

Submission from [REDACTED] to the Future of Local Government Review

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the discussion.

As a resident of the Huon Valley municipality ([REDACTED]) I have difficulty in objectively assessing the various scenarios that have been presented in Stage 3 of this process.

Despite the many trials and tribulations that Huon Valley Council (HVC) has experienced in recent years it is still providing the community with a wide range of services including health and child care and appears to have a plan to become financially sustainable under its current Long Term Financial Plan (adopted in June of this year). The recent rates increase of 12% combined with the projected future rates increases should assist in overcoming the current operational deficit.

There seems to be little indication that creating larger councils will actually reduce costs to ratepayers and therefore one has to question why undertake a highly disruptive and expensive process.

Scenario 3

This has some appeal as it would combine two areas that have "communities of interest" but I question whether residents of the Channel and Bruny Island would welcome this: especially given the dysfunction that HVC has experienced in recent years.

The large area and relatively low rates income would quite possibly result in a lack of resources to maintain the infrastructure required unless other funding (ie State Government) was guaranteed. While Huonville is geographically quite central (in terms of distance) it is not the 'natural centre' for the eastern area which would still gravitate towards Kingston as the major commercial centre in the region with easier road access and being on the route to Hobart. Making Huonville the administrative centre would disadvantage residents and be another probable reason for resistance to such a change.

Scenario 2

It is most probable that the majority of councillors would reside in the urban areas and potentially the needs of these urban centres would be prioritised. Even if this was not the case in practice this would probably be the persistent perception.

Introducing a Ward system might help in counterbalancing this but would add another complication that might negate any of the supposed advantages.

Scenario 1

This is obviously the least onerous option since it is essentially retaining the status quo with no changes for HVC and only a relatively minor change for KC.

Conclusion

1. With some reluctance I consider Scenario 1 the best option but would hope that, in future, better use be made of shared services and that councils be strongly encouraged/required to consider 'The Future of Local Government Review Background Research Paper No. 4' and to demonstrate that they are making a real effort to implement efficiencies wherever possible.
2. The State Government appears to be offloading more and more responsibilities onto LGAs which results in duplication of services that could be more efficiently dealt with by one bureaucracy. This would seem to be contradictory to its stated aims of increasing efficiencies through amalgamation.

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