Amalgamations: To Merge or not to Merge?

Local Government in NSW is facing significant challenges that demand fresh thinking. LGNSW Learning Solutions offers a range of programs to support the sector in thinking through new ways of doing business.

_Smarter Local Government_ roundtables bring together elected members and senior managers from a variety of councils to exchange information, explore ideas and identify opportunities to strengthen their role and performance.

**Overview**

Councils are currently preparing their ‘Fit for the Future’ submissions which, among other things, require consideration of the option of mergers. The State Government has offered substantial financial incentives for voluntary mergers but has yet to guarantee that the policy of ‘no forced amalgamations’ will be maintained.

Amalgamations have been the single most contentious area of Local Government reform throughout Australia. The NSW Independent Local Government Review Panel stated that amalgamations are not a panacea for all the issues and problems facing Local Government, but argued that structural reform must be considered and that some mergers are essential. However, the Panel also proposed an improved process for considering mergers, including closer attention to the business case and a more independent Boundaries Commission.

Over recent decades NSW has seen several rounds of council amalgamations, both forced and voluntary. Experience gained and lessons learned can now be shared in order to help councils decide whether or not to consider a merger in their ‘Fit for the Future’ proposal.

**Roundtable Program**

The Roundtable will cover:

- A summary of research findings on the pros and cons of mergers
- Case studies of recent mergers – forced and voluntary, more or less successful
- How the ILGRP’s analysis and findings link to the ‘Fit for the Future’ templates
- Alternative merger processes and what a merger may cost
- What works and what doesn’t.

**Facilitators**

The Roundtable will be led by experienced Local Government practitioners including:

- Jeff Tate, a former council CEO who has managed a large amalgamated council in South Australia, and one of the recent de-amalgamations in Queensland
- Denise Osborne, Councillor and Steven Pinnuck, General Manager, Greater Hume Shire Council (amalgamated from three councils)
- Professor Graham Sansom, former Chair Independent Local Government Review Panel
- Greg Hoffman PSM, General Manager – Advocacy, Local Government Association of Queensland
- Rob Kelly, Director Third Horizon
- Sarah Arti, Manager LGNSW Learning Solutions

**Who Should Attend?**

The roundtable will be of value to all those mayors, councillors and senior managers who need to consider whether a merger option is appropriate for their council, or might arise in the near future.

**Register now**

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