

23rd March 2018.

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

Dear Local Government Board Members,

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

I am 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 to do 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.

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. 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, but how does the Council know that?

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, 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.

Neither Tasman's nor Sorell's surveys were worth the paper (or rather, website) they were written on! There is a petition against the amalgamation of Tasman currently circulating in the Tasman Municipality that should prove all of the above.

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 supported 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 current 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.

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.

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?

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! I have been told that a particular

person who is pushing the amalgamation barrow, is too scared to hold public meetings, this should be a good indication of the community's feelings on this topic, and if you're too scared, get out!

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 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?

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 a whole set of serious issues.

Tassal, Port Arthur Historic Site, the M.P.S., the School, Tourism, Fishing, Farming 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 could well be the destruction of our community. 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.

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 deny these facts, but 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 destroys 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.

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, entitled 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.

The K.P.M.G. report and also noted in the Review Board Discussion Paper compares various options. The option of a merger with Tasman and Sorell delivers a combined additional surplus of \$1.3m p.a. The option of resource sharing delivers a combined additional surplus of \$900,000. p.a., 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! What is very clear in the K.P.M.G. report is that the total amalgamation surplus of \$1.3m p.a. 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. 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.

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. 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.

Noted in the Discussion 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 clearly certain councillors didn't read it. After reading these reports, I have to think that somebody is having a lend of us, or there is something seriously wrong with some of the councillors at Tasman, 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 or cover up their decision by saying pathetic, ridiculous 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 the wheel, or sliced bread, or amalgamation! 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.

As I've stated previous 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 the 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.

As noted in the Discussion 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?

Again, according to the Discussion 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.

I note that I have utilised the older 2015-16 financials as noted in the Discussion Paper rather than the current 2016-17 financials, because on Tasman Council's website the 2016-17 financial report is still marked as a draft.

According to recent financial reports, Tasman consistently exceeds most of its financial benchmarks, Sorell 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.

Given the various financial reports I have read in regards to Tasman 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.

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.

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.

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.

Given that Tasman attracted 320,000 tourists in 2015, 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 to 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 on 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.

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.

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 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.

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 dog, purchase photocopying, attend Council Meetings, submit building applications or to conduct other council business. There will also be a greatly reduced interest in Council business, who wants to travel an hour to attend Council Meetings. Once amalgamation occurs this will all stop, no staff, no offices and no Council Chambers.

Without a council presence and reduced policing 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 disadvantage, 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, letting our dogs run wild, playing loud music and fighting with our neighbours, we'll become the wild west in the south of Tassie (although, I have an ironic smile as I write this, it really is that serious).

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.

The same applies to our Council Works Crew, once they've gone, we'll be lucky to receive any maintenance on our roads, we'll receive none or hardly any slashing and 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, given the fact that they are the fastest grown municipality in Tasmania, do you really think they'll be interest 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 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 days. 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. 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 finalised.

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 everyone knows just about everyone. With the influx of new comers, I dare say that has been lost at Sorell.

In Tasman there are very strong ties to the places we live, 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. So over 100 years of proud history and heritage completely wiped out. Sure we also happily accept and welcome newcomers and our shack owners, but we have maintained our rural feel, which is our greatest attraction and what brings them here in the first place.

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 and he may well be viewing the issue as a fate accomplie or inevitable. Unfortunately when Tasman agreed to share their General Manager with Sorell, this situation was very predictable. 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 appears to be total treachery and betrayal and is viewed by many 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.

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 Sorell just close them down and sell them off?

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.

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.

Together 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, alongside our existing businesses, 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.

Sorell is well on the way to losing its rural feel and sense of community. Its close proximity to Hobart is the reason for the influx of new residents, who I guess would mostly commute to Hobart for work and would socialise and seek entertainment in Hobart also. 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 reside, because they have better places to go and better things to do.

The proposed amalgamation appears to be change for change sake, without any logical justification for doing so and is most certainly not in the best interests of Tasman ratepayers and will not improve the level of services for our communities.

Yours sincerely,

John Cooley