$8million.


NMC’s demonstrated history in successfully pursuing and receiving external grant funding and delivery of projects is indicative of NMC’s ability to foreshadow and provide for the community’s needs in a timely manner. NMC holds concerns that if it was required to merge into a larger municipal area, opportunities tied to grant funding may be lost which will ultimately negatively impact our community. Further, the impact of amalgamations on existing grants already received has not been canvassed and there is a risk of changes to a council’s financial status resulting in a loss of grant funding due to ineligibility.


Response to Proposed Scenarios


TRANSlInk Industrial area is a strategically located industrial and business hub servicing many of the North’s multi-million dollar industries, and large source of NMC’s industrial and business sectors. Council’s plans to further enhance this precinct through the proposed multi-million dollar logistics hub at the Intermodal Facility is further evidence of Councils commitment to the commercial and industrial growth of the municipality. The confidence of the business sector is evidenced in the continued demand for commercial space and the continued growth of TRANSlInk Industrial area at Western Junction.


Any loss of the TRANSlInk Industrial and surrounding Western Junction area is vehemently opposed as it would result in greater financial burden being placed onto rural landowners and residential ratepayers. This area is vital to the financial wellbeing of the municipality, representing a large part of the industrial and business sectors and rates base. NMC has worked hard to develop this area and grow this part of its local economy, with income being allocated to local community. If this area was removed from NMC, the benefits would be lost to a larger entity and may not be reinvested in the local community.


Central and Midlands Community Catchment	
<p>Scenario 1</p> <p><i>Establishing two separate councils to the north and south.</i></p>	
<p>Advantages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides a larger rate base, with larger urban areas subsidising rural areas more • Emergency/Recovery resources would have greater depth of service and resources • Potential combination of service centres for future efficiencies and consistency of service • Potential to expand and implement shared services which could provide future efficiencies and consistency of service 	<p>Disadvantages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of Longford, Perth, the TRANSlInk Industrial Hub at Western Junction, Evandale and surrounds. This will have a flow on effect from a sustainability perspective for the balance of the existing Northern Midlands municipality in any new Central and Midland council • Communities of NMC are largely opposed to amalgamation with Launceston • Loss of local representation, voice and identity

Central and Midlands Community Catchment	
<p>Scenario 1</p> <p><i>Establishing two separate councils to the north and south.</i></p>	
Advantages	Disadvantages
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of recognition of rural communities in a large council area and small communities may receive lower levels of service, or be neglected • Competing priorities between existing councils and how they will be managed in any amalgamation • Increased municipal areas and a loss of council offices and depots may result in additional travel times and loss of efficiency • Council B will have a large geographical area to service and cover, e.g. roads – increase from 960km to 1,914.8km • Council B would have a smaller rates and population base, as well as significant areas of low growth or population decline • Council B will have an older population mostly in smaller towns • Proposed council hubs in “Council B” are in Westbury and Bothwell – what will happen to NMC existing office and depots? • Rates approaches vary in the catchment and would need to be considered in any transition • Impact on rating systems, governance and funding models for the remote and sparsely populated highland communities may be required • Anticipated increase in rates payments and flow on effect, including the need for an equitable and consistent rating approach • Consideration of three existing Enterprise Agreements and the negotiation/creation of a new one for the new council • Consideration of Council’s net financial positions including assets and debts to be considered in transitional plan – no data has been provided • Potential loss of staff and corporate knowledge
<p>Are there any adjustments that could be made to maximise the strengths and minimise the weaknesses?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusion of Northern Midlands townships of Evandale, Perth, Longford, TRANSlink Industrial Hub and surrounding areas in the Northern Midlands municipality and Meander Valley’s areas of Blackstone Heights, Prospect Vale, Carrick and Hadspen areas would not result in a population reduction of approximately 8,000 residents in important industrial and residential areas. The needs of these areas are more commensurate and better provided for by the Northern Midlands than with a metropolitan municipal area proposed in the Tamar Valley. 	

Central and Midlands Community Catchment	
Scenario 2 <i>Establishing a single Central and Midlands Council.</i>	
	
Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Represents a significant portion of rural Tasmania • Provides a larger rate base, with larger urban areas subsidising rural areas more • Emergency/Recovery resources would have greater depth of service and resources • Potential combination of service centres for future efficiencies and consistency of service • Potential to expand and implement shared services which could provide future efficiencies and consistency of service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large geographic area and dispersed community to service • Balancing the needs of the fast-growing urban communities in the south of the Catchment with rural communities further north • A need for a clear strategy of retaining jobs and teams across the region to maintain local employment and knowledge and provide community members with ready access to council services • Consider the need for existing regional structures for resources and how to best adapt and integrate systems across six existing councils • Loss of Longford, Perth, the TRANSlink Industrial Hub at Western Junction, Evandale and surrounds. This will have a flow on effect from a sustainability perspective for the balance of the existing Northern Midlands municipality in any new Central and Midland council • Communities of NMC are largely opposed to amalgamation with Launceston • Loss of local representation, voice and identity • Lack of recognition of rural communities in a large council area and small communities may receive lower levels of service, or be neglected • Competing priorities between existing councils and how they will be managed in any amalgamation • Increased municipal areas and a loss of council offices and depots may result in additional travel times and loss of efficiency • A large geographical area to service and cover, e.g. roads – increase from 960km to 3,394km • Rates approaches vary in the catchment and would need to be considered in any transition • Impact on rating systems, governance and funding models for the remote and sparsely populated highland communities may be required • Anticipated increase in rates payments and flow on effect, including the need for an equitable and consistent rating approach • Consideration of six existing Enterprise Agreements and the negotiation/creation of a new one for the new council • Potential loss of staff and corporate knowledge
Are there any adjustments that could be made to maximise the strengths and minimise the weaknesses?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusion of Northern Midlands townships of Evandale, Perth, Longford, TRANSlink Industrial Hub and surrounding areas in the Northern Midlands municipality and Meander Valley's areas of Blackstone Heights, Prospect Vale, Carrick and Hadspen areas would not result in a population reduction of approximately 8,000 residents in important industrial and residential areas. The needs of these areas are more commensurate and better provided for by the Northern Midlands than with a metropolitan municipal area proposed in the Tamar Valley. 	

Central and Midlands Community Catchment	
<p>Scenario 3</p> <p><i>Establishing three councils – a northern council encompassing the Meander Valley and Northern Midlands, a southern council encompassing Brighton and the Southern Midlands, and a western council encompassing the Derwent Valley and the Central Highlands</i></p>	
	
Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes the townships of Evandale, Perth, Longford, TRANSlink industrial area and surrounding areas • Provides a larger rate base, with larger urban areas subsidising rural areas more • Emergency/Recovery resources would have greater depth of service and resources • Potential combination of service centres for future efficiencies and consistency of service • Potential to expand and implement shared services which could provide future efficiencies and consistency of service • This scenario involves less change to council structures than other scenarios, the transition costs would be expected to be lower 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of Blackstone Heights and Prospect Vale – key industrial and residential areas for Meander Valley • Loss of local representation, voice and identity • Lack of recognition of rural communities in a large council area and small communities may receive lower levels of service, or be neglected • Competing priorities between existing councils and how they will be managed in any amalgamation • Increased municipal areas and a loss of council offices and depots may result in additional travel times and loss of efficiency • Council A will have a large geographical area to service and cover, e.g. roads – increase from 960km to 1,720.3km • Rates approaches vary in the catchment and would need to be considered in any transition • Impact on rating systems, governance and funding models for the remote and sparsely populated highland communities may be required • Consideration of two existing Enterprise Agreements and the negotiation/creation of a new one for the new councils • Potential loss of staff and corporate knowledge
<p>Are there any adjustments that could be made to maximise the strengths and minimise the weaknesses?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusion of Prospect Vale and Blackstone Heights would not result in a population reduction in important industrial and residential areas. The needs of these areas may be more commensurate and better provided for by inclusion with their existing LGA of Meander Valley than with a metropolitan municipal council of Launceston. 	

Central and Midlands Community Catchment	
<p>Scenario 4</p> <p><i>Establishing three councils: a northern council capturing the Meander Valley, Northern Midlands and the northern Central Plateau region; a south-western council incorporating the Derwent Valley and south-west of the Central Highlands; and a south-eastern council reaching into the Central Highlands.</i></p>	
	
Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides a larger rate base, with larger urban areas subsidising rural areas more • Emergency/Recovery resources would have greater depth of service and resources • Potential combination of service centres for future efficiencies • Potential to expand and implement shared services which could provide future efficiencies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large population base – estimated at 122,000 • Potential difficulty in retaining jobs and teams across the region, including a loss of corporate knowledge and skills • Loss of Longford, Perth, the TRANSlInk Industrial Hub at Western Junction, Evandale and surrounds. This will have a flow on effect from a sustainability perspective for the balance of the existing Northern Midlands municipality in any new Central and Midland council • Communities of NMC are largely opposed to amalgamation with Launceston • Loss of local representation, voice and identity • Lack of recognition of rural communities in a large council area and small communities may receive lower levels of service, or be neglected • Competing priorities between existing councils and how they will be managed in any amalgamation • Increased municipal areas and a loss of council offices and depots may result in additional travel times and loss of efficiency • Council A will have a large geographical area to service and cover, e.g. roads – increase from 960km to 1,904.8km • Rates approaches vary in the catchment and would need to be considered in any transition • Anticipated increase in rates payments and flow on effect, including the need for an equitable and consistent rating approach • Impact on rating systems, governance and funding models for the remote and sparsely populated highland communities may be required • Consideration of three existing Enterprise Agreements and the negotiation/creation of a new one for the new council
<p>Are there any adjustments that could be made to maximise the strengths and minimise the weaknesses?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusion of Northern Midlands townships of Evandale, Perth, Longford, TRANSlInk Industrial Hub and surrounding areas in the Northern Midlands municipality and Meander Valley’s areas of Blackstone Heights, Prospect Vale, Carrick and Hadspen areas would not result in a population reduction of approximately 8,000 residents in important industrial and residential areas. The needs of these areas are more commensurate and better provided for by the Northern Midlands than with a metropolitan municipal area proposed in the Tamar Valley. 	

Tamar Valley Community Catchment	
Scenario 3 <i>Establishing one council area comprising the existing West Tamar, George Town and Launceston LGAs, extended to include the commuting areas of Hadspen, Carrick, Longford, Perth, Evandale and immediate surrounds</i>	
	
Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides a larger rate base, with larger urban areas subsidising rural areas more • Emergency/Recovery resources would have greater depth of service and resources • Potential combination of service centres for future efficiencies and consistency of service • Potential to expand and implement shared services which could provide future efficiencies and consistency of service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of Longford, Perth, the TRANSlink Industrial Hub at Western Junction, Evandale and surrounds. This will have a flow on effect from a sustainability perspective for the balance of the existing Northern Midlands municipality in any new Central and Midland council • The impact from a sustainability perspective associated with this scenario and the loss of the above key population areas on any future council in the Central and Midlands, which would include the balance of the Northern Midlands. • Large population base – estimated at 122,000 • Anticipated increase in rates payments to those of City of Launceston and the flow on effect, including the need for an equitable and consistent rating approach • Potential difficulty in retaining jobs and teams across the region, including a loss of corporate knowledge and skills • Loss of local voice, representation and engagement due to one large council • Impact on existing service sharing agreements • Communities of NMC are largely opposed to amalgamation with Launceston • Lack of recognition of rural communities in a large council area and small communities may receive lower levels of service, or be neglected if amalgamated • Potential loss of council offices and depots would result in increased travel time and loss of efficiency • What will happen to existing NMC Chambers and Depots?
Are there any adjustments that could be made to maximise the strengths and minimise the weaknesses?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exclusion of the Northern Midlands townships of Evandale, Perth, Longford, TRANSlink Industrial Hub and surrounding areas in the Northern Midlands municipality and Meander Valley’s areas of Blackstone Heights, Prospect Vale, Carrick and Hadspen areas into the proposed new Tamar Valley council would not result in a population reduction of approximately 8,000 residents in important industrial and residential areas of NMC and Meander Valley. The needs of these areas are more commensurate and better provided for by the Northern Midlands/Meander Valley than with a metropolitan municipal area proposed in the Tamar Valley 	

Concerns

NMC continues to hold concerns regarding the City of Launceston’s proposal to adjust municipal boundaries such that the Airport and surrounding TRANSlink industrial areas are incorporated into any future Tamar Valley council. This is opposed for the preceding reasons.

NMC holds concerns about the lack of information/data and business plans in support of local government reform from the Board. This impacts the ability of all councils to make fully informed decisions for the future of their local government area.

Financial information has not been provided by the Board supporting the need for council amalgamation or demonstrate how economies of scale would positively impact residents and result in costs savings. Furthermore, the Board has not provided councils with information regarding implementation of reform options, including costs estimates for implementation of any reform, advice as to who will bear the financial burden of amalgamations, timeframe for reform implementation, support to be offered throughout that process.

NMC does not support any of the reforms proposed or changes to its municipal boundaries, and does not agree that its residents should in any way bear the financial burden of implementing change.

6 ALTERNATE REFORM OPTIONS

If the State Government was to change its position on the announcement of not forcing amalgamations or boundary adjustments throughout this process and forced amalgamations were proposed, NMC's position regarding the proposed scenarios in the Information Packs remains unchanged. However, while not NMC's preferred position, it would consider amalgamation with Meander Valley on the basis both LGAs retain all of their existing municipal areas – that is Longford, Perth, Evandale, TRANSlink, Prospect Vale, Blackstone Heights, Carrick and Hadspen.

This consideration is on the basis of Meander Valley having a similar geography to Northern Midlands (part urban, part rural/agricultural) and similar community of interest. NMC and Meander Valley have a history of shared service arrangements in place. There are continued opportunities for resource sharing across the two councils and, in this way, all the current assets, strategic plans, corporate knowledge, staff and strong financial position would be retained.

Council recognises there is a long-established increasing need to do more with less. Sharing services would enable councils to do this by reducing duplication of effort, resources and expenditure. Shared services are not new and can bring financial benefits to councils while potentially improving customer service.

NMC is open to consideration of shared service arrangements upon additional information being provided from the Board, including but not limited to what services are to be shared, whether that is a statewide or regional arrangement, whether it is voluntary or mandatory, financial implications of any shared services arrangements and the governance arrangements around them.

7 CONCLUSION

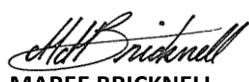
Northern Midlands elected members and the executive team are of the view that the future of the NMC is prosperous, sustainable and well placed to provide for, and meet the needs of the community now and into the future. There are few benefits identified through proposed amalgamations.

NMC is open to further consideration of shared services models upon receipt of further information being received.

NMC opposes all scenarios proposed by the Board in the Information Packs. It does not support any forced amalgamation or boundary adjustments throughout the Review process. NMC does not support any voluntary merger with other council(s), wishing to protect its boundaries and for the boundaries to remain as they presently are.

Thank you for your consideration of NMC's submission.

Yours sincerely



MAREE BRICKNELL
ACTING GENERAL MANAGER