

**VERBAL SUBMISSION TO THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOARD
MAYOR DOUG CHIPMAN
26 MARCH 2018**

Mr Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to make this verbal submission about options for Sorell and Tasman councils.

Clarence City Council will be following up this verbal submission with a written submission and I am grateful that you have agreed to extend the deadline for that until Wednesday 18th April 2018.

My original purpose for providing this submission was to argue that the boundaries of the Clarence local government area should not be considered in this review.

Notwithstanding your letter of the 20th March 2018 which advises that boundary adjustments will not be considered by this review, you flagged the possibility of suggesting to the Minister he hold another review for that purpose.

Hence, it is still necessary for me to explain why boundary adjustments involving Clarence are a bad idea.

I would like to start by explaining why in any event there is no need to prop up Sorell and Tasman councils.

Viability of Sorell and Tasman Councils

The Board in assessing the 3 options for the viability of Sorell and Tasman councils has indicated in its Consultation Paper (page 11) that it would be looking at up to 9 matters.

Most if not all of these matters represent challenges for any council in one way or another, and are directly addressed through the quality of governance provided by the council, irrespective of size and rate base. Well-managed councils establish credible expectations and plans for their communities, and then competently deliver against those expectations. They also live within their means and effectively lobby for external funding assistance.

To illustrate this point about governance, Glenorchy City Council with a relatively large population, business precinct and rate base was recently found not to be on a viable trajectory. Some of Tasmania's smallest councils were recently assessed by the Auditor General to be sustainable and viable in the long term. The issue here is that size and rate base are not the determinants of viability, so much as good management.

My observation, through working with and observing both Sorell and Tasman councils over a number of years is that both are relatively well-governed and so there should be no reason why under any of the 3 options they should not continue to be viable. The KPMG Feasibility Study did identify challenges each council faces in the longer term, but did not suggest they could not be overcome with good management.

The close working relationship that exists between Clarence, Sorell and Tasman councils, and to a lesser extent, Glamorgan Spring Bay Council commenced back in the 1990s with the establishment of the South East Regional Development Association, an associated body with a membership comprising the 4 councils.

In recent years the Association has been very effective at attracting funds and commissioning the KPMG Economic Infrastructure Development Study for the region which was submitted to the State Government. Many of the recommendations have been followed up on in a very positive way and already significant projects announced.

The Association also made a submission on behalf of the region to the recent Australian Electoral Commission's Redistribution Committee.

A further project of significance between Clarence, Sorell and Tasman councils has been the development of the Copping Landfill facility. The three councils acquired the site and lease it to the Joint Authority operating the site. The three councils, along with Kingborough Council, make up the Joint Authority. The site has required significant investment to date but has already begun to provide a positive return to both its owners and operators.

The prospect for increased collaboration and shared services between the councils is certainly very good.

These close relationships, developed over many years, set the scene for the three councils, along with Glamorgan Spring Bay Council, to take up the Minister's offer to explore voluntary merger options.

It is now a matter of public record that a majority (52%) of the Clarence residents responding to our survey chose not to support the amalgamation option, largely in my view, because they perceived Clarence City Council was doing a good job and they did not want it meddled with. Indeed, biennial surveys of Clarence residents over many years reveal an extremely high satisfaction rate with the services provided by Clarence City Council.

Notwithstanding, Clarence is still committed to working with the councils to its east with both SERDA and the Copping landfill site as two standouts. Clarence also provides a bridge between the eastern rural councils and economic hub of metropolitan Hobart of which it is clearly part.

In essence, it is my belief that both Sorell and Tasman councils, while facing significant challenges over the years, are well governed and have the capacity with good management and strong regional cooperation to meet their challenges.

Forced Boundary Adjustments

The logic of the forced breaking up of large well-run sustainable councils to prop up struggling small rural councils defies the expectation that local government in Tasmania should be based on fewer but stronger councils. The stark reality of such a proposal would be exposed by considering the breakup of some of the other larger councils in the State to support neighbouring rural councils.

For the SE of Tasmania, the KPMG review certainly did not even entertain the possibility of such boundary adjustments and has no analysis to support them.

Furthermore, to the communities involved, such a move would certainly seem like the forced amalgamation the Minister has vowed to avoid.

By way of background, Clarence Council formed as a rural council with a population of just 1552 in 1860 with Cambridge as one of its 3 founding wards. The municipality grew rapidly after WWII to the point where it was recognised as a city in 1988 and is now has the largest population for a local government area in Southern Tasmania, 10% greater than that of the City of Hobart.

Nevertheless, Clarence has never lost its rural roots and historical connections. Today Clarence City Council's commitment to its communities in the rapidly developing Cambridge area, and in the agricultural and tourism precincts of the Coal River Valley is stronger than ever, underpinned by close personal contacts between community leaders, elected representatives and council officers. Those contacts, based on mutual trust and respect, take years to develop.

The Clarence recycled water scheme that takes greywater out of the Rosny, Rokeby and Cambridge sewerage treatment plants to irrigate the Coal River Valley could not have been conceived and delivered without the advocacy and management skills of a large council encompassing all parts of the scheme. As an 11% shareholder of Taswater, Clarence Council is still strongly lobbying on behalf of the farmers in the Coal River Valley for the expansion of this scheme to take greywater from Hobart and Glenorchy.

The development of Cambridge would not have occurred if Clarence City Council did not have the foresight and capacity to build the requisite infrastructure such as the Cambridge sewerage treatment plant.

Hobart International Airport is important infrastructure for the Southern Region and must remain with a strong metropolitan Council to ensure its opportunities are maximised.

Continued support will be required to deliver projects such as the Coal River Valley Gourmet Trail between Cambridge and Richmond identified in the Richmond Destination Action Plan and launched by myself late last year.

It is essential for ratepayers of Cambridge and Richmond to continue as part of Clarence if they are to flourish, rather than for them to simply become cash cows to prop up a smaller rural council. Certainly, the unanimous feedback I have received over the past three weeks is that the residents of both Cambridge and Richmond would fiercely oppose a move away from Clarence.

Furthermore, to proceed down the path of annexing parts of Clarence in favour of Sorell and Tasman would risk undermining the excellent collaboration that is benefiting the whole region today, and also risk damaging the economic and cultural bridge that Clarence provides between the southeast councils and the economic hub of metropolitan Hobart.

Conclusions

In conclusion:

- There is strong evidence that both Sorell and Tasman councils will be viable into the long term and hence any outcome of this review should also be finding them viable.
- The concept of annexing any of Clarence as part of the review or a follow on review should be dismissed immediately as a bad idea. It would be detrimental to the ratepayers of the communities involved, it would be outside of the spirit of voluntary mergers promised as an article of faith by the Minister, and it would risk existing regional ties that benefit the whole of SE Tasmania.

Alderman Doug Chipman
Mayor
City of Clarence

Given what the region may become, what could be done to respond to the potential pressure points/ risks?		Refer Page #
Roads and transport	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Investigate opportunities to improve Sorell/ Cambridge public transport services, having regard to the review of current public transport contracts from 2016-17 (to take effect from 2018) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Investigate opportunities to improve on current services levels i.e. scheduling, frequency of service, express etc. ii. Investigate opportunities to construct bus lanes through key congestion points on the Tasman Highway iii. Improve utilisation of park and ride infrastructure, shelters, modify kerb and gutter etc. as required 2. Continue to investigate opportunities undertake upgrades to the Arthur Highway through to Port Arthur and surrounds as necessary 3. Investigate the feasibility of undertaking gravel road upgrades to key visitor sites <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Three Capes Track ii. The Coal Mines 4. Investigate the feasibility of new/ upgraded road infrastructure as part of the State's 10 year Roads Infrastructure Plan due in 2016 at key points/ routes in the south-east region: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. The Airport round about ii. Cambridge by-pass iii. The Richmond Road from Cambridge to Richmond iv. Sorell by-pass (to south-west) v. Sorell By-pass (to north east) 	47-48
Water and sewerage	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Investigate demand and potential improvements to water and waste water services at the Port Arthur Historic Site and the Coal Mines, including the possibility for these services to be managed by TasWater 2. Consider options for Irrigation schemes currently owned and operated by TasWater to be transferred to Tas Irrigation for the ongoing management of irrigation schemes. 3. Monitor the adequacy and supply of water and waste water services to major private sector employers in the south east region, including but not limited to Houston Farms, Ingham and TASSAL 4. Factor planning for the southern beaches water and sewerage systems in TasWater's longer term strategic asset management plans 	49
Energy and communications	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Investigate options for the provision of gas supply to the eastern shore including Rosny Park, Mornington Industrial Estate and Cambridge Industrial Park. 2. Undertake upgrades to address communication black spot issues in Tasman and Glamorgan Spring Bay. 	50

What else may need to be done in relation to some of the other economic development enablers? (Section 7)		Refer Page #
Skilled labour force	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Liaise with DOE and other stakeholders to advocate for changes that are beneficial to the region ii. Develop programs that will improve literacy levels and business skills for people in the agricultural industry iii. Develop programs that will improve skills and customer service standards in the tourism and hospitality sector iv. Develop improved approaches to optimising VET and DOE program to continue to increase participation in Trade Training Centres, since these centres are new with good facilities, but are currently under utilised 	58
Lifestyle/ health	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue to work closely with the new Primary Health Network provider, TasPHN to effect change in the determinants of health – 80% of which have no dependence on health infrastructure (physical environment 10%, socio-economic factors 40%, health behaviours 30%) and only 20% relate to access to health care 2. Ensure all health support services – GP's, multi-purpose centres etc. – remain appropriately accessible and scaled to deal with the foreseeable growth in economic activity driven by an expanding population, visitors and jobs, guided by a target of 1 GP per 1,000 resident population 	59
Governance	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consider options to establish a more formalised governance model for SERDA, including the need for a dedicated regional resource to advance economic development initiatives on a broader regional scale. This needs to be considered within the current context of local government reform. 	60

Given what the region may become, what could be done to respond to the potential pressure points/ risks?		Refer Page #
Social infrastructure	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Coordinate the objectives and plans of Sorell and Clarence in relation to proposals for regional sporting facilities at Pembroke Park and Seven Mile beach 2. Continue to develop public/ social infrastructure to support growing visitor demands in townships. This would include, but not be limited to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Infrastructure to facilitate cruise ship visits to Spring Bay ii. Improved streetscapes, gardens, tree plantings, foot paths etc. to be more appealing to visitors iii. Improved visitor centres with new branding and improved services at Triabunna, Swansea, Bicheno and Freycinet iv. Upgrades/ replacements of jetties, boat ramps etc. and improved supporting amenities such as parking, toilet facilities, fish cleaning areas v. Improved public amenities such as 'loos with views', baby changing facilities etc. vi. Improved and more coordinated/ cohesive signage 3. Continue to liaise with DOE to advocate for changes that are beneficial to the region <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Explore options to improve the perception and performance of the Sorell High School ii. Investigate the option of the extending Sorell High School to years 11/12 iii. Understand the rationale behind DOE projections that, it is claimed, would have Sorell with no change to the potential student numbers for 10 years iv. Investigate options to rebalance student numbers between in-zone and out-of-zone schools that are having adverse impacts on schools such as Cambridge Primary School v. Investigate pre-school and after school care options at schools and in the community more generally 	51-52
Commercial/ Industrial land/ airport	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue to investigate demand for additional infrastructure on appropriate commercial/ industrial land to support <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Expanded growth in direct freight through Hobart Airport e.g. cool stores, quarantine facilities etc. ii. Expanded services relating to Antarctica e.g. quarantine facilities, storage etc. 	53
Residential/ housing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a Sorell Activity Centre Strategy 2. Continue to progress Sorell's residential development, but with regard to consequential impacts on regional infrastructure pressure points, notably traffic impacts, and other regional settlement plans 3. Develop and implement the Cambridge Master Plan (including potential by-pass) 4. Continue to progress the development of the Triabunna Marina Views Estate and the urban redesign at Triabunna 	53-54

Alderman Doug Chipman

Hobart Public Hearing - 26 March 2018 at 3.30pm

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

Submissions in addition to the written submission

Relationship with Hobart International Airport

A working commercial relationship between the Council and Hobart International Airport is challenging - even for a bigger council like Clarence City Council. In recent years, the relationship has matured and as Clarence City Council is a larger council it has a position of strength in the relationship.

SERDA

The South East Regional Development Association (SERDA) is an incorporated association, not a joint authority. SERDA has four (4) members: Clarence City Council, Sorell Council, Tasman Council, and Glamorgan-Spring Bay Council. The current President is the Mayor of Sorell Council. I am the current Vice President and the other two Mayors are the other members. The Secretariat of SERDA is the General Manager of Sorell and Tasman Councils. Clarence City Council also provides support with its Economic Development Officer attending all SERDAs quarterly meetings. It is fair to say SERDA is more of an advocacy group with a strategic focus for the region. Up until recently it has not had any operational matters. However, given the way SERDA is set up there is no reason why SERDA could not take on operational matters.

SERDA commissioned a KPMG review addressing a number of development issues facing the SERDA area – however, a number of issues have been announced/addressed during the recent state election campaign. The areas covered by the KPMG review include: social infrastructure; industrial land and airport; residential housing; skilled labour force; lifestyle and health; governance; roads and transport; water and sewerage; and energy and communications. Deliverables from election promises of the new Government include: a new high school in Sorell; improved bus services linking in with the airport, Rosny Park, and the city; improved road infrastructure from Sorell to airport roundabout; and working collaboratively to extend irrigation in Sorell. I table the Executive Summary of the KPMG review.

Increasing level of disparity between service levels/provision
by regional and larger metropolitan councils

I do not think the Board should be considering or taking on this issue as it is not specific to Sorell and Tasman Councils (and surrounding councils). Disparity between the service levels/provision by regional and larger metropolitan councils is a situation applicable right across Tasmania and it should be addressed through a state-wide review and not in a discrete two council review. I agree that it is an issue and it ought to be a state-wide debate.

I'll raise another point, Clarence City Council is a multi-faceted area containing both urban and rural areas. For example, south of Lauderdale there is no water and sewerage services provided. The Council has looked it a number of times but the people that reside down there do not want it and the bills that come along with it. People have chosen a way of life that does not need to apply to everyone.

Boundary adjustments

No adjustments to Clarence City Council's boundary come to mind. I know Break O'Day Council has laid a claim to 'Glamorgan' and I would think Sorell are best placed to take 'Spring Bay' – the Board may want to consider this. However, it is all about voluntary amalgamation and if there is another agenda then the community should be able to analyse it and make comment.

I understand that the Board is tasked to consider the three options and, if it finds that none are viable, then the Board must report this to the Minister. Should that be the case, I would urge the Board against any particular avenues involving boundary adjustments and suggest you diligence stops at reporting that none of the three options are viable.