

# TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR HILLTOPS REGION REVIEW STEERING COMMITTEE

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## Background

As a result of sector wide consultation commenced in Dubbo NSW in August 2011, the NSW Government has been undertaking what is considered a comprehensive review of the local government sector within NSW.

The initial consultation was the basis of “Destination 2036” and was attended by representatives from all 152 Councils that currently exist across NSW.

According to the Division of Local Government (DLG) “Destination 2036 is the start of a new way of planning which moves local government in NSW from talking about and reacting to change, to managing change to create a preferred future. In effect, it will begin the strategic plan and delivery program for NSW local government, mirroring key elements of the integrated planning and reporting frameworks which individual councils are implementing.”

As a follow on from the early work of Destination 2036, the NSW government commissioned an Independent Local Government Review Panel to thoroughly investigate all options available for the future of local government.

In April 2013 the Independent Panel released “Future Directions for NSW Local Government – 20 Essential Steps” which provided the first major insight into the thinking of the panel and the potential range of final recommendations to be delivered to the local government Minister.

With the initial report recommending major changes for the Councils of Boorowa, Young and Harden, it became obvious that the Councils could either be proactive in creating their own future or run the risk of being dictated to by the State Government.

This initially entailed the three Councils of Boorowa, Young and Harden working collaboratively to determine what the future of the region known as the Hilltops should be and how this new future would be achieved. Consultation with the NSW Local Government Minister as well as the Chief Executive of the Division of Local Government determined that the Division would be highly supportive of the three Councils in working together to develop a suitable future model for the Hilltops Region. This culminated in the Minister pledging funding on a 50/50 basis for the engagement of a consultant to specifically review the Hilltops Region and potential options for the future.

Subsequent to the offer being made by the Minister for funding support, Harden Council independently made the decision to wait to take any further action until the final report of the Independent Review Panel was made public (released 8 January 2014) and the State Government responded to the recommendations in the report.

## Introduction

With Boorowa and Young Councils preparing to engage a Consultant to undertake a review of the Hilltops Region with a view to the future, it is important to clearly define how the process will occur and what the intended outcomes are. As the process involves multiple Councils and communities it is particularly important that an agreed framework is established early on.

This document is intended to be a guidance document and may be subject to review and change at any stage throughout the process as parameters change.

## Project Parameters

### Objectives

The overarching objective of Councils working collaboratively in shaping the future of the Hilltops Region is to ensure that the community receives the best quality of life possible.

There are a number of sub-objectives of the project which are as follows:

- Strengthen individual communities within a regional context
- Enhanced economic activity across the region
- Increased political strength and recognition with other levels of Government
- Maintain fair, open and accountable local democracy
- Maintain and strengthen local employment
- Securing the best value for money services for the community whilst acknowledging social and environmental implications.
- Strong place management where distinct communities have the ability to influence the identity of their place.
- Maintain the individuality and uniqueness of the communities that make up the Hilltops Region.

### Outcomes

Specific outcomes of the project are as follows:

- Clear understanding of the definition and constituents of the Hilltops Region
- Identify areas of commonality across the region to identify obvious areas for cost saving
- Identify and consider strengths and weaknesses of current representation models, governance arrangements and service delivery mechanisms
- Identify and assess alternative representation models, governance arrangements and service delivery mechanisms
- Identify the most desirable future representation models, governance arrangements and service delivery mechanisms and develop a road map for how this best possible future can be achieved
- A clear and shared understanding of the desired future of the region with majority support from the community

## Scope

The project is going to require a broad range of resources and a diverse range of stakeholders made up from a variety of communities.

The scope of the project will initially involve the following key aspects:

- Engage with Councils within and surrounding the Hilltops region to allow for early participation
- Development of a stakeholder communications plan
- Engaging a consultant to independently and objectively review the region, the Councils that make up the region and the way services are provided to the communities of the region.
- Identifying the most suitable model going forward that will provide the most cost effective, highest quality and democratically fair service to the community.
- Develop a transition plan that clearly identifies the steps associated with moving from where we are now towards the ideal future

## Governance Framework

### Participants

At commencement of the project participating Councils are Boorowa Council and Young Shire Council. It is acknowledged that participant Councils are likely to change as the process progresses.

The steering committee consists of the Mayor and General Manager of each participating Council.

Invited representatives of the Division of Local Government may attend as observers, to provide information and advice, as required and receive updates on project milestones.

### Delegations

The steering committee has not been given any initial delegations and will act as an information and advice conduit between consultants and participating Councils.

### Role of the Steering Committee

The role of the committee and its members is to undertake research, consultation and communications in relation to the progress of the project. The committee will meet as needed and provide regular updates to participant Councils. The committee will provide guidance and input into consultant work that will form the basis of draft reports to be presented to each participating Council for consideration.

## Overarching Principles Critical for Success

At the outset of the project the following principles are considered as critical to moving towards a successful future:

- The project's main aim is to ensure that all Hilltops communities ultimately benefit from the proposal.

- The community will have opportunities to be engaged in the process and contribute to the final model
- The community will receive clear and consistent information from committee members regarding the process
- Local identity will be respected and enhanced
- Each participating Council agrees to remain focused on the long term benefits for their community and the wider region
- All options are to be considered objectively within the context of what is best for our long term future
- No future model shall be adopted unless endorsed by each participating Council.

## **Project Management**

The project will be managed on a joint basis by the General Managers of the participating Councils. It will be the responsibility of the General Managers to coordinate meetings and ensure that all correspondence relating to the project is distributed to all steering committee members.