

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.

DECISION 157/23

Moved Clr Rob Churchill, seconded Clr 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

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.