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Government commitment on Council mergers a welcome relief

Premier Jeremy Rockliff's new commitment that no councils in Tasmania will be forced to amalgamate with their neighbours is a welcome development in a [Local Government Review](#) process that has stoked community concern and a widespread campaign to protect the integrity of local government representation and planning decision making, said the Planning Matters Alliance of Tasmania (PMAT) today.

PMAT [has held nine public meetings around the state](#) and directly heard the concerns of the community, councillors and council staff about the direction the review process was heading.

"This is a welcome announcement from Premier Rockliff and we know there will be palpable relief in communities across Tasmania," said Sophie Underwood, State Director of PMAT.

"While it's a shame the review process created so much community concern and uncertainty, this announcement will offer some relief."

"Experience interstate is that forced council mergers deliver poor outcomes for communities and local democracy. The meetings PMAT held across the state heard community concerns about the loss of local representation, the sell off of council assets, dismissal of staff and loss of local identity and local decision making.

"Similarly, local councils retaining the role of Planning Authority and making decisions on development proposals is widely seen as critical to retaining local character, independence and genuine community input.

"A past Government decision in April 2023 to defer a decision to remove planning decisions from councils was also very welcome and combined with today's announcement, takes much of the angst and concern about this review process away.

The future of the Local Government Review process, and what it will now seek to achieve, is however now unclear in the wake of this decision.

"PMAT will continue to be vigilant to ensure Councils are not forced to amalgamate (with any amalgamations based on an elector poll run by the Tasmanian Electoral Commission) and that planning remains within Local Government" said Sophie Underwood, State Director of PMAT.

Peter McGlone of the Tasmanian Conservation Trust also states that "No forced amalgamations is a victory for local democracy and community voice. The Government needs to admit it's deceptive process caused the conflict".

For Comment Sophie Underwood State Director, PMAT 0407501999