



**NORTHERN  
MIDLANDS  
COUNCIL**

# **MINUTES**

**SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING**

**MONDAY, 31 JULY 2023**



MINUTES of the Special Council Meeting of the Northern Midlands Council held on 31 July 2023 at 5.00pm in person at the Council Chambers, 13 Smith Street, Longford

## **1 ATTENDANCE**

### **PRESENT**

Mayor Mary Knowles OAM, Deputy Mayor Janet Lambert, Cr Dick Adams OAM, Cr Alison Andrews AM, Cr Richard Archer, Cr Matthew Brooks, Cr Richard Goss, Cr Paul Terrett

### **In Attendance**

Miss Maree Bricknell - Acting General Manager/Corporate Services Manager, Mr Leigh McCullagh - Works Manager (to 5.32pm), Miss Victoria Veldhuizen - Executive Officer (to 5.32pm), Mrs Gail Eacher - Executive Assistant (to 5.32pm)

### **APOLOGIES**

Cr Andrew McCullagh



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### 3 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge and pay our respects to the Tasmanian Aboriginal Community as the traditional and original owners, and continuing custodians of this land on which we gather today and acknowledge Elders – past, present and emerging.

### 4 DECLARATIONS OF ANY PECUNIARY INTEREST OF A COUNCILLOR OR CLOSE ASSOCIATE

As per the *Local Government Act 1993, Part 5 - Pecuniary Interests, section 48*:

- (1) *A councillor must not participate at any meeting of a council, council committee, special committee, controlling authority, single authority or joint authority in any discussion, nor vote on any matter, in respect of which the councillor–*
  - (a) *has an interest; or*
  - (b) *is aware or ought to be aware that a close associate has an interest.*
- (2) *A councillor must declare any interest that the councillor has in a matter before any discussion on that matter commences.*

No declarations of interest were received.



## 5 SPECIAL MEETING REPORTS

### 5.1 THE FUTURE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT REVIEW: LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM 2023

Responsible Officer: Maree Bricknell, Acting General Manager

Report prepared by: Victoria Veldhuizen, Executive Officer

#### MINUTE NO. 23/0248

##### DECISION

Cr Goss/Cr Andrews

That Council:

- a) endorses the attached submission to the Local Government Board in response to the Future of Local Government Review.
- b) authorises the Acting General Manager to provide the attached submission to the Local Government Board.

Carried Unanimously

Voting for the Motion:

Mayor Knowles, Deputy Mayor Lambert, Cr Adams, Cr Andrews, Cr Archer, Cr Brooks, Cr Goss and Cr Terrett

Voting Against the Motion:

Nil

##### **RECOMMENDATION**

That Council:

- a) endorses the attached submission to the Local Government Board in response to the Future of Local Government Review.
- b) authorises the General Manager to provide the attached submission to the Local Government Board.

#### **1 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To consider and make a submission on the Local Government Board (**Board**) in response to the Future of Local Government Review Community Catchment Information Packs and the Stage 2 Interim Report.

#### **2 INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND**

In 2021, the Board commenced the Future of Local Government Review (**Review**). The objective of the Review is to create a more robust and capable system of local government that is ready for the challenges and opportunities of the future.

Pursuant to the Board's Terms of Reference, the Review will consider the following:

- The future roles and functions that should be delivered by local government in Tasmania;
- The organisational features and capabilities necessary to enable local government to effectively and sustainably deliver its future roles and functions;
- The optimal future design for the Tasmanian local government sector to support the delivery of local government's proposed roles, functions, features and capabilities, individually and collectively, across representative and administrative roles and functions;
- A practical transition plan for implementing the future design of local government in Tasmania, if required; and



- Any other matters the Board considers relevant to the above.

The Board proposed three structural reform options, being mandatory sharing of services across the current 29 councils; changing boundaries to create fewer, larger councils; and a 'hybrid' model with some sharing of services and some council consolidation, varying around the state based on local needs.

On 19 April 2023, the Board released the Future of Local Government Review Stage 2 – Interim Report. The Interim Report identified the Board's view is the preferred approach for the future system of local government in Tasmania is a 'hybrid' blend of larger councils, supported by shared services for some functions.

The Board has released a series of Information Packs and supporting papers, in line with the nine Community Catchments identified by the Board in its Stage 2 Interim Report. The relevant Community Catchment Information Packs for the Northern Midlands municipality are the Central and Midlands Community Catchment and the Tamar Valley Community Catchment. Copies of the Information Packs and supporting papers are **attached** to this report.

On 26 June 2023, Council resolved:

**MINUTE NO. 23/0206**

DECISION

*Cr Goss/Cr Brooks*

*That the Northern Midlands Council (NMC) rejects all the scenarios presented in the Local Government Review as they pertain to the existing boundaries of the NMC.*

*Carried Unanimously*

*Voting for the Motion:*

*Mayor Knowles, Deputy Mayor Lambert, Cr Adams, Cr Andrews, Cr Archer, Cr Brooks, Cr Goss, Cr McCullagh and Cr Terrett*

*Voting Against the Motion:*

*Nil*

**MINUTE NO. 23/0207**

DECISION

*Cr Goss/Cr Archer*

*That Council has rejected all scenarios presented in the Local Government Review and the preferred option is for the Northern Midlands Council (NMC) to remain in its current form, however, should council be placed into a position to forcibly be amalgamated that NMC and Meander Valley Council merge in their entirety.*

*Carried*

*Voting for the Motion:*

*Mayor Knowles, Deputy Mayor Lambert, Cr Adams, Cr Andrews, Cr Archer and Cr Goss*

*Voting Against the Motion:*

*Cr Brooks, Cr McCullagh and Cr Terrett*

**MINUTE NO. 23/0208**

DECISION

*Cr Goss/Cr Andrews*

*That the Northern Midlands Council (NMC) undertake an immediate and extensive information campaign for the municipality, outlining its decision and the rationale for the decision. The campaign to include media release, press conference, talk back radio, letter drops, social media saturation, and community meetings.*

*Carried Unanimously*

*Voting for the Motion:*

*Mayor Knowles, Deputy Mayor Lambert, Cr Adams, Cr Andrews, Cr Archer, Cr Brooks, Cr Goss, Cr McCullagh and Cr Terrett*

*Voting Against the Motion:*

*Nil*



**MINUTE NO. 23/0209**

DECISION

*Cr Archer/Cr Andrews*

*That Council*

- a) engage a consultant to conduct a community survey to seek feedback on the Local Government Reform review process and recommendations; and*
- b) receive the prepared survey questions for council to disseminate upon their own volition at community meetings and to circulate to media outlets.*

*Carried Unanimously*

*Voting for the Motion:*

*Mayor Knowles, Deputy Mayor Lambert, Cr Adams, Cr Andrews, Cr Archer, Cr Brooks, Cr Goss, Cr McCullagh and Cr Terrett*

*Voting Against the Motion:*

*Nil*

On 16 July 2023, the Minister for Local Government and Premier announced the Government would not be forcing any Council boundary adjustments as part of the response to the recommendations of the Future of Local Government Review. The Review will continue, with a focus on the future role, functions and design of the Tasmanian local government sector.

Any written submissions to the Board are due by **2 August 2023**. The review itself has been extended until the **end of October 2023**.

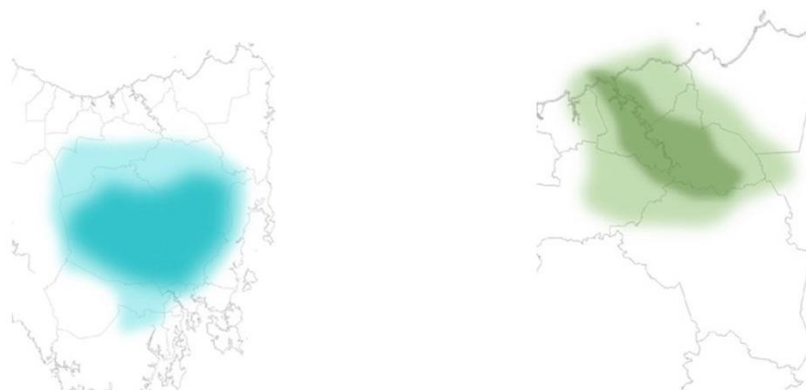
Council will have an opportunity to present verbally to the Board on **10 August 2023**. The purpose of the hearing is to make presentations on how councils see local government best serving the identified community catchments.

Information Packs

Each Information Pack puts forward several different scenarios for new local government boundaries and service delivery models which propose to build a scale and capability to improve services, while also better reflecting the way Tasmanians live and work within these communities.

The Board's goal is to design local government in Tasmania in a way that allows all Councils to develop and maintain the capability communities need, while delivering services locally, keeping jobs in local communities, and ensuring that all Tasmanians have a strong voice in decisions being made on their behalf.

There are two Community Catchments which outline possible structural reforms for the current area of the Northern Midlands Council – Central and Midlands Community Catchment and Tamar Valley Community Catchment.





The possible reform scenarios in the information packs are not the only options for reform. They are designed to prompt a discussion about some of the possible pathways available to deliver a more capable and sustainable system of local government. The Board welcomes alternative suggestions as part of the engagement process.

Each of the scenarios in the information packs have been developed using the Board's structural reform principles:

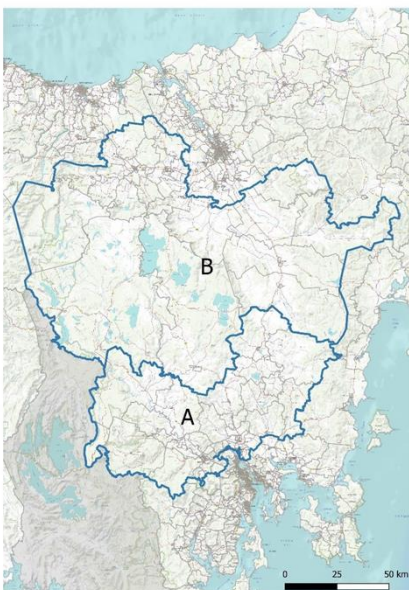
- 1 Be resolutely focused on future community needs (and not just tied to council's existing structures and current priorities);
- 2 Retaining jobs and service presence locally;
- 3 Preserving and enhancing local voice;
- 4 Be supported by fair funding models that smooth financial impacts for communities; and
- 5 Be supported by dedicated and appropriate resourcing for the transition.

And the following four criteria:

- 1 Place and Representation;
- 2 Future Needs and Priorities;
- 3 Financial Sustainability; and
- 4 Operational Capability.

The Central and Midlands Community Catchment Information Pack outlines four possible structural reform scenarios and the Tamar Valley Catchment Information Pack outlines four possible structural reform scenarios, one of which appears to directly impact the Northern Midlands municipality. The relevant proposed scenarios are summarised below.

*Central and Midlands Community Catchment Information Pack:*

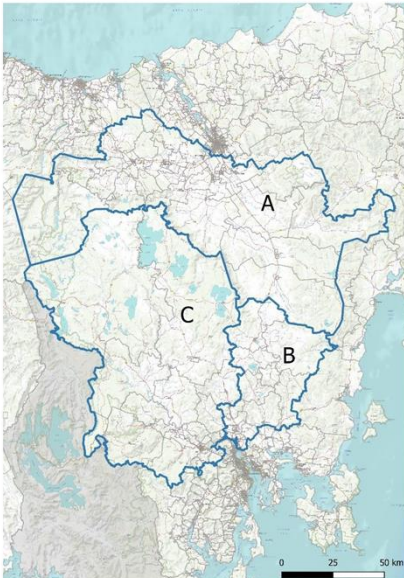


**Scenario 1** – Establishing two separate councils to the north and south. Council A combines the existing Brighton, Southern Midlands and Derwent Valley LGAs and a proportion of the Central Highlands including Hamilton, Ouse and Wayatinah. Council B captures the remainder of the Central Highland LGAs, Meander Valley (minus Hadspen, Carrick, Prospect Vale and Blackstone Heights) and Northern Midlands (minus Perth, Evandale and Longford).

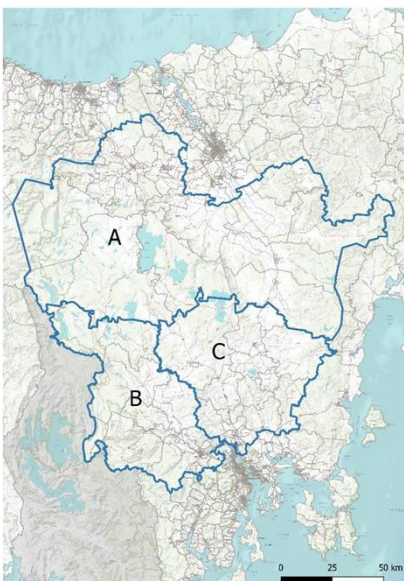




**Scenario 2** – Establishing a single Central and Midlands Council. The existing LGAs of Derwent Valley, Brighton, Southern Midlands, Central Highlands, Northern Midlands, and Meander Valley, minus Carrick, Hadspen, Perth, Longford and Evandale.



**Scenario 3** – Establishing three councils – a northern council encompassing the Meander Valley (minus Prospect Vale and Blackstone Heights) and Northern Midlands, a southern council encompassing Brighton and the Southern Midlands, and a western council encompassing the Derwent Valley and the Central Highlands.



**Scenario 4** – Establishing three councils: a northern council capturing the Meander Valley, Northern Midlands and the northern Central Plateau region; a south-western council incorporating the Derwent Valley and south-west of the Central Highlands; and a south-eastern council reaching into the Central Highlands.



Scenario 4 creates three new councils, with different boundaries to scenario 3. Of relevance for Northern Midlands Council, "Council A" combines Meander Valley (excluding Hadspen and Carrick areas), Northern Midlands (excluding Perth, Evandale and Longford) and Central Highlands from north of Derwent Bridge, the Steppes and Interlaken. This scenario proposes to more closely group communities of interest and regular travel/mobility patterns, e.g. dispersed rural communities with larger regional service hubs. This scenario tests the view that the community in the northern part of the Central Highlands is more connected to Meander Valley and Northern Midlands regions.

The Board notes Scenario 4 is more complex than the others as the proposed councils are largely independent of existing council boundaries. The Board considers this proposal merits consideration as it is the most tailored to communities of interest.

*Tamar Valley Community Catchment Information Pack:*

There is one proposed scenario in the Tamar Valley Community Catchment which would see parts of the Northern Midlands municipality no longer being linked to the Northern Midlands, being merged with the Launceston/Tamar Valley municipality. It is for this reason the scenario has been identified and included in this report.



**Scenario 3** – Establishing one council area comprising the existing West Tamar, George Town and Launceston LGAs, extended to include the commuting areas of Hadspen, Carrick, Longford, Perth, Evandale and immediate surrounds. The Board states this scenario is informed primarily by commuting and community of interest data.

### 3 STRATEGIC PLAN & INTEGRATED PRIORITY PROJECTS PLAN

#### 3.1 Strategic Plan 2021-2027

The Strategic Plan 2021-2027 provides the guidelines within which Council operates.

**Lead: Serve with honesty, integrity, innovation and pride**

**Leaders with Impact**

**Strategic outcomes:**

- 1.1 Council is connected to the community
- 1.2 Councillors serve with integrity and honesty
- 1.3 Management is efficient, proactive and responsible

**People: Culture and society - a vibrant future that respects the past**

**Sense of Place - Sustain, Protect, Progress**

**Strategic outcomes:**

- 3.4 Towns are enviable places to visit, live and work

**Place: Nurture our heritage environment**

**Environment - Cherish, Sustain our Landscapes and Preserve, Protect Our Built Heritage for Tomorrow**

**Strategic outcomes:**



- 4.1 Cherish and sustain our landscape
- 4.2 Meet environmental challenges
- 4.4 Our heritage villages and towns are high value assets

### **3.2 Integrated Priority Projects Plan 2021**

This plan has been developed with a coordinated perspective to align with local, regional, state and federal plans. Rather than grouping projects by town or assembling a long list of 'nice to have' projects, this plan takes a Council-wide view of needs and opportunities in relation to the strategic investment drivers in the region. This matter has relevance to:

Not applicable.

## **4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

Not applicable.

## **5 STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS**

Not applicable.

## **6 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The financial implications of the various proposed reform options are unknown at this time.

## **7 RISK ISSUES**

Council must consider it is a risk to not participate in discussions and make a submission to the Board or take the opportunity to put forward Council's position.

## **8 CONSULTATION WITH STATE GOVERNMENT**

The Board will convene a number of formal hearings for councils to make presentations on how councils see local government best serving the identified community catchments. Council will be presenting at the community hearing on 10 August 2023.

The Board has also invited further written submissions to be made, with the submission anticipated to be discussed and endorsed during consideration of this report.

## **9 COMMUNITY CONSULTATION**

Northern Midlands Council has engaged independent research marketing firm EMRS to conduct independent community surveys, including via telephone, via a website survey and face-to-face surveys. The survey period is 17 – 29 July 2023.

Despite the Government's announcement on 16 July 2023, Council has proceeded with the community feedback surveys for the following reasons:

- Despite the State Government advising there would not be forced amalgamations or boundary changes, the Board is continuing with the Review and Council still wishes to gauge community opinion about the Board's proposed scenarios;
- It is hoped the survey will provide a strong indication as to the community's views on Local Government reform;
- The data obtained from the community survey's will inform Council with respect to the community hearings where Council will verbally be presenting to the Board to support its position to not amalgamate.



The response is expected from EMRS on 4 August 2023. The feedback information will be incorporated into Council's verbal presentation to the Board at the Community Hearing on 10 August 2023.

Since the 26 June 2023 decision, Council has also engaged the community via Media Releases, letter drops, publications on social media and the website and publications in newspapers in the region.

## 10 OPTIONS FOR COUNCIL TO CONSIDER

Council can:

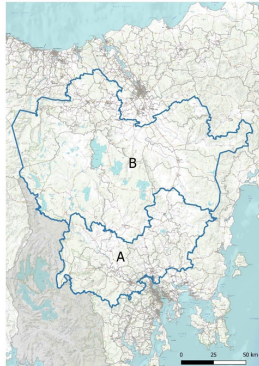
1. endorse the attached draft submission for submission to the Board.
2. endorse the attached draft submission with amendments for submission to the Board.
3. reject the attached draft submission.
4. elect not to form a position or provide a written submission to the Board.

## 11 OFFICER'S COMMENTS/CONCLUSION

The Board want Councils and communities to consider four fundamental questions:

1. What are the strengths?
2. What are the weaknesses or challenges?
3. Are there any adjustments that could be made to maximise the strengths and minimise the weaknesses?
4. Are there any other entirely different scenarios the Board should consider, which would still deliver against the Board's criteria and structural reform principles?

Based on the contents of the Board's Information Packs, below is an analysis of the scenarios. Council's views of the advantages and disadvantages of the Board's proposed scenarios are included in the written submission **attached** to this report.

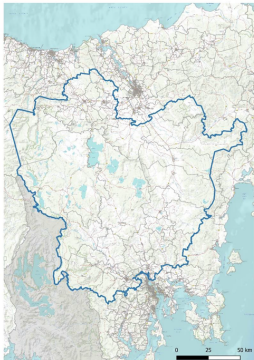
Central and Midlands Community Catchment		
	Advantages	Disadvantages
<b>Scenario 1</b> <i>Establishing two separate councils to the north and south.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Benefit the community by increasing the scale and capability of the two councils</li><li>• Council B an approximate population of 15,500</li><li>• Each of the new councils would have larger workforces enhancing recruitment opportunities and enabling career development/progression</li><li>• Strong correlation between council boundaries with communities of interest and geography of the region</li><li>• Includes dispersed rural communities connected with significant regional centres, which should help with operational sustainability</li><li>• Improve the streamlining whole-of-region cooperation and service sharing as well as collaborations with other tiers of government.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Current NMC areas of Longford, Evandale and Perth would be allocated to the Tamar Valley Catchment. Communities will also need to consider whether it is appropriate to allocate Perth, Evandale, Carrick, Hadspen, and Longford (combined population of approximately 8,000) to the Tamar Valley Community Catchment, given the impact it has on the population and rate base of Council B.</li><li>• Council B will have an older population mostly in smaller towns, with more working outside the area</li><li>• Proposed council hubs in "Council B" are in Westbury and Bothwell</li><li>• Due to its smaller size, Council B would need to continue to rely on external service sharing arrangements for some of its technical and regulatory services</li></ul>





	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 74% of residents in Council B would be within a 30-minute drive of the larger service and administrative hubs of Westbury and Bothwell</li> <li>• Maintaining these services hubs would ensure good access to services in what are geographically large councils while also highlighting the need to invest in digital services and other outreach and engagement strategies (especially in Council B)</li> <li>• Scope to retain council administrative and operations hubs in New Norfolk, Hamilton, Old Beach, Oatlands and Kempton, Westbury and Bothwell, thereby maintaining local employment while also supporting local engagement and service delivery</li> <li>• Integration of centralised or standardised corporate 'back-office' systems or services for council finance and administration may reduce staff time spent on administrative tasks, allowing them to focus on improving services to council staff and communities</li> <li>• Integration of centralised or standardised corporate 'back-office' systems or services for council finance and administration may reduce staff time spent on administrative tasks, allowing them to focus on improving services to council staff and communities</li> <li>• Consolidated councils could lead to greater sharing of road maintenance teams and equipment, there would still be a need to maintain regional depots across the council area. Larger regulatory services teams should provide greater capacity to manage workloads, allow for business continuity during periods of leave, and help to attract and retain specialist staff – all of which currently present challenges to existing councils in this area</li> <li>• Enhanced capacity to invest in new and more systematic approaches to community engagement – introduction of community advisory panels</li> <li>• Operations hubs could be used for regional council meetings in different locations</li> <li>• In 2021 dollars, total rates revenue for</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notes a continued reliance on grant funding given their scale and the road networks and other infrastructure they would have to manage</li> <li>• Rates approaches vary in the catchment and would need to be considered in any transition - Central Highlands Council apply higher residential rates per capita than the other Councils in the Catchment.</li> <li>• Multiple rating systems proposed to enhance sustainability of both Councils, establish an alternative governance and funding model for the remote and sparsely populated highland communities</li> <li>• Consider how services provided by the Northern Tasmania Development Corporation and the Southern Tasmanian Councils Authority, both to member councils and other councils across the broader region, would be undertaken under the new arrangements</li> <li>• Future status of the significant number of shared or joint arrangements would need to be considered</li> <li>• Consideration of Councils net financial assets to be considered in transitional plan</li> <li>• Council B would have a smaller rates and population base, as well as significant areas of low growth or population decline. It is more likely to need to rely more on external shared service arrangements for some specialist functions</li> </ul>
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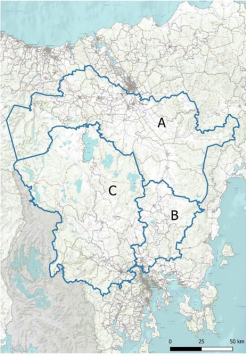


	Council B is estimated at \$12.7m. establishing new funding models would be easier.	
	<p><b>Are there any adjustments that could be made to maximise the strengths and minimise the weaknesses?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include the areas of Longford, Perth, Evandale, TRANSlink Industrial at Western Junction, Blackstone Heights, Prospect Vale, Carrick and Hadspen in this scenario would minimise the impacts losing these areas would have on any future council.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Scenario 2</b></p> <p><i>Establishing a single Central and Midlands Council.</i></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maximises potential scale and capability</li> <li>• Supports higher and more consistent service delivery across central parts of rural Tasmania and deliver a more financially sustainable model of government</li> <li>• Continuation of the number of customer service and administration centres with supporting works hubs in other areas to maintain regional employment opportunities.</li> <li>• Hypothetical revenue of \$34.7m and population of 53,000 – ongoing growth giving capacity to serve its community</li> <li>• Represents a significant portion of rural Tasmania and lessen the need for many regional organisations and structures to promote collaboration across councils</li> <li>• Consolidated council would have the resources to invest in community engagement and establishing administrative and service delivery hubs across the community</li> <li>• Better resources and capabilities to respond to emerging community needs</li> <li>• If existing council offices across the Community Catchment were maintained as a part of a network model, then 85% of residents would be within a 30-minute drive of the major service and administrative hubs</li> <li>• Less need for regional shared services arrangements.</li> <li>• Well placed to advocate for the Central and Midlands community and rural interests more generally and enter strategic partnerships with other spheres of government</li> <li>• Deliver effective land use and strategic planning</li> <li>• Scale benefits including the ability to attract</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large geographic area and dispersed community to service</li> <li>• Current NMC areas of Longford, Evandale and Perth would be allocated to the Tamar Valley Catchment.</li> <li>• Primary challenge given the size is ensuring local voices are heard with equal representation and engagement</li> <li>• Ensuring local representation, employment and service delivery across the entire area</li> <li>• Investment in strong management systems to ensure community priorities are being delivered</li> <li>• Balancing the needs of the fast-growing urban communities in the south of the Catchment with rural communities further north</li> <li>• In the north, given commuter links between Launceston and Perth, Evandale, Carrick, Hadspen and Longford, consideration should be given to whether these communities are more oriented towards the more urban areas, or do they identify more strongly and perform as service hubs for their rural hinterlands?</li> <li>• Whether a single council model is the most effective and sustainable model for providing local representation and services across the Central and Midlands</li> <li>• Significant urban growth in the region and major infrastructure projects (wind farms and irrigation) will require further and increased strategic planning and infrastructure</li> <li>• Necessity of reconsidering the Southern</li> </ul>



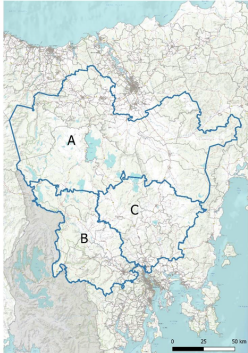
	<p>and retain specialist staff and invest in productivity-enhancing equipment and 'back-office' systems.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responsible for 3,500km roads - greater sharing of road maintenance teams and equipment – maintain several regional depots</li> <li>• Larger regulatory services team would likewise provide greater capacity to manage workloads, allow for business continuity during periods of leave, and help to attract and retain specialist staff</li> <li>• Significant scale, capacity and purchasing power.</li> <li>• Benefits of centrally sourcing some basic common services, such as cloud-based ICT systems, to support council finance and administration and enable employees to access systems from across this large LGA</li> <li>• Capacity to invest in new and more systematic approaches to community engagement to ensure all communities within the larger council areas are heard and represented</li> <li>• Introduce community advisory panels</li> <li>• A significant rate base drawn from a mix of residential, commercial, industrial, and agricultural land</li> </ul>	<p>Tasmanian Councils Authority</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A need for a clear strategy of retaining jobs and teams across the region to maintain local employment and knowledge and provide community members with ready access to council services</li> <li>• Continue to rely on grant income to maintain its large road network and other infrastructure</li> <li>• Current rating systems (various in Catchment) would need to be considered</li> <li>• Consider the need for existing regional structures for resources and how to best adapt and integrate systems across six existing councils</li> <li>• Treatment of debts and surpluses held by all councils (specific details not provided)</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Are there any adjustments that could be made to maximise the strengths and minimise the weaknesses?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include the areas of Longford, Perth, Evandale, TRANSlint Industrial at Western Junction, Blackstone Heights, Prospect Vale, Carrick and Hadspen in this scenario would minimise the impacts losing these areas would have on any future council.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Scenario 3</b></p> <p><i>Establishing three councils – a northern council encompassing the Meander Valley and Northern Midlands, a southern council encompassing Brighton and the Southern Midlands, and a western council encompassing the Derwent Valley and the Central Highlands</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aligns communities of interest with significant regional towns as service hubs</li> <li>• Enhances possible scale capabilities and scope for cohesive coordination, but to lesser extent than scenarios 1 and 2.</li> <li>• Host several administrative and service centres and works hubs to maintain employment opportunities</li> <li>• Comprises of two existing LGAs in proposed councils which almost entirely follow existing boundaries</li> <li>• Larger workforces enhancing recruitment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continued reliance on shared services and partnership agreements</li> <li>• Require greater regional coordination and cooperation</li> <li>• Whether a three-council model is the most effective and sustainable model for providing local representation and services to the Central and Midlands region</li> <li>• Increased strategic planning and infrastructure required for urban growth areas and major infrastructure projects</li> </ul>



	<p>opportunities and enabling career development and progression</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Longford and Westbury retained as administrative, customer service and works hubs</li> <li>• Coordinate development and services</li> <li>• Connection to at least one significant regional town connected to surrounding rural and highland communities</li> <li>• if existing council offices across the Community Catchment were maintained as a part of a network model, then between 87 and 97% of residents would be within a 30-minute drive of the major service and administrative hubs</li> <li>• Economic and demographic diversity which should help ensure financial sustainability</li> <li>• Significant scope to retain multiple existing council administrative centres and operations hubs in the different councils to maintain local employment and to support local engagement and service delivery</li> <li>• Integration of centralised or standardised corporate 'back-office' systems or services for council finance and administration may reduce staff time spent on administrative tasks, allowing councils to reallocate resources towards improving the scope and quality of service provision</li> <li>• Enhanced capacity to invest in new and more systematic approaches to community engagement, ensuring that all communities within the larger council areas are heard and represented</li> <li>• Scope to introduce community advisory panels</li> <li>• Operations hubs could also be used for a program of scheduled regional council meetings in different areas of the municipality</li> <li>• Rates for Council A in 2021 dollars is estimated \$21.7m</li> <li>• Establishing new funding models easier</li> <li>• This scenario involves less change to council</li> </ul>	<p>(wind energy and irrigation)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• These councils would likely still need to share services on a local or regional scale. For example, all three councils would have to cooperate to support existing or expanded shared services and regional emergency management committees</li> <li>• Need for advocacy to other spheres of government for the communities</li> <li>• Collaboration between the three councils to deliver effective land use and strategic planning</li> <li>• All three councils would continue to rely on grant funding for a significant proportion of their revenue</li> <li>• Careful consideration would need to be given to the status of shared services arrangements, including any financial and staff commitments made to other councils</li> <li>• Variations in the financial assets held by councils would need to be considered as part of the transition arrangements when establishing new councils</li> </ul>
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	<p>structures than other scenarios, the transition costs would be expected to be lower.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Councils A and B would have relatively large rates and population bases that should give them the capacity to service their communities.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Scenario 4</b></p> <p><i>Establishing three councils: a northern council capturing the Meander Valley, Northern Midlands and the northern Central Plateau region; a south-western council incorporating the Derwent Valley and south-west of the Central Highlands; and a south-eastern council reaching into the Central Highlands.</i></p> 	<p><b>Are there any adjustments that could be made to maximise the strengths and minimise the weaknesses?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include Meander Valley's areas of Blackstone Heights and Prospect Vale to minimise impacts a loss of those areas would result in.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Benefit the community by increasing the scale and capability of the three councils</li> <li>• Each of the new councils would have larger workforces enhancing recruitment opportunities and enabling career development/progression</li> <li>• Most administrative, customer service, administration and works hubs could be maintained to service the Catchment</li> <li>• Improvement to current council scale (and therefore capability) relative to status quo.</li> <li>• 76% of residents would be within a 30-minute drive of key service and administrative hubs for Council A.</li> <li>• Demographic and economic diversity which should help support financial sustainability</li> <li>• Shared specialist and technical staff with neighbouring councils at a regional level. Regulatory services (building, environmental health, plumbing) and asset construction and maintenance being prime candidates.</li> <li>• Centralised/standardized corporate 'back office' systems or services for finance and administration may reduce time spent on repetitive transactional tasks, allowing resources to be reallocated to improve scope and quality of service provision</li> <li>• Enhanced capacity to invest in new and more systematic approaches to community engagement – introduction of community advisory panels</li> <li>• In 2021 dollars, total rates revenue for Council A is estimated at \$12.5m. establishing new funding models would be easier. Notes a</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current NMC areas of Longford, Evandale and Perth would be allocated to the Tamar Valley Catchment.</li> <li>• Whether it is the most effective and sustainable model for providing local representation and services to the Catchment</li> <li>• Further and increased strategic planning and infrastructure due to significant growth</li> <li>• All three councils would need to cooperate to support existing or expanded shared services and regional emergency management committees. Coordination of regional strategy and economic development, currently undertaken by the Southern Tasmanian Councils Authority, would be an ongoing need.</li> <li>• NMC currently has Local District Committees which appear to operate similarly to the proposed "community advisory panels"</li> <li>• Careful consideration given to the status of shared services arrangements (existing), including financial and staff commitments</li> <li>• Variations in financial assets held by councils would need consideration</li> <li>• Consideration of the role of Southern Tasmanian Councils Authority</li> <li>• Data used is based on ABS 2021 Consensus</li> <li>• Under operational sustainability, it is</li> </ul>



	continued reliance on grant funding	noted Council A would have relatively smaller rates and population base and more likely to need to access external shared service arrangements for specialist functions
	<p><b>Are there any adjustments that could be made to maximise the strengths and minimise the weaknesses?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include the areas of Longford, Perth, Evandale, TRANSlink Industrial at Western Junction, Blackstone Heights, Prospect Vale, Carrick and Hadspen in this scenario would minimise the impacts losing these areas would have on any future council.</li> </ul>	

Tamar Valley Community Catchment		
	Advantages	Disadvantages
<p><b>Scenario 3</b></p> <p><i>Establishing one council area comprising the existing West Tamar, George Town and Launceston LGAs, extended to include the commuting areas of Hadspen, Carrick, Longford, Perth, Evandale and immediate surrounds.</i></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Benefit the community by increasing the scale and capability of the council</li> <li>• Population base of 122,000 – one of the largest in the Information Packs</li> <li>• Alignment with communities of interest and geography of region</li> <li>• Resources and capabilities to respond to emerging community needs</li> <li>• If existing council offices across the Community Catchment were maintained as a part of a network model, then 95% of residents would be within a 30-minute drive of the major service and administrative hubs</li> <li>• Support enhanced scope capabilities in areas such as strategic planning, development and environmental health assessment, and could help manage issues such as urban consolidation and infrastructure planning</li> <li>• Whole of catchment land-use planning initiatives, such as the Northern Tasmania Regional Land Use Strategy (STRLUS), would be streamlined and supported</li> <li>• Significant scale, capacity and purchasing power</li> <li>• Benefits in it centrally sourcing some basic common services, such as cloud-based ICT systems, to support council finance and administration. This would reduce staff time on repetitive administrative tasks and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current NMC areas of Longford, Evandale and Perth would be allocated to the Tamar Valley Catchment.</li> <li>• There would have to be a clear strategy of retaining jobs and teams across the region to maintain local employment and knowledge</li> <li>• Ensuring that a single regional council is able not only to preserve but also enhance local voice, representation, and engagement.</li> <li>• Establishing an equitable and consistent approach to rating across the proposed council</li> <li>• Consider the need for existing regional structures and how best to adapt and integrate the systems across the existing councils</li> <li>• Perhaps the most significant challenge from a sustainability perspective associated with this scenario would be the implications for any new council in the Central Midlands, given approximately 8,000 residents of Evandale, Perth and Longford would be included in the Tamar Valley council</li> <li>• Many current service sharing agreements would become unnecessary</li> </ul>



	<p>system management, allowing them to focus on improving tailored local services to communities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Well placed to support and share specialist staff with smaller rural councils, potentially acting as a hub for regional or state-wide shared service provision</li> <li>• Capacity to invest in new and more systematic approaches to community engagement to ensure all communities within the larger council areas are heard and represented, including those in the rural hinterland areas and segments</li> <li>• Scope to introduce community advisory panels</li> <li>• Operations hubs could also be used for a program of scheduled regional council meetings in different parts of the council area</li> <li>• In 2021 dollars, total rates revenue for is estimated at \$101.2m.</li> <li>• Access to a significant rate base drawn from a mix of residential, commercial, industrial, and agricultural lands</li> </ul>	
	<p><b>Are there any adjustments that could be made to maximise the strengths and minimise the weaknesses?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include the areas of Longford, Perth, Evandale, TRANSlink Industrial at Western Junction, Blackstone Heights, Prospect Vale, Carrick and Hadspen in this scenario would minimise the impacts losing these areas would have on any future council.</li> </ul>	

### Alternate Reform Options

Boundary changes are only one part of the equation. The Board also want Councils and communities to think about options for complementary, supporting reforms, such as shared services and partnerships, options to improve local services and keep jobs in local communities, and new models of engagement and representation.

To support this conversation, the Board have prepared a number of *Supporting Papers*, which present a range of opportunities for Councils and communities to consider, copies **attached** to this report.

The Supporting Papers draw on research about new and evolving approaches in local government elsewhere, as well as the ideas that they have heard from talking with Councils, state agencies, and the broader community, including from submissions they have received.

The Supporting Papers focus on:

- Supporting strong and empowered local communities (protecting and enhancing local voice and local services);
- State government partnership opportunities for local government; and
- Potential models, options, and key considerations for shared service opportunities in Tasmania.



On 16 May 2022, a report was put to Council in response to the *Local Government Reform- General Discussion Paper* which addressed shared services, details of which are as follows:

It is recognised that there is a long-established increasing need to do more with less. Sharing services enables Council's to do this by reducing duplication of effort, resources and expenditure.

There is often a heavy focus on economic arguments to the exclusion of other issues, for example:

- importance of good governance
- effective local democracy and representation
- evaluation of post-reform experience

There is a wide array of shared services models already operating across Australia. The varying models each have different advantages and disadvantages. One model will not suit all councils. The range of choice out there means that there is very likely to be an effective option for council to consider.

We need to draw on the experiences and lessons learned from those who are already sharing services in the areas of Council's interest.

Shared services are not new but can bring financial benefits to councils through the reduction of duplication. They can also improve customer service.

Through resource sharing on a regional basis, Councils can improve the efficiency, effectiveness and quality of services and functions. Importantly, they provide the opportunity for Councils to maintain but also to improve service delivery to their communities in response to increasing external pressure resulting from other levels of government and to increasing regulatory, compliance and reporting requirements imposed on them.

Resource sharing can be implemented in a number of ways including:

- Resource sharing through service agreements where Councils as a group agree to allocate functions between themselves – one Council does a function on behalf of the group. Here a Council outsources a function to another Council.
- Resource sharing through a joint enterprise where Councils form a joint business to achieve economies of scale across a functional area of core business.
- Merger/amalgamation where Councils join together voluntarily.

There are other variations of resource sharing through service agreements. These include agency agreements, where one Council performs operations on behalf of other Councils as their agent. As well there could be a range of formal and informal arrangements to jointly fund, operate or provide services and share staff, facilities and assets. Examples of these include the sharing of building inspectors and waste management services.

There are opportunities to rationalise and achieve better utilisation of major operational assets such as plant and equipment, depots, workshops, administration centres and office technology, such as IT systems. Specialised items of plant which may have relatively low utilisation levels can be better utilised.

To achieve a successful outcome from the process of resource sharing it is essential that the process is designed to enable a range of options to be considered and informed decisions made only when the strengths and weaknesses of the options are determined.

Some of the opportunities for shared service delivery/regional collaboration include:

- Information Technology:

The company that councils in the region were partnering with withdrew from the project. It is understood that the reason for the withdrawal was because it was of greater financial benefit to the company to deal with each council on an individual basis.

The benefit of common technology platforms is not in the technology cost or operations. Rather, the majority of



the potential benefit in shared platforms is in the ability to consolidate and drive synergies in processes across all operations of the councils, regardless of their physical location, size and complexity. This includes the standardisation of all corporate applications (finance, procurement, human resources, etc.) as well as technology platforms used for engineering & GIS, planning & design, asset management and risk management.

#### Establish a Regional Authority

- Northern Tasmania Waste Management Authority (**NTWMA**)

NTWMA may be formed to provide waste management and resource recovery services. It would receive and process material on behalf of its constituent councils as well as providing waste management services to private industry.

- Waste Management Services
  - Kerbside Bin Collections
  - Hard Waste
  - Resource Recovery Centre
  - FOGO – Green Waste
  - Landfill

- Common Services

Common Services delivery model would involve the councils coming together as stakeholders, looking within the councils for opportunities to undertake shared initiatives at a whole-of-region or sub-regional level.

A common services model would provide participants with the ability and resources to enable quality equitable service provision, as well as generate economic efficiencies and increased viability to participating councils in the region.

The model enables participants to meet legislative requirements, increase consistency of processes between municipalities and develop the reputation and professionalisation of the councils.

- Engineering
- Environmental Health
- Planning/Building
- Building Surveyor

#### Planning Authority

- Internal and Independent Planning Authorities

There is recognition of the importance of planning to the economy in general, and particularly in housing supply, and hence the importance of improving the efficiency of the development application process.

A local authority may be staffed by officers and/or councillors, and an independent authority comprises of external experts and community representatives.

These collaborative approaches provide increased transparency, integrity and rigour in the development assessment process. The authorities can be used to provide advice to the applicants, objectors, council officers and councillors on individual DAs at various stages during the assessment process and/or to determine the development application. For example, authorities can be established:

- To provide advice to the applicant at the pre-lodgement stage including on design matters
- To provide advice upon lodgement or once the submissions have been received
- To provide advice on the design of the development at the pre-lodgement stage or during the assessment process
- To peer review the officers' assessment and recommendations
- To make the determination or to provide advice to those making the determination
- To review decisions as part of the post determination mediation/conciliation stage
- To provide advice to the councillors on senior officers on policy and practice matters.



An independent authority may be considered to be a council's body, they can be seen as a partner in the council's processes. This partnership can assist in removing the conflict associated with the multiple roles of councillors as decision maker and advocate, particularly when the authority takes over the decision-making role.

**Are there any other entirely different scenarios the Board should consider, which would still deliver against the Board's criteria and structural reform principles?**

While not Council's preferred option and only relevant if forced amalgamations were to be considered by the Government, an alternative scenario which is not contained within the Board's Community Catchment Information Packs would be the merger of Northern Midlands and Meander Valley local government areas in their entirety. That is, including Longford, Perth, Evandale, Launceston Airport, TRANSlink, Prospect Vale, Blackstone Heights, Carrick and Hadspen.

This scenario would result in a larger Council which has similar community of interests to Northern Midlands, while retaining key municipal areas of future growth.

It is important to note that currently neither Meander Valley nor Northern Midlands Council's agree to voluntarily amalgamate with other councils.

A draft written submission is **attached** to this report for Council's review and consideration. An executive summary of the written submission is summarised as follows:

1. NMC is capable of providing for community needs – presently and into the future. NMC has worked hard to establish and implement NMC's Strategic Plan and associated strategies. Council is most appreciated in its local communities for its level of trust and public engagement.
2. NMC is impacted by all of the scenarios presented by the Board in the Central and Midlands Community Catchment Information Pack, and one scenario presented by the Board in the Tamar Valley Community Catchment Information Pack.
3. NMC has not supported forced amalgamations or boundary adjustments throughout the reform process. It wishes to retain all aspects of the municipality for existing residents, visitors, and investors.
4. NMC rejects all four scenarios presented by the Board in the Central and Midlands Community Catchment Information Pack as they pertain to changes to existing boundaries of the NMC.
5. NMC rejects all four scenarios presented by the Board in the Tamar Valley Community Catchment Information Pack as they pertain to changes to existing boundaries of the NMC.
6. NMC's position is that NMC boundaries remain as they presently are.
7. NMC is supportive of targeted local government reform, including voluntary amalgamations for council's who mutually agree to the amalgamation occurring. NMC does not currently support any voluntary amalgamation of NMC with any other Tasmanian council(s).
8. NMC is very concerned about the likely negative impact any changes to municipal boundaries would have on smaller, more rural communities located within the municipality if forced boundary adjustments are made.
9. The provision of additional data by the Board which demonstrates the impacts of the proposed reform would have been beneficial to all councils, especially with regard to how economies of scale would deliver costs savings, the financial implications of proposed reforms (including impact on ratepayers) and business case scenarios for proposed reforms.
10. Council and especially Northern Midlands ratepayers must not bear the financial burden arising from any proposed reforms.



## 12 ATTACHMENTS

1. 2023-07 DRAFT Submission to the Board re Future of Local Government Review [**5.1.1** - 15 pages]
2. Central and Midlands Community Catchment Information Pack [**5.1.2** - 46 pages]
3. Tamar Valley Community Catchment Information Pack [**5.1.3** - 46 pages]
4. Supporting Paper - Supporting Strong and Empowered Local Communities [**5.1.4** - 9 pages]
5. Supporting Paper - State Government partnership opportunities for Local Government [**5.1.5** - 10 pages]
6. Supporting Paper - Shared Services Models [**5.1.6** - 17 pages]





## 6 ITEMS FOR THE CLOSED MEETING

### MINUTE NO. 23/0249

#### DECISION

Deputy Mayor Lambert/Cr Adams

That Council move into the “Closed Meeting” with the Acting General Manager/Corporate Services Manager to discuss Closed Council Items.

Carried Unanimously

*Mayor Knowles adjourned the meeting for the meal break at 5.32pm at which time Mrs Eacher, Mr Leigh McCullagh and Ms Veldhuizen left the meeting.*

*Mayor Knowles reconvened the meeting after the meal break at 5.55pm.*

#### RECOMMENDATION

That Council move into the “Closed Meeting” with the General Manager, Corporate Services Manager, Works Manager and Executive Assistant to discuss Closed Council Items.

Item	Local Government (Meeting Procedures) Regulations 2015 Reference
Personnel Matters	15(2)(a)

*Local Government (Meeting Procedures) Regulations 2015 - Part 2 - Meetings*

- (a) *personnel matters, including complaints against an employee of the council and industrial relations matters;*
- (b) *information that, if disclosed, is likely to confer a commercial advantage or impose a commercial disadvantage on a person with whom the council is conducting, or proposes to conduct, business;*
- (c) *commercial information of a confidential nature that, if disclosed, is likely to -*
  - (i) *prejudice the commercial position of the person who supplied it; or*
  - (ii) *confer a commercial advantage on a competitor of the council; or*
  - (iii) *reveal a trade secret.*
- (d) *contracts, and tenders, for the supply of goods and services and their terms, conditions, approval and renewal;*
- (e) *the security of -*
  - (i) *the council, councillors and council staff; or*
  - (ii) *the property of the council.*
- (f) *proposals for the council to acquire land or an interest in land or for the disposal of land;*
- (g) *information of a personal and confidential nature or information provided to the council on the condition it is kept confidential;*
- (h) *applications by councillors for a leave of absence;*
- (i) *matters relating to actual or possible litigation taken, or to be taken, by or involving the council or an employee of the council;*
- (j) *the personal hardship of any person who is a resident in, or is a ratepayer in, the relevant municipal area.*





## 6.1 CLOSED COUNCIL DECISIONS RELEASED

Nil

## 7 CLOSURE

### MINUTE NO. 23/0252

#### DECISION

Deputy Mayor Lambert/Cr Terrett

That Council move out of the "Closed Meeting".

Carried Unanimously

Mayor Knowles closed the meeting at 6.13pm.

MAYOR \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_