



12th July, 2023

I am concerned about the proposed amalgamations of councils, as in my experience the current Meander Valley Council does an excellent job and is very responsive to rate payers' requests.

And I am certainly against forced amalgamations as impinging on a citizen's rights.

My questions to you are:

1. Why don't you offer the option of efficient councils remaining as they are rather than "branding" all small councils as inefficient and large councils as efficient
2. Where is the comparative information on current councils' efficiency – it can't be the case that any small council is intrinsically inefficient
3. Have you compared the efficiency of large councils against small councils? An obvious way to do so is to look at the rates per person that councils charge. If you looked at Launceston Council against Meander Valley Council, the latter is more efficient. Perhaps the large councils need to be broken down into several smaller councils.
4. There appears to be an assumption that larger councils will reduce costs. However, this does not appear to be the case in the history of council amalgamations in Queensland and NSW – see attached research.
5. In claiming that fewer larger councils are preferable, have you considered the costs of (a) new chambers needed to fit in the larger employee count, (b) the costs of council employees travelling longer distances, (c) the inherent growth in the larger organisations as "empire building" takes place in the headquarters
6. Have you considered the option of providing State-wide management support to the individual councils in such areas as (a) information systems (b) council policies e.g., staff policies (c) planning as well as a sharing of experts and equipment (d) insurance and legal support. This could benefit all councils large and small whilst keeping councils responsive to rate payers' needs.
7. What weight do you give to high levels of availability from small councils compared to larger councils – availability and responsiveness is worth something

I suggest that a better approach for ratepayers is to create an overall State body to provide support and identify inefficiencies no matter the size of council.

Tim Biggs

