



Professor Graham Sansom
Chair
NSW Independent Local Government Review Panel
C/-Locked Bag 3015
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Dear Professor Sansom

Re: Strengthening Your Community Consultation Paper

I refer to the call for submissions in relation to the Consultation Paper.

The Lithgow Local Government Area (LGA) is a relatively large geographical area of 4,551 sq km, located about 140 kilometres west of the Sydney CBD and within the eastern part of the Central West Region. The Lithgow LGA is made up of one large urban centre of Lithgow, two townships of Portland and Wallerawang and numerous villages, hamlets and rural localities of varying proximity to Lithgow.

The community is typified by industries such as mining, power generation and tourism, the later being showcased by the location of the Emirates Wolgan Valley Spa and Resort, a luxury accommodation facility located within the LGA.

The residential population for the 2011 census was recorded as 20,160. Council has a vision for the Lithgow area to be recognised as a desirable place to live and visit and a viable place in which to invest.

Whilst Council recognises the need for improvement to occur within the NSW local government sector there are questions around the approach taken with the consultation process of the Strengthening Your Community Consultation Paper. The paper highlights within the Terms of Reference on more than one occasion the review of boundary changes. It was further emphasised during the session at Orange on 16 August 2012 that 'everything' was to be considered.

To Council this process is everything about amalgamations. Our opinion is that amalgamations would be a poor choice and outcome.

Local Government by its very nature is the form of government closest to the people within our communities. It is also the form of government that allows the people to have a much greater say in what happens rather than

Over the current term of this Council there have been a number of significant projects achieved by this Council and ones that we should feel very proud of. These projects have included the construction of two sewage treatment plants at a cost of over \$30M, improvements done to our main sporting precinct at a cost of over \$4M, the first stage in our aquatic centre improvements of over \$2M, stormwater mitigation, many road works and other beneficial projects for the community. In addition to this two universities have commenced development within the local government area, one of which came directly as the result of Council's actions.

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There are many other issues that Council has worked at overcoming through being a proactive member of our ROC, Central NSW Councils (Centroc). This has been a very proactive group of councils and an avenue that should be encouraged and emulated throughout the state. With more appropriate governance arrangements Centroc could expand even further upon its roles and activities thus providing even greater benefit for its members whilst at the same time allowing the member councils to keep independence and stay 'local'.

1. What are the best aspects of NSW Local Government in its current form?

1. Level of government closest to the people. The community have access to their representatives and have a voice
2. Improving local services and facilities
3. The range of issues that are dealt with and managed locally, e.g. water, sewer and general
4. Alliances such as Centroc
5. Diversity of issues

2. What challenges will your community have to meet over the next 25 years?

1. Responding to the needs of a diversifying and ageing community. This will require lobbying and/or planning by Council to provided adequate accommodation facilities and support services.
2. Diversification of economic base, particularly as coal reserves are not infinite. This will also spin off to impact on local electricity producers and support industries.
3. Rogue and disruptive councillors – There needs to be more teeth in the legislation for action to be taken against 'rogue' councillors. If a councillor is continually working against the overall Council and the community.
4. Planning and funding for aging infrastructure and new infrastructure. Particularly as Council's revenue stream is hamstrung through rate pegging and professional skills shortages.
5. Labour shortages in specialist areas.

3. What 'Top five' changes should be made to local Government to help meet your community's future challenges?

1. Improved financing for infrastructure
2. Reducing compliance and processes
3. Remove cost shifting by State and Federal Govt e.g. health, roads etc
4. Greater flexibility to allow for ROCs
5. Wider powers to deal strongly with rogue councillors, including 'surcharging for legal costs incurred', longer periods of suspension and dismissal.

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission. And process

Yours sincerely

Clr N Castle
Mayor