



6 March 2017

Dear Ratepayer/Resident,

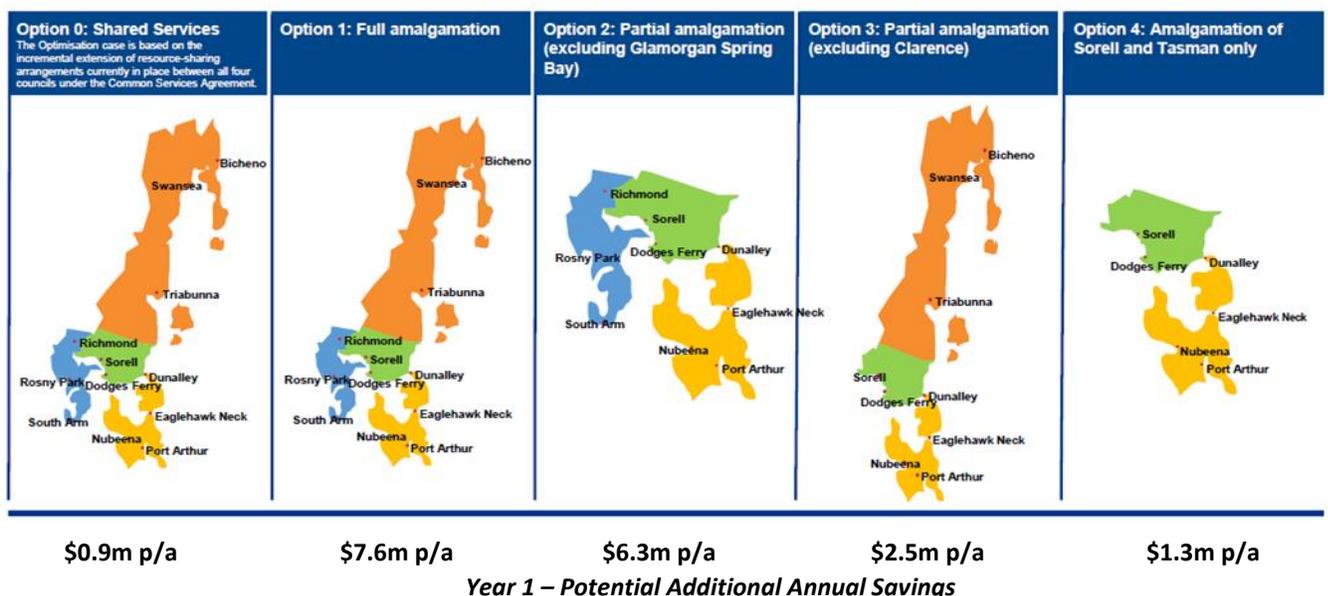
In February 2016, Council in partnership with the Department of Premier and Cabinet commenced a South East Council's Feasibility Study ("the Study") of potential voluntary amalgamations and shared services. The purpose of the Study was to assist Council in determining whether there is merit in amalgamating with other south east Councils and to establish a baseline of information, data and modelling that can be used for consultation with the community.

The Study and the assessment of the options have been guided by the following principles determined by the Minister for Local Government:

- Be in the best interests of ratepayers;
- Improve the level of services for communities;
- Preserve and maintain local representation, and
- Ensure that the financial status of the entities is strengthened.

The Study, carried out by KPMG, was completed in September 2016 and investigated five options:

- **Option 0** – Extension of common service arrangements;
- **Option 1** – Amalgamation of Clarence City Council, Sorell Council, Tasman Council and Glamorgan Spring Bay Council;
- **Option 2** – Amalgamation of Clarence City Council, Sorell Council and Tasman Council;
- **Option 3** – Amalgamation of Sorell Council, Glamorgan Spring Bay Council and Tasman Council; and
- **Option 4** – Amalgamation of Sorell Council and Tasman Council.



The Study

The South East Council's Feasibility Study summarizes the current situation as follows:

- There are fundamental differences in the profile, size and scale of the Councils, but these do not preclude amalgamation.
- Diverse communities exist within and across current Council boundaries.
- Forecast population growth is concentrated in Clarence and Sorell, with low growth in Tasman and a decline in Glamorgan Spring Bay.
- The Councils have many similar goals and offer the same core services to their communities, although there is some disparity in the scale and scope of service.
- Each Council is currently living within their means but face long-term challenges.

In relation to the options, the Study proposes the following:

- Conservative assumptions have been used in assessing the options and based on:
 - No changes to services;
 - No changes to rates;
 - Local shopfronts retained; and
 - No changes to community facing staff.
- All options provide a positive financial return for the Councils and their communities.
- Local representation can be maintained through wards with fewer elected members. There will be fewer councillors in the south east region under options 1-4. The formation of wards for a transition period is proposed in order to mitigate community concerns about loss of representation under an amalgamated model.
- On balance, ratepayers are no worse off under any option, but the impacts vary.
- There is still work to be done if Councils decide to move ahead with one of the amalgamation options. Achieving the potential financial savings is directly impacted by the effectiveness of any merger implementation plans and strategies between the relevant Councils.

In summary, the Study conclusions propose that all of the councils are better off by reform in any of the options in which they feature, but there are variations in financial impact. In all options involving amalgamation, there will be a reduction in the number of elected members, and this is one trade-off for improved financial performance. The creation of electoral districts is a mechanism that can be employed to lessen any real or perceived loss in access to representation.

Both the abridged and full reports and associated appendices of the Study can be viewed on Council's Website www.tasman.tas.gov.au

Community Survey

In order to find out what our community thinks about voluntary amalgamations a community survey will be undertaken throughout March and April, closing on Friday 5th May. The aim of the survey is to gauge, in broad terms, the general community interest in amalgamations and if they want Council to continue with the process. It is designed to find out what the 'community feel' is on the topic, as to whether they are 'for' or 'against' amalgamations and what the preferred option is.

Following the consultation period, Council at the June 2017 Ordinary Council meeting will determine whether to continue with the process and, if so, to write to the Minister for Local Government to request a Local Government Board review incorporating a due diligence assessment and additional community

consultation. Council will also be required at this June 2017 Ordinary meeting to nominate their preferred option(s). Please be advised, however, that this is not the decision to amalgamate.

Any further decision by Council after the Local Government Board Review, ('the decision to amalgamate') would be subject to further deliberation between Council and the Minister.

I encourage all residents and ratepayers to complete the short online survey which can be accessed online at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/amalgamations-community-survey-tasman>

Surveys can also be completed online at the Council Offices during their usual business hours.

Those requiring assistance to complete the survey can contact a member of Council's Customer Service Team who will complete the online survey on your behalf, over the phone. Our Customer Service Team can be contacted on 6250 9200 between 8.30am – 5.00pm, Monday to Friday.

The survey will ask a 'yes' and 'no' question as to whether you are 'for' or 'against' Council continuing with the voluntary amalgamation process. It will then ask you to rank your preferred options, even if you are not in favour of amalgamation. The survey is short and will only take a couple of minutes to complete.

If you wish to provide further comment to Council on amalgamations an email can be sent to tasman@tasman.tas.gov.au with 'Amalgamations' as the subject line.

I encourage you to speak with your Councillors to share your views on the amalgamations options and process. Their contact details can be found on our website at <http://www.tasman.tas.gov.au/your-council/>

Council will continue to communicate with the community as the voluntary amalgamation process continues. Do not hesitate to contact the Council office on 62 50 9200 should you require any further information or clarification.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robert Higgins', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

ROBERT HIGGINS
GENERAL MANAGER