

Subject: Submission in Support of Local Planning Council Amalgamation

The Future of Local Government Review
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Dear Future of Local Government Board

As active member of our community to express my strong support for the proposed amalgamation of our local planning councils. Especially with regards to Western Shore Scenario 2 and Southern Shore Scenario 3.

As someone deeply invested in the development and growth of our region, I firmly believe that this consolidation will lead to more efficient decision-making, enhanced collaboration, and improved overall outcomes for our community where local culture is reflected within the council.

The following amalgamations Western Shore Scenario 2 and Southern Shore Scenario 3 would be the most ideal amalgamation as it:

- Consolidates the urban footprint of Kingston, Blackmans Bay and Taroona
- Consolidates the rural and regional capabilities of the Huon Valley region and Kingborough region

Western Shore Scenario 2 relieves the urban administrative burden of governing across a river boundary. Connections across the River Derwent can be managed better with potentially two council bodies in tandem with the State Government working for the best outcome.

Southern Shore Scenario 3 focuses on the rural and regional capabilities of the area. It effectively makes a rural council for a rural area whereby planning and resourcing will not be dominated by urban demands. Where urban demands are vastly different and have different priorities from the rural environment.

This split will also enable both councils to have their own regional land use strategies where cultural ties are better reflected from the regional representation.

The amalgamation of our local planning councils presents a unique opportunity to streamline processes, remove bureaucratic barriers, and foster a more cohesive and integrated approach to urban and regional planning. With a more focused role for councils with regards to rural or urban environments, each council will be able to be more effective in addressing the complex challenges facing their respective communities, from sustainable development and infrastructure improvements to environmental conservation and social equity.

Key reasons to support the amalgamation include:

Enhanced Efficiency:

A single, unified planning council will reduce redundancy and eliminate overlaps, leading to quicker and more efficient decision-making processes. Especially with regards to planning specialisations on respective geographic foci (i.e., having more capable planners who are suited unique challenges that a rural or urban community demand for assessment and strategic vision). This, in turn, will expedite the implementation of vital projects and initiatives, benefiting the community as a whole.

Improved Resource Allocation and Prioritisation:

With a new focus for council with regards to planning, the respective councils can better prioritise their development strategy and better allocate funds and invest in projects with higher priority and impact. This will lead to a more strategic approach to community development and ensure that investments align with the long-term vision for our region.

Holistic Planning: Amalgamation will facilitate better coordination between various departments and stakeholders, promoting a more holistic and integrated approach to planning. The new rural council for example will be able to achieve more positive outcomes working with Sustainable Timbers Tasmania with the ability to better resource a communication conduit with that stakeholder. This will enable us to address complex challenges comprehensively and achieve sustainable and inclusive growth. Especially when climate change presents more unique challenges and opportunities.

Stronger Community Engagement: A unified council around the community type will provide a clearer and more coherent stratify for council to encourage public engagement. This will alleviate the disenfranchisement of rural investment to the public square. As such, this will better encourage active participation from citizens, businesses, and organizations, leading to a greater sense of ownership and commitment to the development of our community.

Regional Representation: Amalgamation will promote regional representation and ensure that decisions are made with a broader perspective, taking into account the interconnectedness of neighbouring communities and the potential for collaborative initiatives.

Additional notes for consideration with regards to all council within Tasmania.

Fee structure standardisation:

Planning development applications and fees need to be standardised on category. Standardisation of fee categories facilitate better benchmarks for State Government reporting. It will also allow for investors to better calculate planning costs between municipalities. It will also simplify the structure. This is not to say prices should be the same, they should remain variable to the needs of each local council.

Auditing software and standard tools:

Planning should be approached within of the framework consistent and repeatable processes. Standard tools are used to assess, track and determine decisions are imperative to ensure that there is an audit trail of compliance.

A standard approach to planning will allow for resource sharing between councils to support smaller councils with possible influx of planning demands or to cover shortfalls in service delivery as a result of temporary resourcing constraints (sudden retirement of several staff members within a specific department from a particular council). This will enable councils to contract out planning work to other local councils avoiding the requirements to hire external and possibly cost prohibitive consultations. It will also allow for sampling to be done to ensure consistently is being applied.

In addition, with the expertise of planning specialisations with regards to certain developments it will allow for councils lacking these specialisations to consult and work with each other.

Comments on council naming:

If there is to be an amalgamation there should be public consultation with regards to naming. As these current catchment community areas are broad and do not currently represent the uniqueness of the area.

Working with great people from the Huon Valley Zoning Association and talking a range of people from both rural Kingborough and Huon Valley there is a wealth of name recommendations that can be formulated to best reflect the cultural heritage of the locality. I would not want to propose their ideas here, however, I do recommend speaking to the community via an open forum to engage the population and work with the people.

In conclusion, the amalgamation of our local planning councils represents an opportunity to build a stronger, more cohesive, and future-ready community. It is my firm belief that the Western Shore Scenario 2 and Southern Shore Scenario 3 will lead to a more effective, responsive, and sustainable approach to planning and development in each region.

Thank you for considering my perspective. I trust that your committee will act in the best interest of our community, and I am available to provide any further information or support as needed.

Please don't hesitate to contact me at my gmail [REDACTED]

Until Anon,

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