

To: Local Government Review Board

Valerie Perry

Tasmanian State Government

Re: Review of Local Government in Tasmania by the Tasmanian State Government

I happen to have been the secretary to the Rural City of Benalla's City Engineer, Max Richards, and was also the next-door neighbour of the Mayor of the Rural City, Bill Hill (who had been the Chairman of the Bonlac Milk Corporation previously).

At the time that the Victorian State Government decided that amalgamating the City of Benalla with the Shire of Mansfield would be a good idea (in the late 80's), neither of these bodies wanted to be amalgamated with the other.

It was two hours of driving between the two towns to attend monthly Council meetings of the now joined entity (which had been renamed to the Delatite Shire). These meetings were held alternately in each of the towns which necessitated ensuring all paperwork had to be carted back and forth.

The City of Benalla was a town that provided for all the agricultural needs for cropping farmers, livestock production and dairying ones. Whereas the town of Mansfield provided for the requirements of people heading up to the Victorian high country in Summer and to Mount Buller snowfields in the Winter. Two towns philosophically different in so many ways.

It cost a lot of money to go through the amalgamation process and hence the rates went up and the ratepayers, justifiably, complained.

After a period of time, the State Government could see very well that it was not working for anybody in either town and allowed a separation back to the town's original separate entities which also cost both towns more money for the processes of separation.

People want to be able to go to a readily available representative of their Council, close to their place of residence – particularly due to the number of older people in this area, many of whom do not drive.

The stress of this whole amalgamating and then de-amalgamating caused more than one of the City of Benalla's councillors to endure serious health problems.

At the time this amalgamation was causing such distress to Benalla and Mansfield, they were in touch with towns in New South Wales which had recently undergone the same processes of not wanting an amalgamation but having had it forced upon them by their State Government and eventually being allowed to de-amalgamate.

Amalgamation should not be forced upon towns that do not want it and will not benefit from it but, indeed, be worse off after the process.

Val Perry

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