

SUBMISSION TO

LOCAL GOVERNMENT
BOARD REVIEW
Sorell and Tasman
Councils:
Voluntary
Amalgamation &
Shared Services
Options

Prepared by Russell Dorrell

Council Submission.

This submission is presented addressing Item 4 of the Guiding Principles – “Ensure that the financial status of the entities is strengthened.”

I commend the residents and rate payers of Sorell and Tasman who, in the majority, recommend a merging of the two Councils.

The “Local Government Boards Review Consultation Paper - Sorell and Tasman Councils Consultation Paper”¹ provides a snapshot of Sorell and Tasman Councils and highlights some vast differences and many similarities in the two municipalities.

Both Sorell and Tasman Councils have recently been under the management of the same General Manager Robert Higgins who has them both “performing better than the majority of other Rural Councils in the state”².

In my view Option 3, Merger of Tasman and Sorell Councils, is preferred.

My concern is the Rate Base for the combined entity.

in 1865, considering the then economies, demographics and their locations in the state, 30 Municipalities were created. Over time these grew to 46 Councils. Reviews of these boundaries were carried out in 1939, 1960 and 1974. In 1993 a review by the Local Government Advisory Board (LGAB) reduced the number of Councils back to 29³.

At this time the then “Municipality of Richmond” was dissolved and most of the eastern portion of that was merged into the City of Clarence⁴.

In the 25 years since 1993 the state has seen a major change, mostly for the good.

Although the state’s population has grown marginally, the economy which was in decline has moved into positive and is still growing. In the 29 Local Government Areas (LGA’s) of the state, 10 of the councils are predicted to increase in population with Sorell growing the strongest⁵.

Tasmania is now a major supplier of rural products and is a destination of choice by thousands of national and international visitors. Transport, entertainment and social activities have changed.

Along with the Cities of Hobart and Glenorchy, the City of Clarence has developed greatly making Greater Hobart a “happening area”.

¹ <http://www.sorell.tas.gov.au/local-government-board-review-of-voluntary-amalgamation-and-shared-services-for-sorell-and-tasman-councils-submissions-open/>

² 3.1 NO CHANGE TO SORELL AND TASMAN COUNCIL’S:CURRENT AND FUTURE VIABILITY CONT... pp 12.
³

http://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/divisions/local_government/what_is_local_government/local_government_in_tasmania

⁴ http://www.utas.edu.au/library/companion_to_tasmanian_history/R/Richmond.htm

⁵ <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/3222.6>

The Government has commissioned a review "Greater Hobart: Local Government Reform Final Feasibility Report Clarence City, Glenorchy City, Hobart City & Kingborough Councils January 2017"⁶ with a view of the four, or some, possibly amalgamating.

These four (4) councils are listed under the Australian Classification of Local Governments as being "Urban" locations - Hobart UCC; Glenorchy URM; Clarence URM and Kingston URS.⁷

Clarence City Council's classification Urban Regional Medium (URM), listed as Urban, Regional, Medium – "Part of an urban centre with population less than 1 000 000 and predominantly urban in nature".

The City of Clarence's web-site's home page⁸ includes "*The City of Clarence is located on Hobart's eastern shore and is the **second largest local government area in Tasmania by population.***" ... "*The city has several different retail and commercial centres, from thriving commercial centres at Rosny Park and Howrah, to major industrial and commercial centres at Mornington and Cambridge. There is also a strong agricultural sector in the Coal River Valley which features the iconic Richmond heritage village.*

The region is the home to key enabling infrastructure such as Bellerive Oval and the Hobart International Airport and these are supplemented by a variety of events and attractions across the local government area."

Indeed, The City of Clarence is a City with its correct classification "Urban Regional Medium". (URM)

But the areas of Acton Park, Cambridge, Richmond and the Coal River Valley, currently part of the City of Clarence could not be considered Urban, now or in their foreseeable future.

South Eastern Tasmania is also playing a major part of the improvement in Tasmania and Sorell is now the fastest growing area in the state.

But, the population growth of the current Sorell Municipality or a merged entity with Tasman will not provide a viable rateable base for creating and maintaining the infrastructure needed to meet this influx of people and their associated activities.

Consideration of a merger of Tasman and Sorell Municipalities should include a review of the municipal boundary between the Sorell Municipality and the City of Clarence.

The Australian Classification of Local Government classifies Sorell Municipality as Rural, Agricultural, Very Large (RAVL) and the classification of Tasman Municipality is Rural Agricultural Small Medium (RASM).

The merged municipalities would possibly still be listed as RASM.

6

http://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0007/319489/SGS_Greater_Hobart_Local_Government_Reform_Final_Feasibility_Report_January_2017.pdf

⁷ Australian Government/Local Government/ Publications/ National Reports/ 2002-2003/ Appendix F/ Australian Classification of Local Governments

⁸<http://www.ccc.tas.gov.au/page.aspx?u=1954>

If the area in the original Richmond Municipality was rated today it too would possibly be listed as RASM - Rural, Agricultural, Small Medium with no possibility of being classed as Urban under which it is today as part of the Clarence City Council.

I suggest that the Minister and all the State and all the Local Government departments involved with Tasmanian Municipalities consider transferring the area east of the Meehan Range - Cambridge, Seven Mile Beach, Acton Park, Richmond and the Coal River Valley (that part which is already in the City of Clarence) to a newly merged Sorell and Tasman Municipality. The area south of Rokeby, Lauderdale, Sanford, Cremorne, Clifton Beach, South Arm and Opossum Bay could also be considered.

This would provide the enlarged municipality with a broader base for rates and bring into the area a rural/light industrial/retail mix of enterprises.

The Cambridge area, with its mix of light industrial and big-box retailing, would add a new dimension to the rateable income of the merged municipality. New businesses would have the opportunity to develop and expand on the opportunities available.

Although the airports are on Commonwealth property and not immediately part of the scope of a municipal council their location and the associated development possibilities around them would add to the mix from which a municipality can calculate its rates.

The Guiding Principles of the Review include –

1. Be in the interest of the Ratepayers.

A merger of this type would bring all ratepayers into a united category – Rural. The current area of the City of Clarence listed above (Cambridge, Richmond, Coal River Valley) cannot be considered Urban.

2. Improve the level of service for the communities.

Plant, equipment, planning and management suitable for a rural municipality's use would be able to be shared across the whole municipality.

3. Preserve and maintain local representation

All councillors would have the same rural background not seem to be competing with Councillors from Urban Communities.

4. Ensure that financial status of the entities is strengthened

The inclusion of an area of light industrial and retail would broaden the scope for the calculation of rates and spread the load over a greater economy.

This South Eastern area of Tasmania is already grouped together by many government and other organisations.

The Post Codes (P.C.'s) 7025 – 7027 group Dulcot, Richmond, Campania and Colebrook while Post Code 7170 lists Acton Park, Cambridge, Mt Rumney, Roaches Beach and Seven Mile Beach then P.C.'s 7171 onwards are already in the Sorell, Tasman area⁹.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (A.B.S.) regularly combines statistics of Richmond and Sorell in their presentations¹⁰.

The Anglican Diocese of Tasmania has for many years combined its parishioners into one Parish – The Anglican Parish of Sorell, Richmond & Tasman¹¹.

Many businesses and enterprises combine Richmond and Sorell and the Tasman Peninsular in their distribution and networking arrangements.

Historically the Tasman Peninsular, Sorell and Richmond are linked with the Convict Trail¹² from Port Arthur to Hobart passing through both areas and there are many other links between the locations in the early development of South Eastern Tasmania. Much more could be made of this if the areas were within the same municipal boundary.

I acknowledge that certain parties would not be in favour of this move, especially the Mayor of Clarence who has for some time opposed any reduction in the size of his council. The Mayor, Ald. Chipman in a newspaper commented that it would be “stupid” for Richmond and Cambridge to be taken from the City of Clarence¹³ but his newspaper comments also include his confirmation that a Sorell/Tasman merger, without extra benefits, would create a “struggling” council.

In a reply to an email letter I wrote on 20th March 2017 to the Minister of Local Government and the Mayors of Clarence, Sorell, Tasman & Glamorgan Spring Bay Mr Chapman indicated his preference for a Large Council.

Since then the Clarence Council has decided that it does not want any amalgamation with Sorell/Tasman, but it indicates that it is willing to investigate joining with the other Urban City Councils to create a Large conglomerate under a Government “Greater Hobart Act” for bargaining purposes¹⁴.

An alliance of this size would make it even more difficult for the small Rural areas like Richmond, Cambridge, Acton Park, Coal River Valley to get proper representation or consideration in any form.

⁹ <http://auspost.com.au/postcode>

¹⁰

file:///C:/Users/Lenovo/OneDrive/Documents/Council%20Submission/2016%20Census%20QuickStats_%20Sorell%20-%20Richmond.html

¹¹ <http://www.srtanglican.org.au/home>

¹² https://www.discovertasmania.com.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0015/8430/Convict-Trail-Self-Itinerary.pdf

¹³ [Clarence City Council takes a dim view of proposal to lose Cambridge ...](http://www.themercury.com.au/.../tasmania/...city...richmond/.../fc2f12c74a2342556cf74d6ba...)

www.themercury.com.au/.../tasmania/...city...richmond/.../fc2f12c74a2342556cf74d6ba...

Jan 18, 2018 - CLARENCE mayor Doug Chipman says his council will fight any move to transfer Cambridge and Richmond into a proposed new southeastern council.

¹⁴ <https://www.ccc.tas.gov.au/page.aspx?u=864&c=15739>

In the "pond" of Sorell/ Tasman they, Richmond, Cambridge and the Coal River Valley, would be an equal size "fish".

I understand that this submission is possibly outside the current "terms of the review" but I feel that it should be considered when reviewing any amalgamation.

Russell Dorrell -