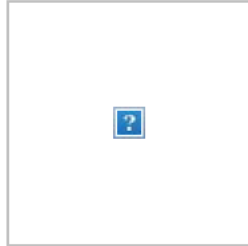


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Submission on Stage 3 of Local Government Board report on Local Government Reform

August 2 2023

Circular Economy Huon (CEH) thanks the Local Government Board for the work that has gone into their consideration of local government reform in Tasmania.

For many years there has been concern in Tasmania that, with a population of around 500,000, has had 29 councils. However, attempts to consolidate local governments have consistently faced resistance from councils and communities.

The consultations and research carried out by the Local Government Board has provided a great deal of information about most areas of local government and the research by consultants on each of the proposed Community Catchments has provided useful insights into the communities examined. The changing demographic in Tasmania has been partly driven by the arrival of “climate change refugees” many of whom are setting up small sustainable businesses and would support local action to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Most Tasmanians also support preparation for the effects of severe weather events.

In reviewing the reports and the SGS research there is little reference to what is the most critical issue facing Tasmania, Australia and the whole world – the escalation of severe weather events. Action to reduce emissions and to protect communities from the effects of rapidly rising temperatures, as demonstrated by the wildfires in southern Europe, America and north Africa and the dramatic decrease in sea ice around Antarctica, has become urgent and must now be at the forefront of reform of all levels of government.

Circular Economy Huon’s response relates primarily to the Southern Shore

Community Catchment Pack, although the comments have much wider applicability. The largest single contribution to GHG emissions in the Huon Valley is from transport. However, because transport is not considered to be an issue of concern for local government, the proposed reforms have not addressed transport or other contributors, such as industry, to GHG emissions. Local government needs to have a voice in supporting public transport and other approaches to reducing emissions.

Now it appears that the process for the reform of local government in Tasmania has been put on hold, and we suggest that further consultation is required on how to address the challenge of increasingly rapid changes to the world's climate due to GHG emissions.

Tasmania is in a position to demonstrate low emissions industries and lifestyles, and any reform of local government, as the level of government closest to the people, must take into consideration how to minimise emissions. Local governments have responsibility to respond to weather emergencies and sea level rise, and are closely associated with State Emergency Services, so are very aware of the increasing dangers due to the effects of climate change.

Those councils that promote economic activity, and especially those that are promoting tourism, should also consider emissions, especially from the tourism sector, and encourage awareness of the need to reduce emissions both locally and on a nationwide and global scale.

It is clear that the State government is not going to take immediate action on local government reform and this should enable the Local Government Board to consider further work on the future of local government in this time of rapid climate change. This should include examination of the research by the University of Tasmania which is very valuable when considering the potential for councils to work together, especially to develop local transport systems to reduce emissions

<https://www.utas.edu.au/community-and-partners/tpe/net-zero-transport>

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission on the Future of Local Government.

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