

# The Future of Local Government Review



A report has been released by the Tasmanian State Government that proposes serious changes to our Council.

The Northern Midlands municipality will cease to exist if the mandated changes to boundaries detailed in The Future of Local Government Review's preferred hybrid option are implemented. Our municipality would be broken up and absorbed into Launceston City, Southern Midlands and Meander Valley and possibly Break O'Day municipalities.

Northern Midlands Council wants to ensure all residents are aware of what the Review has recommended and what it means for them.

## Have your say

The Review Report argues that feedback from the community is that change is needed but that it will only occur if the State mandates those changes.

NMC does not necessarily agree with all the Review's proposed changes. However, before NMC responds we want to ensure residents are informed about the proposed changes and what they would mean for them and for the municipality.

The deadline set for Council to respond to the Report and to propose an alternative view is June 21. We want to ensure your voice is heard by all the decision makers.

Newly developed Village Green at Ross



Recently completed Cressy Pool and concourse refurbishment

## The current position

Northern Midlands has a strong community of interest connection. It also enjoys a balanced mix of industrial, light industry, business, agricultural and residential zones.

The municipality is growing rapidly and is attractive for residents who want the benefits of a residential/rural lifestyle while still within commuting distance of Launceston.

- Underlying Surplus Ratio 9% (4.4% calculated by Consolidated Data Collection)
- Operating Revenue **\$22.8 million** – including Rate Revenue \$12 million (7,460 rateable properties)
- Employee benefit expenses **\$5.8 million** – 88 Employees (74 Full-time Equivalent)
- Cash & Investments **\$26 million** (Non-interest bearing borrowings \$4.05 million)
- Property, Infrastructure, plant & equipment **\$535 million** (written down value of \$390 million).

Council's ratios for Buildings, Roads, Bridges, and Drainage have consistently over a four year period been above the established benchmark of 60%, indicating an appropriate level of investment in renewal of these asset classes.

In the past 5 years Council has purchased/constructed \$42 million of new and renewed infrastructure including community facilities as follows:

- Campbell Town Recreation Ground Complex **\$5m**
- Cressy Swimming Pool & Cressy Recreation Ground upgrades **\$2.7m**
- Evandale Recreation Ground upgrades **\$1.1m**
- Longford Recreation Ground complex and Sports Centre/Gym upgrades **\$5.4m**
- Construction of an Early Learning Centre at Perth **\$4.2m**
- Ross Village Green establishment **\$1.1m**.

Recent Federal Government funding commitments include:

- Main Street Program – upgrade of Perth and Campbell Town streetscapes: **\$8m**
- TRANSLink Intermodal Facility, an intermodal site close to the main road, rail corridors and the airport: **\$5m** to commence the planning process and **\$30m** to deliver enabling infrastructure.

## The Review's objectives

The Review's objectives are to create a more robust and capable system of local government, ready for the challenges and opportunities of the future and to make recommendations on the future role, functions and design of local government.

The Review argues that change is necessary because some councils are unable to provide services, maintain current infrastructure, attract necessary qualified staff, or to meet the needs of their communities now and into future.

To address these issues it has recommended three structural reform options:

- Mandatory sharing of services across the current 29 councils;
- Changing boundaries to create fewer, larger councils;
- A 'hybrid' model with some service sharing and some council consolidation, varying around the state based on local needs.

**Importantly, neither the Review nor the Minister for Local Government have suggested that these reforms would result in a reduction in rates and other costs to residents.**

The Interim Report identified the 'hybrid' model as the preferred approach.

The current phase of the review is to explore how any changes to future boundaries may reflect contemporary 'communities of interest' to align with current and future needs.

## The report's assumptions

The Review makes the following assumptions:

- That parts of the West Tamar and Northern Midlands LGAs in particular have been evolving into 'satellite' commuter suburbs of Greater Launceston.
- The frequency and scale of interaction between residents of this broader region suggests a strong community of interest. This trajectory is also clearly evident in Longford, Perth and Evandale. The rapid growth and development in areas like Legana, Carrick, Hadspen, Dilston/Lilydale, Longford, Perth, St. Leonards, and Riverside provide compelling evidence of the connection to the wider Tamar Valley area to Launceston.
- Both Brighton and New Norfolk in the South have significant employment and resident movement connections to the Central Highlands and Southern Midlands (as well as to greater Hobart), while Deloraine is an important regional hub for the Northern Midlands.
- Northern Midlands and Central Highlands continue to face service provision difficulties associated with population decline; other parts of this larger area are growing relatively strongly.
- The main challenge confronting the Central and Midlands region is its population growth is concentrated in areas like Brighton, Perth, Evandale, Longford, and Westbury, whose functional economic connections are to Hobart and Launceston rather than Central Tasmania Council areas of Central Highlands, Northern Midlands, Southern Midlands.
- For many of the services councils deliver, creating larger councils with greater capacity can lead to improved capability to deliver a broader and more complex range of services
- Having 29 LGAs does, in the Board's view, have a significant and detrimental impact on the ability of councils to attract and retain key staff, to uniformly manage assets well, and to deliver important regulatory functions.

The Review has identified concerning capability gaps across the sector, driven in part by workforce and skills shortages leading to sub-standard delivery of important regulatory functions and highly uneven asset management practices. These gaps and challenges are being felt more acutely in smaller, rural councils.

## How it would affect you and Northern Midlands Municipality

Based on these assumptions and its view on how people live, work, shop, travel and play, the Review Report creates two new 'community catchment' area maps relevant to Northern Midlands.

Their proposed Tamar Valley catchment (as a whole or in-part) encompasses the existing Council areas of: Launceston City, West Tamar, George Town, Northern Midlands and Meander Valley.

Their proposed Central & Midlands catchment (as a whole or in-part) encompasses the existing council areas of Central Highlands, Northern Midlands, Southern Midlands, Meander Valley, Derwent Valley and Brighton.

In essence, if implemented, Northern Midlands Council would cease to exist in its current form.

It would mean Launceston City Council would take over Northern Midlands Council areas vital to its financial well-being including Perth, the TRANSLink Industrial Hub at Launceston Airport and Evandale. Longford and the surrounding area would be merged with Meander Valley Council, whilst Campbell Town and Ross would be subsumed into Southern Midlands Council.

Full details of the Report are available online at [www.futurelocal.tas.gov.au/publications](http://www.futurelocal.tas.gov.au/publications)

Central and Midlands Community Catchment	Tamar Valley Community Catchment
<p><b>Rationale and evidence</b></p> <p><b>Place and representation</b> The broader midlands and central plateau and sparsely populated region whose e agriculture, tourism, and energy generate contains several geographically distant centres, commuting and employment connections to the Central Highlands (as well as to greater Hobart), while Deloraine hub for the Northern Midlands and the u Highlands. As well as their economic and the Midlands and Central Plateau have e cultural similarities represented in physio 'Tasmania's Heartland' road network and</p> <p><b>Future needs and priorities</b> While the Northern Midlands and Cent to face service provision difficulties as decline, other parts of this larger area e strongly. In particular, Meander Valley, Brighton have seen population growth in recent decades. Increasing agricultu also attracted major investment, includ in major irrigation infrastructure which, temperature rise associated with glob drive further strong growth in this regio The main challenge confronting the Ce</p> <p><b>Central and Midlands Consultation Group</b> Central Highlands, Northern Midlands, Southern Midlands, Meander Valley, Derwent Valley, Brighton</p>	<p><b>Rationale and evidence</b></p> <p><b>Place and representation</b> This grouping is primarily clustered around well as its broader catchment zone, takir the North and South Esk rivers. Launceston exerts a strong and wide-ra employment and service centre, extendi Tamar River and south to Longford, Perth the Hadspen/Carrick area. Currently, m Perth, and Evandale commute to Launce in these communities (in other words, app of employed residents in these communit Westbury has a strong commuter come Westbury residents work in Launceston). (67 residents of Deloraine work in Launc connections also do not extend into the e Break O'Day, or Central Highlands LGAs. Greater Launceston is now a major servi for its broader region, and a large perce surrounding LGAs travel there regularly, i Geographically, George Town is part of Consultation group although, owing to it and industrial base, is to a much smaller Launceston's commuting zone. Roughly i work in George Town, while some 05, or local population, live in George Town bu Existing regional collaboration on issues governments in this area occurs primari City Deal framework and the Launceston</p> <p><b>Tamar Valley Consultation Group</b> Launceston, West Tamar, George Town, Northern Midlands, Meander Valley</p>

## The other option

The other option is for no change to the current Northern Midlands Council area. Under this option NMC would continue to:

- Maintain infrastructure to our current high standards
- Community Councillors and staff continue to grow the community, and hear the voice of our community.

Northern Midlands Council strongly encourages all residents to have a say on our future and provide your councillors and the State Government with a clear view of your preference for the way forward.

## Make your voice heard

Northern Midlands Council will have an online survey ready shortly. We will let you know about it on Facebook and our website. You can also contact:

### LOCAL STATE MPs

- The Hon. Nic Street, Minister for Local Government | [nic.street@parliament.tas.gov.au](mailto:nic.street@parliament.tas.gov.au)  
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The Hon Rebecca White, Labor Member for Lyons and Leader of the Opposition | [rebecca.white@parliament.tas.gov.au](mailto:rebecca.white@parliament.tas.gov.au)

Luke Edmunds, Labor, Shadow Minister for Local Government | [luke.edmunds@parliament.tas.gov.au](mailto:luke.edmunds@parliament.tas.gov.au)

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The Hon. Rosemary Armitage, Independent Member for Launceston | [rosemary.armitage@parliament.tas.gov.au](mailto:rosemary.armitage@parliament.tas.gov.au)

### LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOARD

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