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26th September, 2019

The Hon. Mark Shelton MP
Minister for Local Government
Local Government Legislation Review Project Team
Local Government Division
Department of Premier and Cabinet
GPO Box 123
Hobart TAS 7001

Dear the Hon. Shelton MP,

Re: Submission to Review of Tasmania's Local Government Legislation Framework

George Town Council held its Ordinary Council meeting on the 24th September 2019 and considered the Local Government Act Review. Council resolved the following:

Council Resolution No. 175/19 Local Government Act Review

1. That in response to proposed reform number 47 of the Department of Premier and Cabinet's Review of Tasmania's Local Government Legislation Framework Reform Directions Paper Phase Two, Council submit the following:

At the surface, proposed reform 47 appears like an amalgamation of administration functions of councils with the preservation of existing governance arrangements.

The statements contained within reform 47 are also not substantiated. George Town Council is a case in point that demonstrates the ability for a small council to effect change to ensure long term financial sustainability without the need for amalgamation or radical change to the administration of the organisation/s.

Shared services and joint procurement ventures are currently underway through existing relationships of the northern Tasmanian councils with further opportunities being explored.

The northern councils are already investigating the potential benefits advances in cloud based technology such as software as a service (SaaS), infrastructure as a service (IaaS) and platforms as a service (PaaS) may provide, including opportunities for centralising or outsourcing some corporate services functions such as ICT. The Victorian Department of Premier and Cabinet is an example of a government body that has already implemented a strategy that uses this common technology across various state departments with success.

Councils would be better served by legislation that provides power for council's to establish joint entities for the purposes of centralising or outsourcing some but not all administrative services.

The Government needs to provide greater detail and consultation on how the power 'for two or more councils to be serviced under a single administration centre' would be exercised prior to inclusion in new legislation.

2. That in response to proposed reform number 48 of the Department of Premier and Cabinet's Review of Tasmania's Local Government Legislation Framework Reform Directions Paper Phase Two, the Council submit the following:

The aim of the reform is to provide a 'flexible, innovative and future-focused legislative framework' for 'representative and democratic' councils that are 'connected to their communities'.

The proposed reform to introduce the power to create 'Regional Councils' appears like the introduction of another tier of government and seems to contradict the intent of the reform. Creating another level of government that is further from the community than the current local government tier, will be met with resentment.

The proposed governance arrangements for the membership of a Regional Council do not follow existing democratic practices for the election of representatives across any level of government. Such governance arrangements would likely exacerbate the continuing decline in trust of governments by its constituents.

Regional collaborations with governance arrangements independent to the Local Government Act are already in place and functioning with various levels of maturity and success. Examples include regional waste management groups, regional tourism bodies, regional natural recourse management bodies and regional economic development corporations. Further, councils of the various regions collaborate on the development of regional strategies including across the areas of transport and land use planning for the betterment of the regions and municipalities.

Point five under the title of Overview within the Reform Directions Paper states that the proposed reforms aim to deliver a legislative framework that will:

'be guided by best-practice regulatory, governance and legislative approaches and, where relevant and appropriate, lessons and outcomes from reviews of local government legislation in other jurisdictions'.

If the proposal to introduce the power to create Regional Council's is an example of best practice, then the reform paper should provide such examples to assist the reader in understanding how Regional Councils will add value to existing democratic systems.

The intent and value of Regional Councils is unclear. The proposal for Regional Councils appears to be in contrast to the reform that recognises the need for higher levels of community engagement and empowerment. It is Council's view that the provision for power to create Regional Councils not be introduced into legislation without extensive community and sector consultation that is accompanied by robust governance frameworks and operational models that demonstrate democratic process and add value to community and sector outcomes.

3. Council authorises the General Manager to submit recommendations 2 & 3 on its behalf.
4. Council communicate its position with respect to proposed reforms 47 and 48 to its community through appropriate media channels.
5. Council encourage the community to make submissions to the reform process through appropriate media channels.

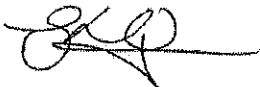
George Town Council grants permission of submission to be published on the Local Government Division's website. Any enquiries can be directed to:

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Council looks forward to continuing to provide feedback on this review to the Department of Premier and Cabinet that provides a positive benefit to the George Town community.

Yours sincerely,



Shane Power
GENERAL MANAGER