

Erin Eiffe

15<sup>th</sup> June 2023

Mayor Knowles  
Northern Midlands Council  
Smith Street  
Longford. Tas 7301

**Re: The Future of Local Government Review**

Dear Mayor Knowles and Councillors,

I am very uneasy and unsettled concerning the proposed changes to Local Council borders.

According to the Concise Oxford English Dictionary, Local Government is:

**“the administration of a particular county or district with representatives elected by those who live there.”**

And: Local means “relating or restricted to a particular area or **one’s neighbourhood.**”

How can an amalgamation that takes in the Tamar Valley, Launceston and various other unrelated areas be described as local?? People living in Launceston or Georgetown can hardly be described as local or neighbours to anyone living in the Northern Midlands area.

This whole debate about local government seems to have ignored the obvious: LOCAL means LOCAL. There have been surveys regarding this Review, but it should have gone further. Because this is such an important issue and will profoundly affect all Tasmanians, there should have been a vote so that the voices of all the people could be heard. Not everyone has access to a computer or is capable of navigating online surveys, so how are these people to be heard?

Democracy is based on the right of the people to be heard and acknowledged, yet this State Government has threatened to ‘mandate’ changes to Local Government, regardless of whether people want it or not. What has happened to democratic process? This is not the way a truly democratic government is expected to behave.

Should the State Government persist with this amalgamation of council areas, local voices will no longer be heard. Our voices are already muted by restrictions placed on local council by the State Government. Already councils are not as autonomous as they should be, which means that local voices are silenced regarding important

issues that profoundly affect local people. Is this democracy? These amalgamations will not remedy this because bigger is not necessarily better.

We have a State Government to which we elect representatives, yet how many of us feel truly represented? I have written to many of these representatives over the years, only to receive no acknowledgement of my correspondence, while the very few replies that I have received have, with one or two exceptions, dismissed my concerns completely.

As things stand, we at least have contact with our local councillors, but should this amalgamation go ahead, creating huge council areas, we will lose this local cohesion, and our truly local representation. It seems to be the case that the larger the organisation, the less responsibility it takes for those it supposedly represents. We see this in government all the time.

Tasmania may be a small state, but there is still an enormous difference between the needs of cities as opposed to the needs of rural areas, and should the amalgamation happen, we know who will win, because historically, country areas have suffered in favour of cities. This will result in local voices being silenced and a lot of discontent throughout this state. Is this what the State Government wants for Tasmanians?

This is yet another in a list of council amalgamations. When is the next one? It would appear that the State Government is endeavouring to 'amalgamate' Local Government out of existence!

Government in Tasmania has reached a crossroads. The State Government is in favour of ignoring the concerns of the people and forcing councils to do their will. Should we go down this path, will there be any way back, or will we lose all claim to democracy.

People and the needs of their communities should be placed above politics and the almighty dollar because without people, there would be neither.

Yours sincerely,

(Mrs) Erin Eiffe