

Local Government Review, Stage 3 comments.

I congratulate the board on the work done on putting this review together.

I was sceptical at first, believing it was just another local government review destined for the too hard basket.

I think what you have put out in this document is very well reasoned, researched and put together. It provides a basis on which some proper discussion about the future of Local Government can be held and any resulting changes can be implemented knowing they are based on a logical well thought through process.

So, well done to you all.

I am not sure what you expect in the stage 3 submissions. So with the exception of the comments below, I will continue to monitor what comes out and will be interested to see what the state government does with your review. The Minister is talking tough at the moment but I have seen it all before and what really happens will be interesting to observe.

Planning:

I support not taking planning from the local government sphere.

What a bureaucratic horror show a state based planning authority would be. The big developers would love it if course as they would only have to deal with one body, but apart from that lot, who get pretty well everything they want anyway, I suspect the ordinary person would find it a bureaucratic nightmare to deal with.

The suggestions you make re this issue , Reforms 2 and 3 on P11 of the Interim Report Summary, make sense to me.

Boundary Changes:

As far as boundary changes are concerned perhaps the only entities that might agree to change are those that believe they are benefitting. Sadly this could mean that the biggest council in any of the possible new areas will, in their view, assume they are being expanded, can subsume whatever comes in and carry on as normal with the added bonus of more rate income to spend and not perceiving a need to be part of the beginning of a new entity.

Overcoming this is a challenge, perhaps outside of your remit, but how do you get a dominant council to accept it is not about them and they are just as responsible as any of the other organisations being included, in full or part, in evolving a new sense of place.

In my stage 2 submission I suggested a ward or electorate system should be put in place, to ensure equal representation from all parts of a new body can be achieved. This need not be forever but perhaps for 2 or 3 election cycles until there is confidence in the new council body.

I am not sure what is planned as far as naming any new council areas that may be created. I suggest that a completely new name is given to new identities. This may help overcome the notion of taking over or being taken over.

In my area for example should the Tamar Valley councils be joined in some form, please don't call it the Launceston City Council or City of Launceston. That thought alone scares me. Boring old Tamar Valley Council, perhaps even the Kanamaluka Council would help achieve some sort of neutrality for the new entity. A geographic City of Launceston could still exist within the larger boundary.

It is already evident that very little will be conceded by existing councils that are proposed to be consumed by one or more other entities or having parts of their current area siphoned off. To have the 29 councils think about their future in terms of a blank sheet approach will be challenging at least. In my view it is more likely the only way new entities will come into being is via legislation.

I think from now the nitty gritty detail will need to unfold and it is not for me to comment on where boundaries should be for local government areas about which I have little knowledge.

I will however comment on my area where I have lived and worked pretty much all my adult life and with somewhat a heavy heart, perhaps the time has come to come to create a Tamar Valley (Kanamaluka?) council. (Declaration time, I worked at the West Tamar Council for a long time but have been retired for several years. I keep up with the goings on at councils . To me it was a bit like playing sport, you respect your opposition (read the LCC) but don't really have to like them.

I suppose it has always been a logical path to pursue, but The LCC as the dominant council has always been seen as a threat to the other 2 councils. The WTC has been a well run organisation for some time now (which unfortunately, since the last elections, some are doing their best to undo) and I think because of that they were always able to resist any talk of amalgamation. Georgetown was always perceived as a bit of a basket case that no one wanted to work with or so called take over, but in recent times their performance has improved.

So in a way the creation of a Tamar Valley Council could have the potential to be a very vibrant and well run organisation but importantly have the capacity to meet all the demands the state is imposing pretty much on their own. Similarly it is not so big geographically and the non urban areas should be able to be properly serviced, especially if an electorate system is put in place to ensure elected member representation is not dominated by the urban sectors.

From what I can see this concept would have serious implications on councils such as Meander Valley and perhaps Northern Midlands and therefore the council areas bordering them. It might not be that easy but with a clean sheet approach it needs to be further investigated.

Thank you

David Gibbins

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