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Clarence Alderman, City of Clarence

Assisting Clarence residents for over 20 years

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Mr Greg Preece,
Chairperson
Local Government Board,
GPO Box 123
HOBART TAS 7001

5 April 2018

Dear Mr Preece

Government Board Review into Voluntary Amalgamation Option of Sorell and Tasman Councils

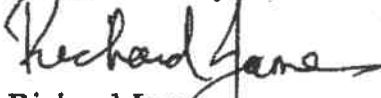
Further to my verbal submission to the Board on the 26 march 2018, I make the following comments in relation to a merger option which includes part of another municipal area, namely the Richmond, Dulcote, Coal River Valley, Cambridge, Cambridge Park and the Hobart Airport currently currently part of Clarence City Council.

- I do not believe the three options the Board has been asked to consider will present a long term solution **in terms of viability** for Sorell and Tasman Councils.
- It is noted the KPMG South East Council's Feasibility Study, Final Report 30 September 2016, page 74 Sorell Impact Assessment and also page 75 Tasman Impact Assessment, the following principles are noted in Option 4 for Sorell and Tasman:
 1. Improved Service Levels – **Neutral outcome**
 2. Maintain local governance/representation – **Neutral outcome**
 3. Strengthened financial status – **Neutral outcome**
 4. Best Interests – **Neutral outcome.**

- Although the KPMG study refers to the Sorell and Tasman Impact Assessments the Option 4 principles as “neutral outcomes,” I suggest that a boundary into in part of Clarence would present a viable option and a long term solution for Sorell and Tasman Councils.
- External profiles of Clarence and Sorell are economically stronger regions whereas Tasman is more economically challenged. Given the large number of managed urban/rural sealed and unsealed roads in Sorell and Tasman (602- KPMG study Page 11), begs the question how a merger of two councils in a predominately rural area can fund and maintain road infrastructure without funding from an external sources.
- It is suggested the Board of Review recommends to the Minister a merger option which includes part of another area outside Sorell and Tasman as a long- term solution and presents the only viable option. It should include regions of Richmond, Coal River Valley, Cambridge, Cambridge Park (industrial) and the Hobart Airport. Estimated income generated during 17/18 financial year from rates/rates equivalent from these regions amount to \$6M. (Source - Clarence City Council Rates Dept April 2018).
- I believe the rates revenue that would flow to a new Sorell and Tasman merger would sustain as it would include a commercial hub, population centre, significant infrastructure and a major transport route link between the Tasman peninsula and large industrial area east of Hobart.

I submit my comments for consideration by the Board and would be glad to provide additional information as required.

Yours sincerely,



Richard James

Alderman Clarence City Council

Alderman Richard James

Hobart Public Hearing - 26 March 2018 at 3.30pm

****Spoke to a written submission****

Submissions in addition to the written submission

Clarence City Council Survey Results-Voluntary Amalgamations/Shared Services

In relation to the Clarence City Council's community survey, the layout and content of the form was very confusing. However when Clarence Council decided not to consider any of the merger options with SE neighbouring Councils, 47.5% of respondents wanted amalgamation and 35.6% of respondents wanted no amalgamation for Clarence with Sorell, Tasman or Glamorgan Spring Bay.

History of pro-merger decisions by Clarence City Council

At a Clarence Council meeting in July 2008 a motion was carried unanimously that Council discuss with Sorell and Tasman Councils about a model for a large South Eastern Council. At Council meeting in October 2008, Clarence Council endorsed its earlier decision of July 2008. This was due to the fact that Tasman Council had not received the letter to explore the opportunities for a regional model and the Council had not undertaken community consultation. The discussions between Councils did not proceed, although both Sorell and Tasman Councils were interested to participate in forum targeting resource sharing.

Commonality

Clarence has a lot in common with Sorell and Tasman Councils. Long coastlines, many beaches, mix of urban and rural communities, historic towns and villages and the connection by way of old road from Bellerive to Richmond to Sorell and beyond to Tasman Peninsula.

Also over the years Clarence, Sorell, and Tasman Councils have a long history of cooperation and sharing of resources. For example, the Copping Joint Authority is a first class facility in the south east and demonstrates united Councils can do and achieve great results through mutual and strong working relationships.

Sorell and Tasman Councils are not sustainable

I believe that Sorell and Tasman Councils remaining as status quo are not viable options. I refer to the 2016 KPMG South East Councils Feasibility Study. Sorell/ Tasman Impact Assessments, Pages 74 and 75, classified all Principles as "neutral outcome" should a merger occur between the two Councils. One would expect from a merger of the two Councils that at least "some positive / significant outcomes" would result.

A better option would be a part or full merger with a neighbouring Council. It does not necessarily mean offloading Clarence City Council's resources to prop up Sorell and Tasman Councils but through cooperation and combination of their resources a large South Eastern Council is a better alternative and on a scale and capacity to negotiate with the State Government for a greater share of special purpose grants for infrastructure projects.

Richmond

Clarence City Council has achieved a lot for Richmond since its merger in the 1990s. Clarence has spent significant amounts of money and the community is appreciative of its share of the annual budget pie. Nevertheless very strong historical and business links still exist between the towns of Richmond and Sorell. When Richmond joined Clarence there was a rift in the community against the change. Now, I believe there is no issue with Richmond merging with Sorell as long as they receive a reasonable share of annual budget and have input into the decision-making process across the region. Richmond can further enhance its identity as a major tourist destination in conjunction with expansion of Sorell and promising untapped developments on the Tasman Peninsula.

Alderman Richard James
Clarence City Council

Local Govt Board - Sorell and Tasman Councils Review

Introduction

CCC, SC, TC and S B CG came together to explore the merits of shared services and the four amalgamation options. KPMG Page 5.

I suggest Council was the force behind the process and during the process the merits of shared services and amalgamation options seemed to have hinged on Clarence Council community survey conducted in November 2017. *Survey was very confusing.*

Discussion

1. KPMG – SE Councils Feasibility Study 30/09/16
2. KPMG Page 11- SEIFA indexes indicate that Clarence and Sorell are within the top 25% of Tasmania across the indexes and within the midrange in Australia. Tasman falls within the bottom 30% of Tasmania in relation to socio-economic conditions.
3. KPMG – Page 23 – “Auditor General’s 2014/2015 snapshot of the Councils which point to the comparative financial strength and higher service levels of Clarence and the generally lower service levels able to be afforded by the smaller, rural more less populated Councils.
4. KPMG - Clarence Impact Assessment P 72 - Clarence contributes significantly to the attractiveness of those options for the region and can also lead to potential gains for Clarence ratepayers
5. KPMG – Clarence, Sorell and Tasman *P 72*
 - **Significant Positive Outcome(dark green)**
 - Strengthened financial status
 - Best interests of the region

- **Some Positive Outcome(light Green)**

Improved service levels

6. Clarence City Council decision 13/10/2008 – “That Council, in conjunction with Tasman Council enter in discussions to explore the opportunities of a regional model for a large South Eastern Council..... “
7. Commonality
Clarence, Sorell and Tasman have coastlines, beaches, mix of urban and rural spread, historic road connection to villages – Bellerive, Richmond , Sorell and Tasman Peninsula.
Copping Refuse Site is in the ownership of Clarence Sorell and Tasman Councils.
8. In my opinion a long term solution in terms of viability for Sorell and Tasman should include all of another municipal area, through a boundary adjustment, neighbour Clarence
9. A boundary adjustment would present a viable option as it would include commercial hubs (Cambridge and Mornington); population centres –Eastern Shore suburbs; significant infrastructure (Hobart International Airport, Schools and Colleges, new Sorell Council Chambers- key administration centre etc)and major transport route (Tasman Highway – common to all three Councils).



Richard H James

