



Subject:
Date:



Forced Council Amalgamations
Thursday, 6 July 2023 6:09:15 PM

Chair LG Board

Submissions.LGBoard@dpac.tas.gov.au

Re Forced Council Amalgamations

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission on the proposed Council amalgamations.

Please ensure this is personally read to the Board and not hidden in a summary document.

We are rate payer in the Central Highlands Council due to our residence being at Shannon in the Lakes area (Central Plateau). I have read the information provided about the proposed amalgamations and have attended public meetings. I am not convinced by the proposal to force amalgamations and in particular force Central Highlands Council to amalgamate.

Our comments are:

- Forced amalgamations should definitely not occur.
- Central Highlands Council boundaries should stay as they are because it has different economic, social, growth, population and administrative drivers from the surrounding Councils. Basically it has very little in common with neighbouring Councils.
- Amalgamation with dissimilar neighbours will harm Bothwell, provide poorer and unresponsive services, alienate locals, and increase costs. Thus a poorer service will occur at an increase cost (both financially and relationally).
- Planning should stay with Council and not be taken over by nameless, faceless, unaccountable and uncontactable bureaucrats and those under the thumb of politicians. Local Councillors are locally accountable and listen to and understand the community.

- The Tasmanian State Government is aloof, secretive, relies on spin doctors, avoids answering correspondence and questions, controls bureaucrats, and beholds to the political party's mantra rather than the local community. They do not represent or implement the public interest.
- Not so the local council. Central Highlands Council from my experience has got it right – open, transparent, well led, available, responsive and accountable. Frank and honest discussions can be held with Councillors and Council staff.
- I don't accept that Central Highlands Council has to be part of forced amalgamations because of financial reasons. Particularly since:
 - CHC is financially solvent and has adequate reserves.
 - It is lazy government to force amalgamations for financial reasons when the State Government is not paying its fair share; and has avoided moving with the times to provide a just and fair rate base.
 - State Government Agencies should pay rates to the Council for public land in the Council area (e.g. National Parks, Crown land and State Forest etc).
 - State Government should require wind farm developers to pay Council rate equivalents on behalf of the host landholders.
 - Multinational business enterprises should pay rates on top of their PR trinkets (the so called Community Benefit Funds)
 - State Government should provide additional road funding rather than wasting taxpayers money (such as use of consultant spin doctors, the \$12B Marinus white elephant that will never make a profit, and money for a stadium (when two stadiums are already available and can be used while the case for a new stadium is proven).

The Review should make recommendations on increasing Council revenue.

It is incomprehensible and hypocritical that the State Government is looking to expand the number of MP's while cutting the number of Councils. The annual cost of an expanded State Government should be made available to Councils.

Rather than forced amalgamations, there is a case for voluntary amalgamations of Councils. Planning matters need to remain with Councils. A wider rate base should be delivered with Crown landholders and

wind farm developers made to pay Council rates.

Having read the documentation that goes with the amalgamation proposal, I see little that applies to Central Highlands Council as a reason to force amalgamations, and see no evidence that my rates will be reduced.

Yours sincerely,

David & Helen Ridley

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6th July 2023