

Friday, 6 April 18

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

To Whom It May Concern:

I am a property owner and ratepayer

This letter addresses the Sorell And Tasman Councils Voluntary Amalgamation & Shared Services Options Review, currently before the board:

After reviewing several learned publications on the matter of voluntary and obligatory local council amalgamations, conducted both nationally and internationally, I wish to submit that I am NOT in favour of amalgamating the Tasman Council with the Sorell Shire Council.

It's self evident in these reports that it takes a particularly rare kind of merger to actually realise the economic benefits supposed in these undertakings. Neither Sorell nor Tasman contains the population, the skills or the resources to manifest the supposed savings.

The 'corporate merger' or corporate takeover' model that seems to be touted by the KPMG report, as though it was some kind of holy grail, is entirely inappropriate in this case; and in retrospect, has been shown to be false in many of the studies undertaken.

In addition, after talking with local councillors and local residents, I am even more convinced that the merger is a bad idea because of the reduction in social capital and reduced local representation.

What we are talking about here is community. Yes, Tasman municipality is poor on the economic scale, but despite its failings, it is a highly functioning self-identified community. This is easy to illustrate with examples of locally organised and run events that keep enticing interstate and international visitors. Take the Tasman Regatta, the Art & Craft Show or the Koonya Garlic Festival for example.

If Tasman Council has financial challenges (who hasn't?) then amalgamation with Sorell isn't going to solve it. The solution lies in reassessing the rôle of small local councils and helping them to provide what they can do so well, which is to represent the needs and foster the cohesion of local people.

This will encompass resource sharing between smaller councils, which is already happening - and should be expanded into a successful model for other local government bodies.

I'm sure the Board will show due diligence and review the range of reports available, including some references that I will list below.

Yours sincerely,

Keith O'Hara

Reports to consider:

A Witherby, B Dollery, M Auster & N Marshall (1999) *Report 1: Is Bigger Better? Towards a Model Process for Local Government Structural Reform*, Australian Institute of Urban Studies, p.7.

Allan, P. (2003). "Why smaller councils make sense." *Australian Journal of Public Administration* 62(3): 74-81.