

David Dunn



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To: submissions.lgboard@dpac.tas.gov.au

I am writing to you as a resident and ratepayer of the Flinders Council area.

Flinders Council area is currently a “stand alone” council area and must remain so.

Due to its isolation, the Flinders Council provides many services to its relatively small community (less than 1000 people) that are outside the experience, expertise or interest of larger mainland Tasmanian councils. Flinders Island would be totally neglected if any amalgamation occurred; this would result in dysfunctional services and steady withering of the significant contribution that Flinders Island makes to the Tasmanian economy in agriculture, fishing and tourism, i.e. an all-round retrograde move!

As examples, the Flinders Council maintains the airport (a vital daily passenger and freight link to the mainland), the Council ensures continuity of shipping from North East Tasmania (essential for groceries, bulk supplies and commercial exchange with the mainland) and also to/from Port Welshpool in Victoria. Also, in addition to councils’ standard remit of “roads, rates and rubbish”, the Flinders Council maintains numerous community services (which can be seen on its website) that provides an environment for employment, prosperity and growth within the community but would undoubtedly be mismanaged or neglected by a larger mainland council. Without doubt, a council amalgamation would result in a less vibrant and prosperous community.

The Flinders Council area makes a significant contribution to the Tasmanian economy. Under proportional representation, Flinders Island Council area with its relatively small population would have little to no voice if amalgamated with a larger council and its unique needs would be neglected. Under such an arrangement, residents would simply be subsidising another council’s priorities to the detriment of services essential to the ongoing prosperity of Flinders Island Council area.

The concept of sharing some services amongst two or more councils certainly has merit and is, I understand, being investigated by Flinders Council. Due to its isolation, I believe that this should be limited to administrative tasks that would benefit from “economies of scale”.

However the shared services concept does not apply to the government’s proposal to eliminate local community input from planning decisions. This proposal is certainly undemocratic as is the government’s proposal to ban the right to protest against unsuitable developments – this is hardly “ensuring that all Tasmanians have a strong voice in decisions being made on their behalf” (to quote the Information Pack).

Forced amalgamations have failed in other states, especially when the government tries to “shoe horn” a small but unique council into a larger one. If the Government unilaterally forces such an amalgamation on Flinders Council, it will find it necessary to undo that bad decision in the near future.