

## **FUTURE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT REVIEW**

### **Glamorgan Spring Bay Council – Submission 29 February 2024**

Glamorgan Spring Bay Council (GSBC) appreciates the opportunity to provide further feedback by way of this submission to the Local Government Reform process.

#### **OUR POSITION**

GSBC continues to maintain its position that the Minister for Local Government's established principles for reform outcomes must remain and

- Be in the best interests of the community.
- Reserve and maintain local representation.
- Ensure financial sustainability of Councils.
- Improve the level of service for communities.

GSBC continues to support the Board's principles applying to structural reform but believe that those principles must be aligned with the Minister's four established principles.

GSBC continues to support reform such as shared services but reiterates our strong desire to keep jobs in our local communities.

#### **THE WAY FORWARD FOR RECOMMENDATIONS 4, 5 AND 6**

Council reiterates that discussions on boundary changes were not well advanced between GSBC, Sorell and Break O'Day as implied in recommendation 4. We had expressed a desire to explore opportunities but had not considered that would be taken by the Board as an interest in boundary changes that could be construed as being 'advanced' to the point where the Board could recommend it as part of a process called phase 1 voluntary amalgamation.

At a meeting with the Local Government Office held on 29 January 2024, the three Councils committed to exploring opportunities. GSBC's position is that this significant body of work can only be done with adequate resourcing from the government. There should be no requirement for Council to expend any funds beyond the three General Managers outlining what data is required to enable our communities to make informed decisions as agreed at that meeting. Council will, of course, cooperate with any consultant or future local government board to provide data that may be readily available in our system.

In relation to recommendation 5, it is Council's firm belief that the membership of any new local government board to be established to '*undertake detailed assessment of formal council amalgamation proposals*' must be established with adequate resourcing from within the Office of Local Government. The membership of the Board will be critical to the success of this recommendation.

Recommendation 6 should not be implemented until after the data has been gathered and disseminated to the community. There is little point in creating Community Working Groups (CWG) until the government has identified the specific opportunities that may benefit the three Councils. The terms of reference of the CWGs will be critical to the success of this recommendation.

## **OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS**

GSBC has concerns in relation to supporting mandated shared services. There is support for investigating shared services that fit within the Minister's principles for reform, that is, provide economic and social benefits for a community. Rather than mandating shared services, there should be a cooperative approach established that allows voluntary opt-in flexibility based on established demand data between Councils.

Council has concerns in relation to recommendation 29 and the migration to common digital systems. To achieve this will require significant funding from the government. Anecdotal evidence from government departments that have tried to integrate their own systems is the cost will exceed several million dollars.

Throughout the recommendations it is stated *The Tasmanian Government – in consultation with the sector – should* consult on a variety of matters. Any consultation must be undertaken with individual councils as well as the broader sector. As evidenced by the reforms to the Statewide Planning Scheme, one size does not fit all.

Table 1 attached contains broad comment on all the reform recommendations.

## **CONCLUSION**

For the past 3 years, GSBC has been on a positive journey of investing in our communities with established plans and policies that has resulted in 100% asset renewal and financial stability. It is a position that we are justifiably proud of.

Glamorgan Spring Bay Council reiterates that we want to be part of the ongoing reform discussions for the benefit of our communities. Any decision on the future of GSBC can only be made by our communities and must be made with the benefit of data analysis that is fully-funded by the government.

Please find attached:

- A. GSBC Submission – 2 August 2023
- B. GSBC comment against 37 recommendations. Note Council's support and reference to the LGAT submission on the 37 recommendations.

## **FUTURE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT REVIEW**

### **Glamorgan Spring Bay Council Submission – 2 August 2023**

Glamorgan Spring Bay Council (GSBC) appreciates the opportunity to provide a submission to the Local Government Reform Review Board.

#### **Background**

Council understands that the Board is cognizant and has taken into consideration all previous reports and information in regard to Local Government reform, over the last 15 years to help inform the Stage 2 Interim Report. In addition to the last two years of Reform Review work, this information includes:

- Report on a potential merger: Break O Day and Glamorgan Spring Bay Councils, October 2009
- Consolidation in LG Australia and NZ, May 2011
- KPMG South East Councils Feasibility Study, September 2016
- KPMG SECFS Abridged Report, March 2017
- GSBC Community survey, October 2017
- GSBC Special Meeting decision, January 2018
- Premiers Economic and Social Recovery Advisory Council PESRAC report, March 2021. Failure to get cross political party support or agreement on the PESRAC recommendations in September 2021, then initiated the current Local Government Reform process.

Attached to this submission is:

- GSBC Community Survey July 2023. (A summary is provided in addition to the data).
- 25 July 2023 GSBC Ordinary Meeting Local Government Reform report and recommendation.

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#### **DECISION 157/23**

Moved Cllr Rob Churchill, seconded Cllr Robert Young:

That:

1. The General Manager provides a further report on the completed community survey at the next Council meeting.  
and;
2. Considering the complexity that Glamorgan Spring Bay Council has with options that include a possible North/South split, that a stage 2 response to the Local Government Review Board (due August 2, 2023) will be necessarily brief.  
and;
3. The response will indicate that GSBC will be willing to continue to engage with the Tasmanian Government and neighbouring Councils to identify reforms that will meet the principles of the Local Government review and be to the benefit of the communities concerned.  
and;
4. That the Tasmanian Government be requested to fund and model any potential Local Government reform identified in point 3 above for consideration by Council and community before any final decisions are made.

## **THE MOTION WAS PUT AND CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY 8/0**

For: Mayor Cheryl Arnol, Deputy Mayor Michael Symons, Clr Rob Churchill, Clr Neil Edwards, Clr Greg Luck, Clr Carole McQueeney, Clr Jenny Woods and Clr Robert Young

Against: Nil

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Other than the above survey GSBC has not undertaken in-depth engagement with the community on options presented in the Community Catchment Information Packs.

### **Glamorgan Spring Bay Councils position**

At the forefront of Councils position are the Minister for Local Government established principles that reform outcomes should always;

- Be in the best interests of the community.
- Reserve and maintain local representation.
- Ensure financial sustainability of Councils.
- Improve the level of service for communities.

GSBC has previously expressed concerns relating to the Boards consultation process and community engagement to date.

### **Community Catchment Information Packs**

GSBC recognizes that some errors and inaccurate analysis in the two Community Catchments that concern GSBC have been made. It is also recognized that scenarios presented in the Information Packs are not the only options for reform.

Each of the scenarios in the Information Packs have been developed applying the Boards structural reform principles;

- A focus on future community needs
- Retaining jobs and service delivery locally
- Preserving and enhancing local voice
- Smoothing financial impacts for communities
- Dedicated and appropriate resourcing for the transition

GSBC supports the Boards principles and suggest they must be read in the context of the Ministers four established principles.

GSBC is pleased to note and supports the Boards stated criteria below used in developing the Information Packs.

1. Place and Representation
2. Future Needs and Priorities
3. Financial Sustainability
4. Operational Capacity.

GSBC strongly supports reform such as shared services and has a strong desire to keep jobs in our local communities.

## **South East Community Catchment**

### **Scenario 1**

GSBC does not support a scenario that excludes the urban sections of the existing Sorell LGA. This scenario seems to suggest a larger area with minimal people can provide the benefits suggested of larger councils. We disagree.

We recognize that Tasman has expressed its desire to remain autonomous and this further reduces the viability of an expanded Glamorgan Spring Bay which incorporates rural Sorell.

### **Scenario 2**

Again, acknowledging the desire of Tasman to remain unchanged, this scenario is still considered the most viable in terms of ongoing provision of services of a council to community, with or without Tasman. Combining Sorell and Glamorgan staff resources will make for a well-resourced council administration to service the full needs of the communities.

This proposal also carves off a northern section of Glamorgan Spring Bay in its present form. That area being Bicheno and Coles Bay. These two areas need to sit together to enable servicing from a depot at Bicheno. We believe the board recognize that the original maps provided contained an error by splitting Freycinet peninsula from Bicheno.

This division is not pivotal to the success or failure of redrawn boundaries and is considered a matter for the population impacted and should be considered on the majority position of the impacted population. Should this area remain in the southern sector, it can be serviced from the southern administration as has been the case for many years.

### **Further Steps**

Council has some difficulties in supporting any proposed changes without adequate community engagement and consultation, data collection and analysis. While CDC information has some use, it is not uniformly recorded and reported by individual councils and may lead to misinformed conclusions. To progress to a more informed analysis, data needs to be collected with specific intent to determine the actual impacts on ratepayers of the various financial positions relevant to respective councils. This includes ongoing service contracts and arrangements like employee EB conditions, that will inevitably have to be managed to contractual conclusions.

Glamorgan Spring Bay Council requests the required engagement and investigation with subsequent reports on a hybrid of Scenario 2, excluding Tasman and considering the wishes of the Bicheno and Coles Bay communities, be progressed. The findings then communicated to councils and communities and a determination made on the outcome based on the Ministers established principles.

Lastly, but most importantly, for Glamorgan Spring Bay Council and our community we have reached a position of:

- Financial sustainability with an effective Long Term Financial Management Plan and Strategy, now in its third year.
- Up to date and relevant Asset Management Plans covering all aspects of Council service delivery.
- 100% renewal of assets in line with the Asset Management Plans.
- Comparable property rating levels to other Councils.

**Glamorgan Spring Bay Council wants to be part of the ongoing reform discussions and not have decisions made by others on behalf of our community.**

**Glamorgan Spring Bay Council wants to continue the positive journey for our community.**

## Future of Local Government Review

### Glamorgan Spring Bay Council – Submission 29 February 2024

RECOMMENDATIONS		COUNCIL COMMENTS
There are 5 key outcomes listed on Page 11 of the <a href="#">Final report</a> .		
1.	Support healthy and sustainable local communities	Supported.
2.	Deliver better local services	Supported.
3.	Build and maintain future-ready community assets	Supported.
4.	Ensure local government represents you and your community	Supported.
5.	Enhance local job opportunities in councils	Supported.
There are 37 recommendations listed on pages 16 through to 20.		
1	<p>Define in Tasmania's new Local Government Act the role of local government consistent with the statement below:</p> <p>The role of local government is to support and improve the wellbeing of Tasmanian communities by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. harnessing and building on the unique strengths and capabilities of local communities;</li> <li>2. providing infrastructure and services that, to be effective, require local approaches;</li> <li>3. representing and advocating for the specific needs and interests of local communities in regional, state-wide, and national decision-making; and</li> </ol>	<p>Council believes that any future changes to the LG Act should run concurrently with the reform investigations so that individual Councils are aware of what they may have to take into account in regards to governance.</p>



	4. promoting the social, economic, and environmental sustainability of local communities, by mitigating and planning for climate change impacts.	
2	<p>The Tasmanian Government – through subordinate legislation – should implement a Local Government Charter to support the new legislated role for local government.</p> <p>The Charter should be developed in close consultation with the sector and clarify and consolidate in a single document councils’ core functions, principles, and responsibilities, as well as the obligations of the Tasmanian Government when dealing with the sector as a partner in delivering community services and support.</p>	<p>Any future Charter should be developed in line with the LG Act. The Charter should be accompanied by a new partnership agreement between Local and State Governments.</p> <p>Council supports the LGAT submission.</p>
3	<p>The Tasmanian Government should work with the sector to develop, resource, and implement a renewed Strategic Planning and Reporting Framework that is embedded in a new Local Government Act to support and underpin the role of local government. Under this Framework councils will be required to develop – within the first year of every council election – a four-year strategic plan.</p> <p>The plan would consist of component plans including, at minimum, a:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• community engagement plan;</li> <li>• workforce development plan;</li> <li>• elected member capability and professional development plan; and</li> <li>• financial and asset sustainability plan.</li> </ul>	<p>Council supports the LGAT submission.</p>
4	<p>Formal council amalgamation proposals should be developed for the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• West Coast, Waratah-Wynyard and Circular Head Councils (into 2 councils);</li> <li>• Kentish and Latrobe Councils;</li> <li>• Break O’Day, Glamorgan-Spring Bay and Sorell Councils (into 2 councils);</li> <li>• City of Hobart and Glenorchy City Councils;</li> <li>• Kingborough and Huon Valley Councils.</li> </ul> <p>The Board acknowledges council interest in and discussions on boundary changes are less advanced in respect of City of Hobart and Glenorchy, and Kingborough and Huon Valley councils, but nonetheless believes that these councils have expressed clear interest in further exploring opportunities. The Board believes there is</p>	<p>As per previous submission, investigations into amalgamation proposals need to outline the benefits and costs for our community.</p>

	substantial merit in ensuring that those councils (and their communities) are afforded the opportunity to genuinely explore structural consolidation proposals in greater detail.	
5	A new Local Government Board should be established to undertake detailed assessment of formal council amalgamation proposals and make recommendations to the Tasmanian Government on specific new council structures.	The establishment of a Local Government Board and associated resourcing is important to the success of the next stages.
6	A Community Working Group (CWG) should be established in each area where formal amalgamation proposals are being prepared. The CWG would identify specific opportunities the Tasmanian Government could support to improve community outcomes.	As per above, community working groups would be critical to the success of the next stages. It is important that relevant data is provided to the CWG's to enable them to be informed.
7	In those areas where amalgamation proposals are being developed, a community vote should be held before any reform proceeds, to consider an integrated package of reform that involves both a formal council amalgamation proposal and a funded package of opportunities to improve community outcomes.	Support in principle.
8	If a successful community-initiated elector poll requests councils to consider amalgamation, the Minister for Local Government should request the Local Government Board to develop a formal amalgamation proposal and put it to a community vote.	An elector poll invites potential conflict in situations where one council area votes for amalgamation when their neighbouring council either hasn't voted or does not support it.
9	The new Local Government Act should provide that the Minister for Local Government can require councils to participate in identified shared service or shared staffing arrangements.	Mandated shared services must be carefully considered to ensure that the Council involved buy fully into agreements.  Mandating shared services may not allow the flexibility to partner/share in response to the ever changing demands for services.
10	Give councils the opportunity to design identified shared service arrangements themselves, with a model only being imposed if councils cannot reach consensus.	Agreed.



11	Before endorsing a particular mandatory shared service arrangement, the Minister for Local Government should seek the advice of the Local Government Board.	This would be dependent on recommendation 9 above being supported. The Minister for Local Government would seek advice from each effected Council prior to making any decision.
12	If councils are unable to reach consensus on a mandatory service sharing agreement, the Minister for Local Government should have the power to require councils to participate in a specific model or models the Tasmanian Government has developed.	As above.
13	<p>The first priorities for developing mandatory shared service arrangements should be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sharing of key technical staff;</li> <li>• sharing of common digital business systems and ICT infrastructure; and</li> <li>• sharing of asset management expertise through a centralised, council-owned authority.</li> </ul>	Council supports the LGAT submission.
14	Include a statutory requirement for councils to consult with local communities to identify wellbeing priorities, objectives, and outcomes in a new Local Government Act. Once identified, councils would be required to integrate the priorities into their strategic planning, service delivery and decision-making processes.	The definition of wellbeing needs clarification. There needs to be detail provided on expectations of Council if they were to expand their role in this area.
15	To be eligible to stand for election to council, all candidates should first undertake – within six months prior to nominating – a prescribed, mandatory education session, to ensure all candidates understand the role of councillor and their responsibilities if elected.	Council considers that mandatory training/education for candidates could deter people from entering Local Government politics. Perhaps a better way would be to make mandatory training within 6 months AFTER being elected.
	<p>The Tasmanian Government and the local government sector should jointly develop and implement a contemporary, best practice learning and ongoing professional development framework for elected members. As part of this framework, under a new Local Government Act:</p> <p>all elected members – including both new and returning councillors - should be required to complete a prescribed ‘core’ learning and development program within the first 12 months of being elected; and</p>	Agreed in principle. Council supports the LGAT submission.

16	councils should be required to prepare, at the beginning of each new term, an elected member learning and capability development plan to support the broader ongoing professional development needs of their elected members.	
17	The Tasmanian Government should further investigate and consider introducing an alternative framework for councils to raise revenue from major commercial operations in their local government areas, where rates based on the improved value of land are not an efficient, effective, or equitable form of taxation.	Why should this be an alternative framework. Could it be considered in the LG Act in a succinct and easy to understand manner.
18	The Tasmanian Government should work with the sector and the development industry to further investigate and consider introducing a marginal cost-based integrated developer charging regime.	Supported.
19	Introduce additional minimum information requirements for council rates notices to improve public transparency, accountability, and confidence in council rating and financial management decisions.	Supported.
20	Within the context of the national framework, the Tasmanian Government should seek advice from the State Grants Commission on how it will ensure the Financial Assistance Grants methodology:  is transparent and well understood by councils and the community,  that assistance is being targeted efficiently and effectively, and  is not acting as a disincentive for councils to pursue structural reform opportunities.	Strongly agree.
21	The Tasmanian Government should review the total amount of Heavy Vehicle Motor Tax Revenue made available to councils and consider basing this total amount on service usage data.	Strongly agree.
22	Introduce a framework for council fees and charges in a new Local Government Act, to support the expanded, equitable and transparent utilisation of fees and charges to fund certain council services.	Fees charges under a fee for service model should be permitted to consider the cost to deliver to the service as well as any policy objective of the Council. Fees and charges have to be based on the actual costs of individual Councils.

23	The Tasmanian Government should review the current rating system under the Local Government Act to make it simpler, more equitable, and more predictable for landowners. The review should only be undertaken following implementation of the Board's other rating and revenue recommendations.	Supported in principle.
24	The Tasmanian Government should work with the sector to develop, resource, and implement a best practice local government performance monitoring system.	Council agrees with the LGAT submission.
25	The Tasmanian Government should develop a clear and consistent set of guidelines for the collection, recording, and publication of datasets that underpin the new performance reporting system to improve overall data consistency and integrity, and prescribe data methodologies and protocols via a Ministerial Order or similar mechanism.	The development of a clear and consistent set of guidelines for data collection and the ongoing maintenance of a system needs to be funded by the State Government.
26	<p>The new Strategic Planning and Reporting Framework should actively inform and drive education, compliance, and regulatory enforcement activities for the sector, and entities with responsibility for compliance monitoring and management – including the Office of Local Government and council audit panels – should be properly empowered and resourced to effectively deliver their roles.</p> <p>As part of this the Tasmanian Government should consider introducing a requirement for councils to have an internal audit function given their responsibilities for managing significant public assets and resources, and whether this requirement needs to be legislated or otherwise mandated. Consideration should also be given to resourcing internal audit via service sharing or pooling arrangements, particularly for smaller councils.</p>	Supported in principle. Agree with LGAT submission. Must be properly resourced and supported by Government.
27	The Tasmanian Government should collaborate with the local government sector to support a genuine, co-regulatory approach to councils' regulatory responsibilities, with state agencies providing ongoing professional support to council staff and involving councils in all stages of regulatory design and implementation.	Agreed.
28	The Tasmanian Government should work with the local government sector to pursue opportunities for strengthened partnerships between local government and Service Tasmania.	Agreed.

29	Councils should migrate over time to common digital business systems and ICT infrastructure that meet their needs for digital business services, with support from the Department of Premier and Cabinet's Digital Strategy and Services (DSS).	Further engagement is required with the Sector prior to progressing. Consideration needs to be given to the critical technical staff workforce shortage to enable this recommendation to progress.
30	The Tasmanian Government – in consultation with the sector – should review the current legislative requirements on councils for strategic financial and asset management planning documentation to simplify and streamline the requirements and support more consistent and transparent compliance.	Anything that simplifies and streamlines our compliance would be an asset.
31	The Tasmanian Government – in consultation with the sector – should investigate the viability of, and seek to implement wherever possible, standardised useful asset life ranges for all major asset classes.	Supported.
32	All Tasmanian councils should be required under a new Local Government Act to develop and adopt community engagement strategies – underpinned by clear deliberative engagement principles.	Supported.
33	A new Local Government Act should require councils, when developing and adopting their Community Engagement Strategies, to clearly set out how they will consult on, assess, and communicate the community impact of all significant new services or infrastructure.	Supported.
34	Following the phase 1 voluntary amalgamation program, the Tasmanian Government should commission an independent review into councillor numbers and allowances.	Supported in principle, recognising that this recommendation is subject to any voluntary amalgamation outcome.
35	The Tasmanian Government should expedite reforms already agreed and/ or in train in respect of statutory sanctions available to deal with councillor misconduct or poor performance.	Strongly agree. Council has for a long time had concerns in regard to the current code of conduct.
	The Tasmanian Government should:	To be successful this work also needs to have buy in from educations and training institutions to support the strategies and actions to meet

36	<p>support the Local Government Association of Tasmania (LGAT) to develop and implement – in consultation with councils and their staff – a workforce development toolkit tailored to the sector and aligned with the Tasmanian Government’s workforce development system;</p> <p>support councils to update their workforce plans at the time of any consolidation;</p> <p>support LGAT to lead the development and implementation of a state-wide approach to workforce development for key technical staff, beginning with environmental health officers, planners, engineers and building inspectors;</p> <p>recognise in statute that workforce development is an ongoing responsibility of council general managers and is included as part of the new Strategic Planning and Reporting Framework; and</p> <p>include simple indicators of each council’s workforce profile in the proposed council performance dashboard.</p>	<p>skills shortages. Funding has to be provided by Government.</p>
37	<p>The Tasmanian Government should partner with, and better support, councils to build capacity and capability to plan for and respond to emergency events and climate change impacts.</p>	<p>Agreed.</p>