

Sorell and Tasman Councils Review Submissions,  
Local Government Board,  
GPO Box 123,  
HOBART. TAS. 7001.

A.G. & J.E. Barwick,

Dear Local Government Board Members,

**Submission against the amalgamation of Tasman Council with Sorell Council, or any other Council.**

We are residents, ratepayers and electors of the Tasman Council and we are strongly opposed to the amalgamation of Tasman Council with Sorell Council or any other Council for that matter.

In the Local Government Board Review Consultation Paper it states that, the following principals must be applied when considering options as they relate to local government reform, noted as follows: Be in the best interest of ratepayers, improve the level of services for communities, preserve and maintain local representation and, ensure that the financial status of the entities is strengthened. Amalgamating Tasman Council with Sorell Council will not meet any of these principals for Tasman electors, residents and ratepayers. I will detail the reasons extensively as follows.

Firstly, I note in the Consultation Paper regarding the community survey: That the results of the survey demonstrated that an overwhelming majority of respondents voted in support of voluntary amalgamations. Although this statement may be correct given the minimal return rate, taken in the context of Tasman having 2340 electors of which only 301 responded and of those 74.25% responded in favour of amalgamation, this is only in the vicinity of 10% of our electors. Far from an overwhelming majority of electors, in fact a very pathetic response, perhaps indicating that there is no appetite for the amalgamation of Tasman Council.

Human nature being as it is, those wanting change would have ensured that they completed a survey, those who were happy for things to remain the same may have felt there wasn't the need to complete the survey. In my opinion, the lack of interest in the survey reveals that people are happy with the status quo rather than the reverse. Surely, with such an underwhelming response, there shouldn't have been any question about doing anything other than to maintain the status quo.

The survey itself was appalling, there wasn't an option for no amalgamation, and there wasn't the ability to add your name and address or any comments. I question whether there were any controls in place to confirm the validity of the respondents, given there was no ability to add your name and address, what prevented the respondents from perhaps completing 20, 30 or 220 surveys submitted by one person, with an interest in pushing their own personal agenda.

My own personal example regarding the completion of the survey was that I was requested by two of my older friends (I don't want to call them elderly) to complete the survey on their behalf. I therefore submitted four surveys, one for myself, one for my husband and one each for my friends. Were all four of my surveys accepted and counted as legitimate, as they were, or did someone decide that all four had been submitted from the one computer and therefore disregarded two or three of them? That's why I have some very grave concerns about the legitimacy of the survey results. It appeared that the survey could have easily been weighted to provide the results certain people desired.

The other very serious issue is that the survey was only provided on-line. This prevented many of the senior people in this municipality completing the survey. According to the population statistics provided in the Consultation Paper, Tasman has 909 people aged 65+ years. Most of those wouldn't

own a computer and therefore wouldn't have the ability to complete the survey, unless they asked somebody else to complete it for them. Also, I'm not sure what proportion of the population is aged 55+ years, but depending on their backgrounds, many of them I would suggest would have computer literacy issues also. If you don't utilise a computer regularly, it certainly isn't hard to lose computer literacy skills. This then brings me back to the point of the validity of the survey and the apparent lack of controls in place, some may have completed surveys for others, like me, but how does the Council know that?

Also, even worse, is the issue of not providing an option for no amalgamation on the survey form, this is extremely serious in my opinion. There may have been many people who were anti-amalgamation who perhaps took a look at the survey and decided that, yet again, Tasman had provided them with no opportunity to express their views. How could the residents of this municipality, who were not in favour of amalgamation express that view? Really shocking stuff.

Tasman Council may try to justify their survey by saying, but there was an option for resource sharing. Well the average Joe Blow, without any detailed knowledge of local government, may not have ever heard of that term or know what it means. Back when I was Mayor, I know I reported on it extensively, in the local Gazette and other reports, when I initiated resource sharing arrangements with Brighton Council, but that was probably around ten years ago. After the initial decision, resource sharing is something that often evolves and is enhanced as time goes by and probably isn't something that is regularly reported about to the general public. They wouldn't necessarily know that Tasman still continues with various resource sharing arrangements now, for all the general public knows, it could have ceased at some point. Most of the Tasman constituents would probably know now about Tasman's continued resource sharing, but only in the past month, after the issue of amalgamation has really escalated in the community. Way too late for the purposes of completing Tasman's survey.

Clarence Council, unlike Tasman, mailed a hard copy of their survey to all residents and ratepayers and included a reply paid envelope. Clarence stated on their survey form that their preferred option was to remain the same, not to amalgamate with any other council. Clarence's survey required the respondents to provide their name and address and provided space for comments. Although I don't know their return rate, I feel sure it would have been much higher than Tasman's and Sorell's. The survey was far more inclusive and therefore the data received would have been (I assume) far more accurate and genuinely indicative of the Municipality's feelings.

Glamorgan Spring Bay Council also conducted a similar survey to Clarence.

Both Clarence and Glamorgan Spring Bay Councils after having open, transparent and real consultation with their constituents, unlike Tasman, pulled out of the amalgamation process. One can assume that their surveys revealed a resounding no to amalgamation.

We, on the other hand, prior to the review process, have never been given any real opportunity by Tasman Council to express our sentiments on the matter.

Sorell's survey return rates were 681 returns from 10,164 electors, just as pathetic as Tasman's and again hardly an overwhelming majority of electors.

A petition was circulated in the Tasman Municipality, strongly opposing the amalgamation of Tasman Council with Sorell Council or any other Council. This petition was only in circulation for approximately two weeks and received 500 signatures in that short time-span. Had it been in circulation for longer I feel sure many more signatures would have been received. The purpose of this petition was to negate Tasman's survey results and it also revealed that the Tasman Council have not been open, transparent,

inclusive and consultative and have not undertaken due diligence on this issue, and most importantly that the community are not in favour of an amalgamation with Sorell. Our goal, for the purposes of negating the survey, was to receive more than 300 signatures in two weeks, this goal was well and truly surpassed. The petition has revealed that Tasman Councils survey was flawed and highly questionable and wasn't worth the paper (website) it was written on.

Having negated Tasman's pathetic survey results, one wonders why we are now being forced to stand up and fight to save our Council. Not good enough! We have better things to do and way better things to spend our money on. We most certainly didn't elect the mayor and councillors to give our Council away to Sorell Council! The elected members who voted to continue the process of the voluntary amalgamation of Tasman are most certainly not representing the majority of electors in the Tasman Municipality and are not doing what they were elected to do. They were elected to take care of our Council, not destroy it! The mayor and councillors in favour of this have no social licence to do so and, it seems, are clearly out of touch with the community. One must question the appropriateness of Tasman Council in requesting a review on the basis of their minimal survey returns and results. I suggest that Tasman Council has wasted both the Review Board's time and our (Tasman residents) time and money.

The amalgamation process is meant to be voluntary. Let's be very clear about this, the majority of Tasman residents have not volunteered and will not volunteer to be amalgamated with Sorell and we won't go down without a fight. I cannot and will not understand how this process can be continued in good conscience and it needs to be aborted now to stop the wicked waste of our money.

Tasman Council's vote to continue this process was far from unanimous, the mayor and three councillors voted for this, two councillors voted against it and one was absent, the absent councillor stated that they would have voted against it. The future of our municipality is at stake and this issue is far too serious for four people to decide upon with minimal consultation, it's outrageous, and it has rightfully left many members of the community angry and outraged. The shocking betrayal of trust by certain councillors may be something many members of the community will struggle to recover from, they had no right to condemn Tasman to this process without the support of their constituents.

There has been an enormous lack of transparency and no real community consultation or engagement on this issue from Tasman Council during this whole process. There may have been the odd vague report in the monthly Tasman Gazette, not everyone reads this and our shack owners don't have access to it unless they happen to be down here when it's issued. There is some information on Council's website, not sure how long that has been there, but I would guess that the bulk of it has only been there since the council voted to refer this issue to the Review Board, far too late by then and again our older residents have no ability to access this information. There was one letter sent providing a link to the on-line survey, what were the elderly going to do with that? The letter also stated that people could phone the Council to assist with the completion of the survey. I have no idea how many did that, but I would think not many given the number of returns, however if they had they would have been left very confused about what option to choose, given there wasn't a no amalgamation option.

Residents of Tasman have been calling for a public meeting on this issue for months. Those who attended council meetings to ask, "when is there going to be a public meeting to discuss the amalgamation issue", were told by the mayor, that there won't be a public meeting because council conducted a survey, or words to that effect. The laughable survey!

During this debacle there have been many things said and done, that shouldn't have been, and many things not said and done, that should have been. One's mind must turn to the serious consideration of possible Code of Conduct complaints against particular individuals.

Many people had no idea about this issue until they read the notice placed by the Review Board in the Mercury Newspaper several weeks ago. There are still many people who have only just become aware of the issue now, not due to the Council, whose responsibility it is to be consultative, inclusive and transparent, but due to the petition and the outrage felt by community members who are spreading the word.

Apparently, the Tasman Council staff have been told they won't lose their jobs, I'm not sure who told them this, but I could take a very good guess, but regardless, whoever it was should hang their head in shame, of course the staff will lose their jobs. Sorell Council will move quickly to remove Tasman's staff, and the Council Chambers, Offices and Depot will be closed. If there isn't "streamlining" of services, where will the savings be made?

Although, sadly for the staff over the past couple of weeks, I believe, they have come to the realisation that they most likely will lose their jobs. I hope they now realise that they have been lied to and I hope they can remember who did this.

Anyone who believes that the staff won't lose their jobs should read the estimated redundancy figures in the K.P.M.G South East Councils Feasibility Study, Final Report, 30th September, 2016. The K.P.M.G. report reveals that in the first year following amalgamation that 10.5 full-time equivalent employees will be made redundant, this will provide \$944,423 savings in employee costs in the first year, let's face it they will all be Tasman employees. Without any doubt, the second year will see the rest of the Tasman staff gone or relocated to Sorell. This then leads me to some very serious issues.

Tassal, the Port Arthur Historic Site, the Multi-Purpose Service Centre, the School and Tasman Council are considered major employers in the Tasman region. Tasman Council has 19 or 20 (depending which report you read) full-time equivalent employees. When they lose their jobs, employment isn't easy to find in the Tasman Municipality, so they will most likely need to relocate to gain employment. Remove these employees, their husbands or wives and children from our community, a total estimated to be somewhere in the vicinity of 80 to 100 residents, this will have a devastatingly negative effect on our community. In a small community such as ours the devastating effect on our School, Shops, Doctors, Pharmacy, Banks, Post Offices and the list goes on and on and the knock on effect that this would cause would be very difficult for the community to recover from and the negative effects would take many, many years to recover from, if at all. Councils are supposed to support and build rural communities, not destroy them. Just the loss of the Council Offices alone, without taking into account the staff losses, would have a devastating effect on the local Post Offices and Banks, e.g. no longer sending and receiving of mail locally and local banking.

In rural and regional areas like the Tasman Municipality, reasonable employee costs are something ratepayers are prepared to bear because jobs are vital to sustain our population and to maintain our current services and to continue to grow our region.

Even if the staff were offered employment at Sorell Council, over an hour away, it will still have the same effect on the community and its economy, as the staff will still need to relocate to Sorell. Talk about taking the local out of local government.

There may be some who may try to say that a local presence/office will be maintained, but no doubt this would be managed by greatly reduced staffing levels, so it would have the same negative effect

on the community and frankly this would only be for a year or two at best. History is the best indicator of the future, take a look at some of the previously forced amalgamations in this State in 1993, for example:

The former Richmond Council was forced to amalgamate with Clarence Council. Richmond no longer has Council Offices, what happened to the staff there? The bigger Council always obliterates the smaller Council and their services. In fairness, Richmond is probably only 25 minutes away from the Clarence Offices, unlike Tasman from Sorell, for most of us over an hour away. Representation of course is a big issue, which I'll touch on in more detail later, but I note that Clarence Council only has one representative living at Richmond out of a total of twelve Aldermen, the other eleven come from mostly the city centric areas such as Rosny and surrounds. What hope would one Alderman have to try to ensure that their area is represented and receiving the level of council services it deserves, no hope. I doubt Clarence Council can remember there was once a Richmond Council.

The former Glamorgan and Spring Bay Councils were forced to merge to form the Glamorgan Spring Bay Council, they couldn't even agree on a new name for their Municipality, but regardless of that, Swansea lost their Council Offices, again what happened to the staff? The areas their elected representatives live in is also interesting, there is one representative from Swansea and none from Bicheno out of eight Councillors. There is some anecdotal evidence in the current Glamorgan Spring Bay Municipality that the communities in the north feel disconnected to the communities in the south of the council area. It seems the wounds are still raw 25 years later.

The former Hamilton and Bothwell Councils were forced to amalgamate to form the Central Highlands Council. The Council Offices/Main Service Centre is in Hamilton with very minimal services (planning) at the Bothwell Office.

What happened to Green Ponds Council and various other victims of the 1993 forced amalgamations? I could go on forever about this but as you can see I've got too many other things to go on about. Also there are various other examples of amalgamated Councils that have slowly dwindled their services away from outlying areas/former local government areas and wounds that remain 25 years later.

Then there is the forced amalgamations in Queensland, councils were forced to amalgamate and since then communities have voted to and subsequently councils have been de-amalgamated.

As quoted in the K.P.M.G Report: That the lessons learnt from Queensland were: 1. The forced amalgamation was much more costly than expected etc. 2. There are still opportunities for significant reform through extensive regional collaboration and shared services, without the need for widespread amalgamations. 3. Public consultation is critical for the success of amalgamations (big mistake made here by Tasman council). 4. Ad hoc policy for de-amalgamation can cause irreversible community agitation at the amalgamation process, reducing the chances of successful reform in the future.

Regarding the forced amalgamations in Victoria, as stated in the K.P.M.G report: Outcomes of reform: The reform produced real savings of eight to nine percent. The Kennett government had claimed higher savings, however, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) compared operational expenditure from before and after the amalgamations. The ABS found that operational costs increased significantly to the point of which it can be argued that the economic gains were not substantial. The reform had additional cost implications which included the distraction of staff, inefficient use of staff, complicating the establishment of new service levels and further diminishing council resources.

I now refer to the Southern Tasmanian Councils Authority Report (STCA), released in October 2011, titled STCA Independent Review of Structures for Local Government and Service Delivery in Southern

Tasmania. The independent panel undertook extensive research, consultation and delivered their results and the report was widely publicised in the Mercury Newspaper and can easily be found on the internet. Without going into extensive detail the final outcome of the report was to leave Tasman alone (not to amalgamate). The report did recommend the amalgamation of various city councils though.

Back to the Tasman amalgamation debacle, the K.P.M.G report states that an amalgamation with Tasman and Sorell will provide a neutral outcome. A neutral outcome! Well this statement is accurate after reading the report. So why on earth am I sitting here typing this! Although neutral on paper, it will be devastating to the economy and social fibre of the Tasman community. For Tasman there are enormous disadvantages for absolutely no financial benefits.

The K.P.M.G. report and also noted in the Review Board Consultation Paper compares various options. The option of a merger with Tasman and Sorell delivers a combined additional surplus of \$1.3m p.a. in the first year. The option of resource sharing delivers a combined additional surplus of \$900,000 p.a., in the first year, one must assume that this surplus could still be achieved with continued and enhanced resource sharing, without amalgamation. I note that the \$900,000 savings included four councils, but as this is the only figure provided, I can only work with that. One must assume that the extended resource sharing options are still currently and in future available to all four councils anyway, but I'm not sure of the methodology used, i.e. what savings, for what services, from which councils, contributed to this total. As I have no alternative, I'll utilise this figure for comparison purposes. Comparing both figures, if Tasman and Sorell amalgamated, as opposed to continuing and enhancing their resource sharing arrangements, the difference for both Tasman and Sorell combined will only provide a surplus of \$400,000, so we are going to amalgamate on the basis of \$400,000 shared between the two councils, wow \$200,000 each, we will really be rolling in the dough, I can hardly wait, not! Given these figures, how shocking is it that we're even having this conversation.

I note that it's very poor form to provide the public with possibly inaccurate financial figures and expect them to prepare submissions on the basis of it. It is very clear that a lot more homework should have been undertaken well prior to Tasman Council approaching the Review Board to undertake a review.

What is very clear in the K.P.M.G. report is that the total amalgamation surplus of around \$1.3m p.a. in the first year, split across the two councils would provide Tasman with a surplus of \$370,210 and Sorell \$913,191. So regardless of the possibly inaccurate data provided, quoting the accurate data, Tasman has been sold out to Sorell for \$370,210. After researching the financial data for Tasman, if the amalgamation of Tasman wasn't such a serious issue, one would think this whole situation was a complete joke, absolutely laughable, but we're not laughing right now, other than at particular councillors. One can be sure that Tasman's pathetic surplus (\$370,210) wouldn't be spent here. We know how that surplus will be achieved, by making Tasman Council Employees redundant and closing Tasman's Offices, Council Chambers and Depot. Although the financial figures are somewhat confusing in the K.P.M.G report, I think although I'm not totally sure, that the bulk of the \$1.3m p.a. in the first year, is made up of the \$944,423 savings in employee costs in the first year. Unfortunately the more research I do, the more appalled and outraged I become.

In the 2016/17 financial report Tasman Council had a surplus of \$1.879m, Sorell Council had a surplus of \$3.628m. Given these figures, both Councils are doing just fine on their own. The financial figures provided by the commissioned K.P.M.G. report into a Tasman and Sorell amalgamation are so minimal that it simply isn't worth the agitation and angst this proposal has caused the Tasman community.

Furthermore, in the 2016-17 financial report Tasman Council had a total of \$260,000 in loans on the other hand Sorell Council had a total of \$2.442m in loans. Tasman ratepayers certainly do not want to take on the responsibility of paying Sorell's astronomical loans.

Noted in the Consultation Paper referring to Tasman's and Sorell's financial performance. The Auditor-General's Report of 2015-16 notes, both Councils' 10 year average operating surplus ratio reflects that they achieved surpluses over the period (with Tasman recording a higher average surplus than Sorell). Both Councils performed better than the majority of other rural councils against this indicator, with Tasman returning the highest average surplus and Sorell returning the third highest. This is Tasman's comparison against all other similar sized councils in Tasmania, given Tasman's financial performance, why would anyone want to interfere with us or either council for that matter.

In the K.P.M.G. report the cost of amalgamation in the first year will be \$1,112,659. Over a million dollars to amalgamate, what a shameful waste of our money!

No doubt Tasman ratepayers paid considerable amounts of money commissioning K.P.M.G.'s report, it's a shame that it seems that certain councillors didn't read it. After reading these reports, I have to think that somebody is having a lend of us, as there is no logical justification to pursue an amalgamation of Tasman with Sorell. Perhaps we do need a commissioner, but please ensure it's none of them though!

The really annoying part of this situation is that we find ourselves having to do all of this work because of certain Tasman councillors who voted to continue the amalgamation process and after the event they are now trying to justify their decision by saying things, such as, "we're looking into the future" or "I voted to continue this process, so I can make an informed decision", as if they have just invented council amalgamations! If they wanted to be so well informed, they should have conducted some research, they may have even learnt something. There are dozens of reports undertaken regularly on this issue, some very recently, including the K.P.M.G. report which was meant to "inform" Tasman councillors prior to voting on the review process, perhaps some of them should have read it.

Quite frankly, the amalgamation discussion is growing very old, tiresome and annoying, certain people need to find something new to amuse themselves with and not at our expense, our time and our Council. They were elected to make informed decisions, perhaps some should start doing so! Considering the days of research I have had to undertake, one would hope certain Tasman councillors will read this and actually learn something, although they should have already known all of this prior to voting on the matter. I'm sure some will read this letter, if only as an exercise in picking it to pieces.

As I've stated previously a good indicator of the future is the past. So if some of the Tasman councillors are so keen on seeing the future, they should take a good hard look at history, or do some research, or read reports that are placed under their noses, or purchase a crystal ball, it would be more accurate than the methods they are currently utilising, which appears to be nothing. It appears for some, instead of conducting their own research to ensure informed decisions are made, as they were elected to do, they've raised their hands to vote for a review, thus putting Tasman's neck in the noose, so that the Review Board can conduct the research on their behalf. I find this very concerning.

As noted in the Consultation Paper Tasman Council's average rates are \$1234.00, Sorell Council's average rates are \$1315.00. After amalgamation, Tasman ratepayers can look forward to an instant rates rise for reduced services and representation and total loss of identity, how is any of this fair and reasonable?

Other than all of our rates and grants going into Sorell's pockets and Tasman losing everything, an amalgamation will not increase the income raising potential for either Council. Separate or amalgamated, both Councils will still only receive the same amount of Financial Assistant Grants (FAG) and Road Grants from the Federal Government and there will still be the same rate base as there was prior to amalgamation. It won't cost the Government any more money by leaving Tasman alone, and amalgamating won't save the Government any money either. It just makes no sense to take everything away from Tasman residents by giving it all to Sorell for no overall financial gains. It is simply robbing Peter to pay Paul, and we don't want to give Paul a cent of our money.

Again, according to the Consultation Paper for the 2015-16 financial year, Tasman had \$6.253m in cash reserves. Sorell had \$8.573m in cash reserves, Sorell's cash reserves are well below the Local Government of Australia (not Tasmania) Classification for a Rural Agricultural Very Large Municipality and is only around \$2.3m more than Tasman with the classification of a Rural Agricultural Small and Medium Municipality. Although Tasman may be around \$2.5m below the Australian average, Sorell is around \$19m below the Australian average, for comparable councils. Sorell Council with its much greater rate base and therefore much greater income has only \$2.3m more than Tasman invested. Sorell needs get their act together before they start looking over the fence at us, in the hope that we'll prop them up.

According to recent financial reports, Tasman consistently exceeds most of its financial benchmarks, Sorell generally only meets its financial benchmarks and at times doesn't meet them. Why would anyone consider amalgamating a smaller rural council who is performing well financially with a larger council who is underperforming financially? Sorell has a much greater income than Tasman and yet Tasman is outperforming many of its counterparts and stacks up very well against its larger neighbour. Speaking of neighbour, that's all Tasman ever wants to be to Sorell, its neighbour. The only thing Tasman has in common with Sorell is a municipal boundary. Sorell probably needs Tasman, but Tasman doesn't need Sorell and never has.

So Tasman ratepayers once amalgamated with Sorell can look forward to savings of \$370,210, as long as we're prepared to spend those savings on \$1,112,659 in amalgamation costs, and take on Sorell's loans of \$2.442 million. One wonders in what universe could anyone think that they could sell this proposal to Tasman Ratepayers. The letter would go something like this, Dear Tasman Ratepayers, have we got a deal for you, we'll give you \$370,210, but you have to be prepared to spend those savings and much, much more on costs of over \$3.5 million, oh and by the way, we're also going to raise your rates, give Sorell your \$6.253 million in cash reserves, we're going to make all of your employees redundant, close and sell off your buildings, and we're going to decimate your services, representation and community. I suppose if Tasman Council had sent us a letter like this at least it would have been more communication than any they've had with us to date on this issue.

Please Note, where possible I have utilised the older 2015-16 financial reports as noted in the Consultation Paper and I have only utilised the current 2016-17 financial reports if this information wasn't provided in an alternative document because on Tasman Council's website the 2016-17 financial report is still marked as a draft, not sure why.

Given the various financial reports I have read in regards to Tasman and Sorell it would be impossible to apply the principal of ensuring that the financial status of the entities is strengthened. Perhaps Sorell's financial status would be strengthened but Tasman's certainly wouldn't be. Taking everything away from Tasman to give to Sorell, will most certainly destroy Tasman, but it won't even fix Sorell's problems, they need more help than we can give them.



If the very worst should happen and Tasman is amalgamated with Sorell, Tasman's existing investments should be quarantined and spent only in Tasman.

One can only assume it is complete negligence or ignorance that certain Tasman councillors have chosen to ignore or disregard the various financial figures quoted in these reports.

Many of the public buildings within this municipality have been built (or partially built) by community members, with hours of voluntary labour and thousands of hard earned dollars donated. For example: The Civic Centre, The Community Centre, The Independent Living Units, The S.E.S. Building, just to name a few. What happens to these community assets once we're amalgamated with Sorell? Also does Sorell still have that same sense of community, would their residents' band together to build something they want or see a need for, or would they expect the council to build it for them? Volunteering is vital to Tasman for example, service clubs, sporting organisations, the Men's Shed, Op Shop, volunteer Fire Fighters, S.E.S. and Ambulance, and the list goes on and on.

Our smaller sporting and social facilities such as the Premaydena Recreation Ground and Rooms, Saltwater River Hall, Koonya Hall and Grounds and Nubeena Tennis Club, etc., what will happen to all of these facilities, will the ongoing maintenance costs be too great, so will Sorell just close them down and sell them off? Will they send an employee and a mower, over an hour away, down to mow our recreation grounds in a timely manner, prior to a sporting or social event?

Another point of difference is that Tasman manages the three cemeteries in the Municipality. I may be wrong, but I believe that all of the cemeteries in Sorell are managed by churches, not the council.

Back in 1993 during the Tasmanian forced amalgamations, Sorell Council fought hard to gobble Tasman up, frankly that is exactly what will happen this time, it won't be a merger, it will be a gobble up! At the time, Tasman fought even harder to not be amalgamated with Sorell. The residents of Murdunna and part of Eaglehawk Neck, then part of the Sorell Municipality, fought to be moved to the Tasman Municipality. These residents were sick of the constant severe neglect by Sorell. Tasman was subsequently enlarged to include this area. If you wish to check Tasman's financial records for the years following 1993, you will find that Tasman spent hundreds of thousands of dollars over the years just trying to get Sommers Bay Road, Old Jetty Road and various other roads in that area up to a reasonable condition. Tasman Council didn't have an enormous income back then and, if you check the records, you will find the original Tasman ratepayers footed most of the bill for the improvements in the new area, not good enough Sorell! If Sorell Council couldn't cope with providing reasonable service to this outlying area, what hope do the rest of us have who live even further away, the thought is truly terrifying, we won't just be neglected, we'll be the completely forgotten, disenfranchised, fringe dwellers.

Southern Water now Tas. Water saved Sorell's bacon financially when Tas. Water got lumped with Sorell's appalling sewage issues in the Southern Beaches. Further evidence of poor management.

The Wielangta Road is a good example of Sorell's apparent lack of interest in tourism. A magnificent scenic drive connecting to the east coast. Glamorgan Spring Bay's end of the road is well maintained, Sorell's end is a disgrace and barely passable. Sorell may claim it's not their road, but they have ratepayers and continue to allow development on this road.

Apparently Sorell wants to not only take Tasman, but to also take Richmond and Clarence's industrial zone. Sorell doesn't really have iconic tourist attractions or major industrial zones and it seems their best idea to date is to steal or cherry pick the things they don't have from their neighbours. Perhaps

the Review Board could give some consideration to carving up Sorell and providing the appropriate portions to their neighbouring Councils?

Sorell doesn't really attract tourists as such, they just pass through Sorell, perhaps stopping to purchase petrol or groceries on their drive to get to somewhere better, Tasman or Glamorgan Spring Bay. Sorell's businesses would benefit from our tourists, because they have to travel through Sorell, like the rest of us. You'd be lucky to find a place to stay (accommodation) in Sorell, but then why would you want to stay there, unlike Tasman, what is there to see or do?

Given that Tasman attracted 320,000 tourists in 2015 (I expect the current figures would be much higher), I would guess that there are some at Sorell who would believe that Tasman will be the jewel in their crown. But once they realise that tourists aren't ratepayers and therefore don't contribute to council's finances and, in fact, cause additional wear and tear on our roads and cost council additional expense for things such as rubbish bins, public toilets and the ongoing cleaning and maintenance of same and, most of these costs must be met by Tasman ratepayers, Sorell will quickly lose interest in all of us down here and redirect our funding to those things that are important them. This statement isn't meant to be negative about tourism, many businesses rely on it and it keeps many locals employed, I am just simply stating the facts.

Probably for over the past twenty years there has been a great deal of work undertaken branding the Tasman region and the subsequent marketing of such. Together with that, Tourism Strategies for the Tasman region were developed and are reviewed and updated, renewed or re-written on a regular basis. This has all assisted in building the Tasman region as a destination of choice for tourists. Does Sorell even have a tourism and marketing strategy? No doubt, an amalgamated council will require a new name, either the South-East Council or worse Sorell. Being amalgamated with Sorell could set Tasman back many, many years regarding tourism, branding, marketing and strategies.

I'll concede that Tasman residents may stop at Sorell on our way home from Hobart to purchase groceries at one of the two supermarkets, but I personally don't make a special trip to Sorell just to buy groceries, I try to shop locally and when I need to go to Hobart I'll stop at Sorell on the way home. We all need to pass through Sorell, we don't have a choice, but if we wanted to live at Sorell we'd move there, we certainly don't want to be amalgamated with them.

It may seem like we're picking on Sorell, well I guess we are, hopefully when we've finished they won't want to have anything to do with us regarding amalgamation, I wouldn't want a bar of us either if I were them, we can be hard to get along with, particularly if you're trying to take us over, as Sorell is. They may decide that they don't want to continue to resource share with us also, but that's fine, we'll just increase our resource sharing with Brighton a trustworthy Council, as we did in the past. Hopefully Sorell may learn that it isn't wise to double-cross Tasman residents because we come out fighting. We're picking on Tasman as well, so perhaps it's nothing personal?

Tasman embarked on resource sharing approximately ten years ago, as reflected in our much improved financial position. Tasman Council has had to be innovative and forward thinking to continually evolve in order to address financial sustainability issues and manage community needs and expectations. Amalgamation is anything but innovative and what more do we have to do to be left alone, we have well and truly proven ourselves over the past decade, consistently punching above our weight. On the other hand Sorell only saw the light regarding resource sharing five years ago, Tasman certainly doesn't want to be shackled to Sorell, who are at least five years behind the more innovative councils in the State.

But of course the residents of Tasman are more than happy for the Council to continue with the existing arrangements and to identify, develop and enhance further resource sharing opportunities into the future. The last decade has proven it to be a win, win formula, ensuring that local employment and services are maintained, whilst providing considerable savings to Tasman.

The newly elected Tasmanian Liberal Government needs to be aware that Tasman residents won't wear this amalgamation. They wouldn't wear it in 1993 and several years later when the Liberal Party announced that they would conduct another round of forced Council amalgamations in Tasmania, they lost the election because of it. I'm happy to confess that it was the first time I had ever voted Labor and clearly I wasn't alone and once you've swung the first time, making you a swinging voter, as I now consider myself to be, it's not that hard to continue doing so. Governments would know that those who vote for the same political party year after year are not the ones that make the difference, swinging voters can bring down Governments. Tasman residents will not wear this now either! It's supposed to be voluntary, let's be very clear, the majority of Tasman residents are not in favour of it, have not volunteered, and will not voluntarily merge with Sorell.

The precedence was set several years ago when Glamorgan Spring Bay and Break O' Day Councils got the idea that they would like to amalgamate, the Review Board recommended against this. Sorell tried to muscle in on this deal at the eleventh hour, with hilarious consequences. Tasman residents do not want to be amalgamated with Sorell, Sorell can amalgamate with whom-ever they like, as long as it's not with us.

I note in the Discussion Paper that the Board will consider options for maintaining representation and minimising the loss of representation in any transitional process associated with any potential merger proposed under a merged council option. The Discussion Paper also goes on to say that wards could provide an option to maintain local representation, at least as a part of a transitional process towards the adoption of a consolidated local government electorate. The key words in these statements are "transitional process" meaning that we may maintain our current quota of seven councillors for a year or two, if we're lucky, after that we're on our own, our local government representation will be virtually gone.

Once the transition process is complete, I'm not sure who decides when it's complete, presumably Sorell councillors. Tasman electors will be faced with trying to elect one or if very lucky two councillors onto the Sorell Council. Tasman has 2340 electors and Sorell has 10,164, what hope will Tasman have of gaining meaningful representation on the new Sorell Council. If we could manage to elect one councillor, one against eight, or two, two against seven, those councillors from the Tasman region will have a constant battle to get their constituent's issues heard. There goes not only our representation, but our services and, dare I say, all of our money will be spent at Sorell. One of the principles that must be applied in the Consultation Paper is to preserve and maintain local representation, the fact is you cannot and will not meet this principle, by your own admission. Sure you may do it for the transitional period, but once Sorell is in total control, it's all over for the Tasman residents.

Tasman usually has a very high voter turnout, mostly the second highest in the State. Our usually high voter turnout reflects that there is still strong community support and interest in local government, our local council and council business. Sorell electors do not have the same interest in Sorell Council, as reflected in their voter turnout. Perhaps their community have lost interest in Sorell Council. I would think if Tasman was amalgamated with Sorell, it would be years before many Tasman electors could bring themselves to vote for Sorell candidates and may well decide not to bother voting in Council elections at all, like many at Sorell appear to have already done.

We know all of our Councillors and can have a chat with them in the street or phone them to discuss our issues or we can drop into the Council Offices and complete a public request form, pay our rates, register our dogs, purchase photocopying, attend Council Meetings, submit building applications or to conduct other council business. All of this will no longer be possible once our staff are gone and our Council Chambers, Offices and Depot are closed and sold off to make Sorell some money.

Furthermore, if we have to travel over an hour to Sorell to conduct council business, we will eat there, shop there, bank there, utilise the pharmacies and visit doctors and conduct other business there, all great for Sorell, but this will be financially and socially devastating for Tasman businesses and communities. There will also be a greatly reduced interest in council business, who wants to travel over an hour to attend Council Meetings?

Without a council presence and reduced policing/governance of council issues, why bother to travel over an hour to submit building applications or register our dogs, we'll be even more isolated, marginalised and disadvantaged, dare I suggest that we'll all go rogue or feral down here. I can hardly wait (not) for us to all start bull-dozing land, chopping down trees, running our sewage onto our neighbours land, Crown or Council land, or beaches and waterways, letting our dogs run wild, playing loud music and fighting with our neighbours, we'll become the Wild West in the south-east of Tassie (although, I have an ironic smile as I write this, it really is that serious). There would be some who don't live in Tasman who would already think that we are the Wild West, but that's okay also, we know we live in paradise and we don't want them to know in case they want to move here. Although we have plenty of former politicians who live or own shacks here.

The same applies to our Council Works Crew, once they've gone, we'll be lucky to receive anything but minimal maintenance on our roads, we'll receive hardly any slashing and or mowing and maintenance of our parks, recreation grounds, etc. As for capital expenditure, this will be a thing of the past, just a distant memory, as Sorell will have far more important things to spend our money on.

Sorell will have enough problems of their own trying to contend with the fact that they are the fastest grown municipality in Tasmania, do you really think they'll be interested in what's happening in the former Tasman Municipality? There may be some Sorell councillors who would claim that this won't happen, whilst they're trying to gobble us up, but once they have the numbers sitting around the council table, they can do as they please.

Sorell has become a satellite city of Hobart or Clarence, growing to be a suburb of Hobart/Rosny and has lost its rural feel. Tasman in area is comparatively larger than Sorell and is still very much rural with scattered communities. It would be far more appropriate for Sorell to be amalgamated with Clarence or Hobart or both, like with like. Tasman has very few, if any, synergies with Sorell.

The Tasman Municipality is virtually an island and quite isolated and for many of us over an hour away from Sorell. When major disasters strike like the devastating 2013 bushfires, we were left with no power and no access in or out for approximately a week, which clearly highlighted our isolation. We had to revert to utilising boats to provide necessities and ship people in and out of the municipality. Tasman Councillors did the best they could under extremely difficult and stressful circumstances and at least they were here. Where would we be as part of the Sorell Municipality, the Sorell Councillors wouldn't have been able to gain access to us to render assistance. The Port Arthur tragedy is another example of Tasman's tragic history and our isolation. Following both of these tragic events, Tasman Council was instrumental in the recovery process, which took years and for some probably will never be totally resolved.

The working paper entitled Local Government Amalgamation in New South Wales cited that communities of interest is a fundamental issue that should be considered during structural reform.

In rural areas such as Tasman people do relate strongly to the locality in which we reside, and why wouldn't we? We are living in our own slice of heaven down here, and everyone knows just about everyone. With very few redeemable features and the influx of new comers, I dare say that has been lost at Sorell. The thought of Sorell having anything to do with our spectacularly beautiful municipality is beyond my imagination.

In Tasman there are very strong ties to the places we live, our family and the people we associate with and our jobs or voluntary work within the community. We live, work and play together and when our lifestyle is threatened we band together and stand up and fight against that threat. Hence, what's happening right now, this amalgamation issue is one of the biggest threats to our way of life. Sure, we fight amongst ourselves fairly often, but that's fine, we're allowed to, but once we're threatened by external forces, all of that is put aside, to protect what is ours.

The old families, and there are still many of them in Tasman, have many generations of proud history within this Municipality. Many have over 100 years of proud links to the Tasman Council, with family members either being employees or elected members of Tasman Council, both past and present, and often over several generations. We maintain very strong family ties and connections to Tasman, we have none with Sorell. Our forefathers built the Tasman region and we therefore feel a very strong ownership of it, we won't sit back and allow over 100 years of local government history and many, many years before that of proud history and heritage to be completely wiped out to Sorell. Sure we also happily accept and welcome newcomers, our shack owners and tourists, but we have maintained our rural feel, which is our greatest attraction and what brings people here in the first place.

Most residents of Tasman maintain a very strong sense of community, our community spirit remains very strong, and we're always willing to help a neighbour in need or in grief. Having a loved one pass away can really highlight this, the endless stream of visitors with homemade cakes, bunches of flowers, cards and messages, phone calls, attendance at funerals and various other expressions of sympathy can make you appreciate living in a small community, where everybody knows everybody and at times such as these, they really care and feel your pain.

In the wee small hours of Easter Monday my husband's phone rang, it was a resident of Eaglehawk Neck informing him that our boat had slipped its mooring and was now sitting on Pirates Bay Beach. We moor our boat for six months of the year at Pirates Bay and six month of the year at Wedge Bay, where we live. My husband was quickly out of bed and with a couple of phone calls he was on his way to Eaglehawk Neck. When he arrived there were at least six people on site, ready, willing and able to tow our boat off the beach and safely back to its mooring. That afternoon he phoned a relative who is a ratepayer in the Sorell Municipality to inform them about how he had spent his morning. Without any prompting and totally unsolicited, their comment was, "you know, if that happened up here, you'd be lucky to find anyone to help you." How strangely current and topical is this comment, and serves to prove much of what I have been saying in this letter about the differences between Tasman and Sorell, and confirms my thoughts that the community spirit at Sorell is long gone.

Personally, I can look out of my front window across the beautiful Wedge Bay and see as far as Betsey Island, in the mouth of the Derwent River, and Mount Wellington. I can look out of my back window and see Tasmanian bush as far as the eye can see. If I choose, I can go out of my front door and walk on three kilometres of beautiful sparkling white sand on White Beach or go out of my back door and go bush walking. I am lulled to sleep every night with the sound of the sea crashing or lapping on the

sand. Most of us who live here have spectacular water views or views of beautiful farm land or amazing forests. You may ask, what does this have to do with the amalgamation debate, well it's all about the way we feel and the links we have to the beautiful place we live, most of us wouldn't choose to live anywhere else. Like the movie the Castle, "it's all about the vibe" (smiling as I write this). It's something that's very difficult to explain, but it's certainly felt by many Tasman residents. There is a catch phrase currently going around in Tasman, merge with Sorell...end up in hell. How can we continue to view the place we live as heaven when we have just ended up being merged with hell?

It is always a relief to return home after spending a day in Hobart and having to travel through the rat race of Sorell to get home. What a pleasure it is to return to our calm, quiet, laid back, sleepy, safe and beautiful rural municipality.

Another point that's really difficult to explain, is the interpretation of whether you are considered a local or non-local. It is a topic that has personally intrigued me most of my life, but I can't claim to be an expert on the subject, as I was born and bred here and so were many generations before me, so I don't know what it feels like to be a new comer to the area. Personally, I have generally accepted that all people who choose to live here are locals. I have heard many times, from those who have recently moved to the area, that you have to live here for twenty-five years before you are considered a local. In fact only the other day, someone said to me, that they have lived here for twenty-one years so they now considered themselves as locals. I always find these comments extremely intriguing and have generally thought that those who make these comments or on the basis of their behaviour have isolated themselves as being non-locals. As far as I can tell, it has very little to do with the "locals" making this judgment call, I have yet to find the "local police". I'm not sure if this phenomenon is an idiosyncrasy of Tasman or applies to all rural areas. Given this phenomenon, the point I'm making is, do you really think that we will accept being represented and governed by Sorell councillors, who are most definitely not locals and will never be accepted as such, I think not!

This letter will be sent from both myself and my husband, he has just graduated as a local, because he married a local and he has lived here for 27 years (tongue in cheek comment).

Initially I had planned to leave the General Manager unscathed, but having listened to community members on this topic, it is impossible to do so. Although, I'm happy to continue with the existing resource sharing arrangements, the resource sharing of a General Manager is one step too far, one should understand that this is a very unique situation. Given the current amalgamation discussions between Tasman and Sorell, it could easily be argued that the General Manager has a conflict of interest. Unfortunately when Tasman agreed to share their General Manager with Sorell, this situation was very predictable.

There are some who seem to view this issue as a fate accomplie or inevitable. It is far from a fate accomplie or inevitable for us living in Tasman, it is our lives and our futures.

Shame on particular individuals, having proven the community correct, that they couldn't be trusted to deal appropriately with this level of trust or responsibility. This is viewed as total treachery and betrayal and seen by some at Tasman as an act of treason! This situation has certainly highlighted to Tasman electors that there needs to be a review and rethink about the existing structures (staff and councillors) within Tasman Council.

It could be viewed that Sorell Council stole our General Manager and now they're trying to steal our Municipality. There's nothing new in that, they've always wanted Tasman, but their betrayal and treachery has proven that they haven't evolved enough to be trusted as a resource sharing partner

and this should serve as a warning to all of their local government neighbours and other Tasmanian Councils.

Around the Tasman community the sense of betrayal, resentment and anger is palpable. I have heard many an angry outburst over the past month about the General Manager, both Tasman and Sorell mayors, and certain councillors, and I have to agree with them. I have given up trying to contain my anger whilst writing this submission. I'm sure the Review Board could feel the anger in the room during the hearings at Nubeena on the 27<sup>th</sup> of March 2018. Various community members attended the Council Meeting held on the 28<sup>th</sup> of March 2018 and again the resentment and anger was palpable.

In the past twelve to eighteen months property sales have skyrocketed and it is virtually impossible to find long term rental accommodation in Tasman and this has generated increased building activity around the Municipality.

Given that Sorell is the fastest growing municipality in the State and probably only because it has stagnated for years and frankly people are only moving there as an overflow from the cities for more affordable housing within commuting time of the city, making Sorell, as I've stated previously, a satellite of the city councils, and once again making it more appropriate to be amalgamated with Clarence or Hobart. I find it very interesting that in 2014-15 Sorell had 250 development applications and Tasman had 113, Tasman's is almost half of Sorell's. I would also suggest that in the last financial year Tasman's building and development applications would have increased substantially. Tasman isn't doing too badly at all considering its comparison to the fastest growing municipality in the State.

With the expansion of Tassal, promising over seventy new jobs, major upgrades to the school, the cruise ships visiting the Port Arthur Historic Site, the Three Capes Track and other bush walks, Shipstern Bluff (becoming iconic for surfies), game fishing at Pirates Bay, 1000's of hectares of National Parks, beautiful safe swimming beaches and outstanding fishing in bays and from beaches and jetties, and new businesses such as the Lavender Farm, Whisky Distillery, vineyards, and planned new major developments such as The Remarkable Lodge and Federal Hotels development, and the list goes on, together with our existing businesses and many other attractions, our Municipality is booming! Why cause all of this disruption and anguish with discussions of amalgamating with Sorell, we don't want or need Sorell interfering. We have our own set of unique challenges and opportunities, which are polar opposite to Sorell. This list also begs the question, what do we have in common with Sorell?

Sorell is well on the way to losing its rural feel and its sense of community. Its close proximity to Hobart is the reason for the influx of new residents, who would mostly commute to Hobart for work and would socialise and seek entertainment in Hobart as well. This will contribute to the further dilution of the sense of community in Sorell, with just more people driving through and not becoming involved with the communities in which they live, because they have better places to go and better things to do.

It seems the only reason this crazy proposal is even being entertained is because Sorell is Tasman's only neighbour, it's them or nothing, well we don't want them, amalgamate them with Clarence. Their other neighbours Glamorgan Spring Bay Council and Clarence Council rightfully ran a mile. It's a shame our Council didn't prove themselves to be as smart.

I think I have proven at length that the four guiding principles as documented in the Discussion Paper that amalgamation must be in the best interest of ratepayers, improve the level of services for communities, preserve and maintain local representation and, ensure that the financial status of the entities is strengthened, cannot and will not be met for Tasman electors, residents and ratepayers.

The proposed amalgamation appears to make absolutely no sense, is ridiculous in the extreme and is change for the sake of change, without any logical justification for doing so and the four guiding principles cannot be met for the Tasman Municipality.

I realise this submission is very long, but I seem to have been appointed the reluctant and unofficial spokesperson for quite a few community members. Together with my thoughts, I have added the thoughts and experiences of various community members. I have spent days researching the various documents provided on this issue. Some of the submissions may appear to be similar and that's because they are, I have written letters and shared lots of information to assist others in making their submissions either verbally or in writing because they didn't feel confident in doing it alone. So I confess that the long rambling letters are my fault, but they're still very much based on the genuine thoughts of the people who signed or provided them. I provided a voice to those who weren't afforded it by Tasman Council and I don't apologise for that.

I only hope that you take very seriously the petition with 500 signatures, because again that gave many people a voice who would have found the Review Hearings and submission writing intimidating, or confronting, or were unable to do so for various reasons, and were therefore left unable to participate in this process. It seems that that may have been the intention of certain people to exclude as many people as they could from the process. They would know full well that by denying them a voice in the survey process, not holding public meetings, and then referring this issue to the Review Board that those people whose opinions didn't align with theirs would struggle to be heard, absolutely appalling. I hope I have circumvented the great lengths certain people have gone to in attempting to silence the majority of the Tasman community. For many this disgusting behaviour and betrayal is unforgivable.

Yours sincerely,

Jan and Andrew Barwick