

Level 3
169 Main Road
Moonah Tasmania 7009

PO Box 307
Moonah Tas 7009

Phone (03) 6208 8700
Fax (03) 6208 8791
ballot.box@tec.tas.gov.au
www.tec.tas.gov.au

Reference 50 003

Sorell and Tasman Councils Review Submissions

Local Government Board

GPO Box

HOBART TAS 7001

submitted by email: lgboard@dpac.tas.gov.au

Dear Chair

Submission: Voluntary Amalgamation of the Sorell and Tasman Councils

Thank you for your invitation, and an extension of time, to provide a written submission as part of the public consultation process for the review of the Sorell and Tasman Councils voluntary amalgamation and shared service options (the Review).

As stated in your letter, the Review's terms of reference provide for four guiding principles for the consideration of reform options. Namely, any reform must:

1. Be in the interests of ratepayers;
2. Improve the level of service for communities;
3. Preserve and maintain local representation; and
4. Ensure that the financial status of the entities is strengthened.

As the Electoral Commissioner, I believe it is my responsibility to provide comment in relation to the third guiding principle. More specifically, answering the question: *Will the Tasman community be able to be represented on the new council if Sorell and Tasman councils amalgamate?*

The Hare-Clark counting system is used to elect Members of the Tasmanian House of Assembly and Councillors to all 29 Tasmanian local government councils. Hare-Clark is designed so that the proportion of seats/councillors elected to the House/Council is in close proportion of the support that exists within the electorate/municipal area. In other words, smaller groups can still be represented under Hare-Clark.

At the 2014 local government elections the enrolment figures for the two councils were:

Sorell Council	10,164	81.29% enrolment of the amalgamated council
Tasman Council	2,340	18.71% enrolment of the amalgamated council

If the new council were to elect 10 councillors, and the electors were to largely vote for candidates from within their old municipal boundaries it would be reasonable to see the election of eight Sorell based councillors and two Tasman based councillors.

Further, in general small councils have higher participation rates at local government elections. Over the last five local government elections (2005-2014) the participation rates for each of the councils have been:

Sorell Council	55.98%	~77.21% of votes returned if councils were amalgamated
Tasman Council	71.74%	~22.78% of votes returned if councils were amalgamated

In 2009, an analysis of the participation rate of the urban (postcode 7250 and Hadspen) area and the regional area of Meander Valley Council was undertaken. This analysis showed that around 45% of the urban electors returned their votes compared to the around 65% of the rural electors.

Alternatively, local representation could be protected through having a proportion of councillors elected directly from Sorell and Tasman districts or wards. Following the establishment of the *Local Government Act 1993*, 46 councils were amalgamated into 29 councils. Two of the seventeen councils going to election in 1994 (Launceston City and Sorell) decided to elect its councillors from three districts each electing four representatives.

In the case of Launceston city, these districts (East, North and South West) were the three former municipal areas of St Leonards, Lilydale and Launceston (respectively). Sorell was divided into three districts (Dodges Ferry, Dunalley and Sorell). Sorell Council reduced to one district (electing seven members) at the next election (1996) and Launceston City Council reduced to one district (electing 12 members) at the subsequent election (1999).

A model with a ratio of councillors to electors could be dependent on the number of electors but could form a compilation similar to seven from Sorell and two councillors from the Tasman.

I would be happy to provide further information in relation to this submission.

Yours sincerely



Andrew Hawkey

ELECTORAL COMMISSIONER

Friday 13 April 2018