



Proposed Merger
Jerilderie and Berrigan Shire
Internal Business Case

Version 1.A 04/02/2015

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1. Introduction/Background

This business case of a merged Jerilderie and Berrigan Shire Council's scale and strategic capacity has been undertaken to determine whether Council should

1. Commission an external business case canvassing the long-term sustainability and service improvements to be gained by a merger with the Jerilderie Shire Council as recommended by the Independent Local Government Review Panel; and
2. Commission an external business case canvassing the long term sustainability and service improvements to be gained by Council retaining its existing structure and implementing its Fit for the Future Improvement Proposal.

The decision on whether or not Council should voluntarily merge with the Jerilderie Shire Council is one that is ultimately a political decision for Council and the Jerilderie Shire Council which, has in addition to a voluntary merger with the Berrigan Shire Council, the option of establishing a Rural Council.

Notwithstanding the Panel's recommendation, and Office of Local Government Fit for the Future benchmarks, Council would be remiss if it did not commission a scoping assessment of whether or not a merged Council or stand alone Council would have sufficient scale and capacity to

- a) Address the factors described in Section 263 of the Local Government Act 1993 and which will need to be considered by the NSW Boundaries Commission
- b) Facilitate delivery of merged community goals and priorities
- c) Maintain its regional competitiveness and responsiveness to social, political and environmental factors,
- d) Continue delivery of the range of services; and
- e) Access to the organisational resources it needs to deliver services to our communities within a future NSW system of local government

2. Overview

2.1. Vision

A Council that is Fit for the Future with the right scale and capacity to:

- a) Be Sustainable;
- b) Maintain and develop infrastructure and services used by ratepayers, visitors and business;
- c) Operate Efficiently; and
- d) Be a credible partner within our system of government.

2.2. Business Case Objectives

The objectives of this business case are to:

1. Provide a high level strategic and economic appraisal of the feasibility of proposed merger option
2. Consider the factors set out in section 263 of the Local Government Act 1993. Namely
 - a) the financial advantages or disadvantages (including the economies or diseconomies of scale) of any relevant proposal to the residents and ratepayers of the areas concerned,
 - b) the community of interest and geographic cohesion in the existing areas and in any proposed new area,
 - c) the existing historical and traditional values in the existing areas and the impact of change on them,
 - d) the attitude of the residents and ratepayers of the areas concerned,
 - e) the requirements of the area concerned in relation to elected representation for residents and ratepayers at the local level, the desirable and appropriate relationship between elected representatives and ratepayers and residents and such other matters as it considers relevant in relation to the past and future patterns of elected representation for that area,
 - (e1) the impact of any relevant proposal on the ability of the councils of the areas concerned to provide adequate, equitable and appropriate services and facilities,
 - (e2) the impact of any relevant proposal on the employment of the staff by the councils of the areas concerned,

- (e3) the impact of any relevant proposal on rural communities in the areas concerned,
 - (e4) in the case of a proposal for the amalgamation of two or more areas, the desirability (or otherwise) of dividing the resulting area or areas into wards,
 - (e5) in the case of a proposal for the amalgamation of two or more areas, the need to ensure that the opinions of each of the diverse communities of the resulting area or areas are effectively represented,
 - (f) such other factors as it considers relevant to the provision of efficient and effective local government in the existing and proposed new areas.
3. Assess based on publicly available information any high level risks of the proposed merger

3. The Business Case

3.1. Purpose of the Business Case

The Berrigan Shire Council in response to the New South Wales Government's Fit for the Future reform of Local Government program is currently undertaking a review of its strategic scale and capacity focused on evaluating

1. Whether Council's current form (the scale and capacity of its service delivery) is appropriate, effective and efficient¹.
2. Whether a merger with the Jerilderie Shire Council based on existing boundaries will enhance the strategic scale and capacity of the new entity.

The NSW Government has been working with local councils since 2011 on a program of local government reform designed to strengthen local communities and improve the system of local government in NSW and the support available to local communities and the Councils. This program of reform measures is based on the Independent Local Government Review Panel's recommendations for the Berrigan Shire Council that it:

¹ (Hunting, Ryan , & Robinson, 2014, p. 3) **Appropriate** – match and can be adapted to meet current and future community needs and wants **Effective** – deliver targeted, better quality services in new ways **Efficient** – improve resource use (people, materials, plant and equipment, infrastructure, buildings) and redirect savings to finance new or improved services.

1. Merge with the Jerilderie Shire Council; while the Panel's recommendations for its merger partner the Jerilderie Shire Council are that it
2. Merge with Berrigan, or establish a Rural Council²

This business case is being developed to consider the feasibility of the proposed merger option. It is not intended that this business case replace the need for a business case prepared by a State Government appointed consultant.

Rather its preparation will assist Council and Council Officers identify the projects/actions and priorities that need to be considered as part of its FFF response and included in the development of the 2015/16 Operational Plan should Council ultimately determine that it should

- a) Merge with the Jerilderie Shire.
- b) Maintain its existing structure and submit a Council Improvement Proposal.
- c) The Jerilderie Shire Council resolved that it will establish a rural Council.

3.2. Business Case Sponsor

General Manager, Rowan Perkins

4. Situational Assessment and Problem Statement

Council has been an active participant in the work undertaken by the Independent Review Panel and a strong supporter of the Independent Local Government Review Panel's goal that reform lead to

A more sustainable system of democratic local government with added capacity to meet the needs of local and regional communities, and to be a valued partner of State and federal governments.

Further its position is that it supports a number of the Independent Review Panel's recommendations particularly, those related to:

² <http://www.fitforthefuture.nsw.gov.au/sites/fftf/files/What-does-this-mean-for-my-council.pdf>

- Fiscal Responsibility
- Strengthening the Revenue Base
- Improvement, Productivity and Accountability
- State and Local Government Relations

On the issue of boundary changes and structural adjustment Council's position has been that it retains an open mind. Further that a detailed business case will need to be developed to inform its communities and to canvass whether the Panel's recommendation will from the perspective of ratepayers, Councillors and other stakeholders in our system of local government add capacity and enable Council to meet the needs of local communities and their regional interests.

As part of its preparation for its Annual Corporate Workshop, and in response to the need to consider the ILGRP recommendation that it merge with the Jerilderie Shire, a strategic service review of Council's current operations and operating environment describing

1. Demographic, social and economic profile of the Shire and region,
2. Opportunities to improve Council planning and the integration of its operations with Council's Strategic Plans,
3. Gaps in service user engagement and involvement in the review and development of Council planning,
4. Gaps in a whole of Council approach to service delivery, and
5. The appropriateness of Council's existing structure (scale) and its strategic capacity³ was undertaken.

This review includes a detailed demographic, social, economic, political and regional competitiveness profile of the Berrigan Shire and the Mid Murray (NSW) and the Victorian Goulburn Valley regions. This sets the environmental context for a strategic service review of Council's existing services and the development of this business case.

Notwithstanding the need to extend the focus of the environmental scan and SWOT analysis

³ (Samson, Munro, & Inglis, 2014, p. 32) Box 8 Key Elements of Strategic Capacity

northward to include the Jerilderie Shire Council the eastern, northern and western boundaries of which are embedded in NSW Riverina region.

Briefly the Service review which considered service delivery in the context of formally documented Council Service Delivery Strategies supporting higher level plans – CSP, Delivery Program, Resourcing Strategy and Operational Plan demonstrates:

1. A need to strengthen internal processes and alignment of strategic planning with asset management which contributes to the following Berrigan Shire 2023 strategic objectives⁴
 - 1.1 Support sustainable use of our natural resources and built landscapes
 - 1.2 Retain the diversity and preserve the health of our natural landscapes and wildlife
 - 2.3 Strengthen strategic relationships and partnerships with community, business and government
2. Community and service user engagement in the develop and review of Council Strategies and 4-year Action plans
3. Current and future needs assessment informing formal strategic planning processes
4. Transparency in formal strategic planning processes and documentation of the outcome to be achieved; and that Council investment (human, physical and financial) in service delivery is
 - a) Strategic and integrated
 - b) Financially sustainable
 - c) Evidence based; and that it
 - d) Facilitates risk management and life-cycle asset planning and management.

An assessment of Council’s performance against FFF elements of strategic capacity was also conducted as part of this review. It referenced public access and therefore, independently verifiable examples of Council population growth, performance relative to NSW peers, regional peers and assuming no change in Council’s model of service delivery, Council boundaries, and

⁴ Berrigan Shire 2023 has 12 strategic objectives – the service review found that Council has developed, in consultation with service users, strategies for the remaining 9 objectives.

its workforce requirements the finding is that *Council has sufficient scale and strategic capacity* to retain its existing structure.

In the context of the development of this business case and given the preceding assessment what is not known is the feasibility or otherwise of a merger of the Berrigan and Jerilderie Shires. Therefore, the foreseeable impacts of boundary changes and the service delivery needs of a merged Jerilderie and Berrigan LGAs scale and strategic capacity and its performance against the FFF elements of strategic capacity is not known and will be canvassed by this business case.

4.1. Problem Statement

The problem to be addressed by this business case giving consideration to Council's service review is therefore

1. The feasibility in a Fit for the Future system of Local Government of the ILGRP's recommendation that the Jerilderie and Berrigan Shire Councils merge.

To test the feasibility of the ILGRP's recommendation that the Berrigan Shire Council merge with the Jerilderie Shire Council the following criteria will be used.

- ✓ ILGRP FFF elements of scale and strategic capacity
- ✓ FFF benchmarks
- ✓ Strategic analysis of high level socio-political-economic and national regional competitiveness profile of the new LGA
- ✓ Section 263 of the Local Government Act 1993

5. Assumptions and Constraints

At the time of writing the role, the function of Joint Organisations even the boundaries within the Murray / Mid Murray region has not been finalised. There is therefore, no clarity on how Joint Organisations' will be configured or operate. This substantial change in the strategic and operating environment of our system of local government going forward is expected to change how state government agencies work with local government; and the effectiveness of Joint Organisations' as a platform for regional development and state liaison. And will depend, in

part, on whether the Joint Organisation is servicing nationally recognised growth region or as will be the case with the Mid Murray or Murray Joint Organisation servicing a region experiencing slow growth and pockets of regional decline.

Furthermore, the development of Joint Organisation's may also, reduce the need for Councils to meet fully the: advanced skills in strategic planning and policy development; effective regional collaboration; credibility for more effective advocacy; capable partner for state and federal agencies elements of the FFF scale and strategic capacity criterion.

This business case is therefore developed based on the following assumptions that

1. Joint Organisations will be configured based on the needs of member Councils.
2. Member Councils that are not rural Councils will require in-house strategic capacity to assist with decision making re: the strategic benefits or otherwise of an LGA specific project which is not of regional or sub-regional significance.
3. FFF financial incentives for merged Councils will be used to cover in the first instance the as yet unknown financial costs associated with merging systems, internal processes, redundancy packages and the legislative requirements of the remaining workforce – place of work and allowances for additional travel etc.
4. FFF financial incentives for merged Councils will therefore not be a factor in the medium to long-term financial sustainability of a merged Jerilderie and Berrigan Shire.
5. All information informing this business case is public. That is published on the respective Council websites, website of other agencies and or is available to the public on request

6. Identification and Analysis of Options

6.1. Identification of Options

6.1.1. Option 1 – Berrigan Shire Council does not merge with the Jerilderie Shire Council nor does it submit a Fit for the Future Improvement Plan

In effect this is the do nothing option. This is not an option as Council is subject to the provisions of the Local Government Act 1993 and as such is obligated to participate in the FFF program of local government reform

6.1.2. Option 2 – Merge with the Jerilderie Shire Council

The existing Jerilderie Shire has an area of approximately 3,373.1 km² with a population of 1,526. The Berrigan Shire has an area of approximately 2,065.9 km² and a population of 8,337. The income of both Shires is derived primarily from the agriculture industry. The high level strategic issues and challenges facing both Shire's are also similar. Attached to this business case (Attachment II) is a high level strategic profile consolidating Office of Local Government 2012/13 Comparative Data, FFF benchmarks. This profile also includes an expanded, to include Jerilderie LGA, socio-economic, political and regional competitiveness profile and SWOT analysis. This high level strategic and economic appraisal of the feasibility of the proposed merger option suggests that both communities face similar challenges.

However, when the comparative Local Government indicators are compared including FFF benchmarks⁵ – the overall sense is that a merger with the Jerilderie Shire Council will introduce operational diseconomies of scale: the result of the population density of the Shire changing from 4 people per square kilometre to 1.8 people per square kilometre. Of further concern, given the intention is to strengthen local government, is that the financial sustainability of the new LGA will not be strengthened by a merger. This analysis is reinforced by triangulating Regional Institute

⁵ Attachment I – Berrigan and Jerilderie Socio-Economic Profile pp.16-17

of Australia's regional competitiveness index theme rankings of both LGAs⁶ with OLG NSW comparative indicators and FFF benchmark results. Triangulation of data sources adds to the credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability of analysis.

This is an outcome that will not assist either the Berrigan Shire and its communities nor the Jerilderie Shire and its communities become Fit for the Future. A position further supported by the following qualitative assessment of the merged Shire's scale and capacity. The following qualitative service review unpacks further the likely outcome of a merger on services currently delivered and enjoyed by Berrigan Shire rate payers. The service delivery criteria reflect the criteria used in Council's 2015 *Review of its Service Delivery: Scale and Strategic Capacity*.

6.1.2.1. Merged Jerilderie & Berrigan Shire Council FFF Scale and Strategic Capacity Assessment

This assessment of merged Jerilderie and Berrigan Shire's against FFF elements of strategic capacity assumes no change in service delivery and operational workforce requirements. At the time of writing the role and the function of Joint Organisations is as has been published. There is therefore, no clarity on how Joint Organisations' will be configured in the region. The assumption therefore is that Joint Organisations will be configured based on the needs of member Councils and Council's will still require in-house strategic capacity to assist with decision making re: the strategic benefits or otherwise of a regional or sub-regional approach.

Element of Strategic Capacity	For	Against	Assessment
More robust revenue base and increased discretionary spending	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The strength of both Council's engagement with its communities and high levels of community volunteerism has contributed to the extent of Council services Access to FFF 	<p>The merged Council will not meet the 60% own source revenue test.ⁱ</p> <p>Merger will increase the number of public facilities , road length, road, bridges and path</p>	Merging Councils will not create a more robust revenue base nor will it increase discretionary spend

⁶ Attachment – Berrigan and Jerilderie Socio-Economic Profile pp.11

Element of Strategic Capacity	For	Against	Assessment
	incentives and funding for projects of regional and strategic significance	<p>expenditure to be maintained – while not increasing the quantum of revenue available from low – rate base ratepayersⁱⁱ</p> <p>The decrease in population densityⁱⁱⁱ will negatively impact the scalability of operations adding to cost of operations</p>	
Scope to undertake new projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The strength of both Council's engagement with its communities and high levels of community volunteerism has contributed to the extent of Council services Access to FFF incentives and funding for projects of regional and strategic significance 	<p>New entity will have limited capacity to attract resources for new projects within its remit</p> <p>Creation of JOs and merger may lead to loss of contracted positions – those with strategic skills e.g: EDO, ERM, SSPC limiting further scope to take on new projects</p>	Merging Councils will not increase scope to undertake new projects
Ability to employ a wider range of skilled staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Berrigan Shire has the demonstrated ability to employ a wider range of skilled staff – this will at least initially transfer to the new LGA 	<p>Merger will not strengthen the financial sustainability of the new Council^{iv} – this will impact attraction and retention of skilled staff</p> <p>Creation of JOs and merger may lead to loss of contracted positions – those with strategic skills e.g:</p>	Merger will not necessarily enhance the ability of the Council to employ a wider range of skilled staff

Element of Strategic Capacity	For	Against	Assessment
		EDO, ERM, SSPC limiting further scope to take on new projects	
Knowledge, creativity and innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Both Shire's have extensive corporate knowledge, and history of creativity and innovation due to a relatively stable workforce and low staff and management turnover 	<p>Limited organizational capacity/peer support for specialist strategic staff</p> <p>Limited opportunity for specialist staff to broaden national international knowledge</p> <p>Change in personnel prompted by merger may lead to loss of corporate knowledge</p> <p>Measures of innovation The metric used by both the NEIR Cluster Analysis and the Regional Competitiveness Index. This metric reports on the number of registered patents by LGA – it should be treated with caution as it is not a per capita or percentage measure. It is therefore for small in population LGAs not an accurate measure of innovation</p>	Merger will not necessarily enhance knowledge, creativity and innovation
Advanced skills in strategic planning	Merged shire will, if it retains current	Strategy development in a financially	Merger will not necessarily ensure

Element of Strategic Capacity	For	Against	Assessment
and policy development	workforce with strategic planning and policy development skills, will have in-house access	<p>distressed environment competes with actual service delivery</p> <p>Limited peer / professional support networks – although this may be addressed by creation of JOs</p> <p>Creation of JOs and merger may lead to loss of contracted positions – those with strategic skills e.g: EDO, ERM, SSPC</p>	that advanced skills in strategic planning and policy development are retained or can be funded
Effective regional collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Merged shire provides evidence of effective regional collaboration 	<p>Both Shire’s already share services with neighbouring Shire’s although not with each other</p> <p>JO will take on this role</p>	Merger of Council will not necessarily ensure effective regional collaboration
Credibility for more effective advocacy	Message of the ILGRP & FFF is that in our system of government bigger and merged LGAs are perceived to be more credible and as such better advocates – than smaller LGAs	Merged LGA and JO creation may lead to local loss of strategic planning staff – reducing research capacity, documentation of local impacts. Strategic planning capacity needed for credible and effective advocacy	Merger of Councils may or may not lead to credibility for more effective advocacy
Capable partner for State and Federal agencies	Berrigan Shire Council already for both Shire’s partners with state agencies delivering	Question the bonafides of other levels of government in seeking partners	Merged Council is likely to be a capable partner for State and Federal Agencies

Element of Strategic Capacity	For	Against	Assessment
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Intervention services • Healthy aging program • Convene Berrigan Jerilderie Community Services Network 		
Resources to cope with complex and unexpected change	Both Councils have <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dealt with change over 108 years • Long term planning • Fit for purpose assets in urban areas • JO will have resources to assist 	Merger will not strengthen the financial sustainability ^v of the new Council with flow on effects to staffing and service delivery	Merged Council will not necessarily have the resources to cope with complex and unexpected change
High quality political and managerial leadership	Merged Council may attract new leaders		Merged Council may or may not attract or retain high quality political and managerial leadership

6.1.2.2. Qualitative Service Review Merged Shire

The service delivery criteria in this summary review reflect the criteria used in Council's 2015 *Review of Service Delivery: Scale and Strategic Capacity* – Appendix I

Service Review Criteria	Berrigan Shire – current model	Assessment if merged with Jerilderie Shire Council
Facilitate delivery of community goals and priorities	Based on its review of services – Council's current model facilitate the delivery of its community goals and	The new LGA would, for example, based on its likely financial sustainability ^{vii} will find it difficult to bring

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Service Review Criteria	Berrigan Shire – current model	Assessment if merged with Jerilderie Shire Council
	priorities ^{vi}	<p>Jerilderie’s recreation facilities up to a comparable standard. An issue identified in Jerilderie CSP as a priority for its community.</p> <p>Assessment – Merger may not facilitate delivery of community goals and priorities</p>
Maintain its regional competitiveness and responsiveness to social, political and environmental factors	Based on review of regional competitiveness index – Berrigan Shire is after Albury the most competitive LGA in the region Murray to Mid Murray Region ^{viii} .	<p>A merger of Berrigan and Jerilderie Shire’s will reduce the regional competitiveness of the new entity as measured by the Regional Competitiveness Index^{ix} and hence attractiveness for new investors. Jerilderie CSP identifies that resources are needed to generate support for upgrade of its industrial precincts and to increase range of community services and supports</p> <p>Assessment – Merger will not maintain the national regional competitiveness ranking therefore making it more difficult to attract investment in industrial precincts moreover, the BSC is already the auspice for NSW funded transport, HACC and early intervention services in Jerilderie as it receives additional funds to do so</p>

Service Review Criteria	Berrigan Shire – current model	Assessment if merged with Jerilderie Shire Council
Continue delivery of a Council’s current range of services	Based on its review of services – Council’s current model facilitate the delivery of Council’s range of services ^x	<p>The new LGA will find it difficult to extend the range of its services due to inherent issues re: its financial sustainability and the diseconomies of scale^{xi} and may need to cut back on services</p> <p>Assessment – Merger will not assist with the delivery of BSC’s current range of services and nor will it assist Jerilderie residents maintain current range of services</p>
Access the organisational resources it needs to deliver in NSW system of local government	Assessment: Based on its review of services – Council’s current model is capable of being Fit for the Future ^{xii}	<p>Assessment: Merged entity does not have the capacity to deliver the current range of services^{xiii} and nor could it deliver community aspirations identified in Jerilderie CSP without compromising CSP aspirations of BSC. Moreover, to attempt to do so would be strategically unsound and unsustainable</p>

6.1.3. Option 3 – Retain Existing Structure and Submit Council Improvement Proposal

The Strategic Service Delivery Review canvasses this option. As previously noted this review of Council's current service delivery and its scale and capacity finds that Council Service Delivery Strategies supporting higher level plans – CSP, Delivery Program, Resourcing Strategy and Operational Plan:

1. Need to strengthen internal processes and alignment of strategic planning with asset management contributing to the following Berrigan Shire 2023 strategic objectives⁷
 - 1.1 Support sustainable use of our natural resources and built landscapes
 - 1.2 Retain the diversity and preserve the health of our natural landscapes and wildlife
 - 2.3 Strengthen strategic relationships and partnerships with community, business and government

And that Council planning is

2. Strategic and integrated
3. Financially sustainable
4. Evidence based; and that it
5. Facilitates risk management and life-cycle asset planning and management.

Further that assessment of Council's performance against FFF elements of strategic capacity found that *Council has sufficient scale and strategic capacity* to retain its existing structure.

⁷ Berrigan Shire 2023 has 12 strategic objectives – the service review found that Council has developed, in consultation with service users, strategies for the remaining 9 objectives.

7. Recommended Option

Subject to Council decision on engagement of state government appointed consultant and their conduct of external business case investigating feasibility of ILGRP recommendation that Jerilderie and Berrigan Shire Council's merge the recommended option is Option 3.

Retain existing structure and submit Council improvement plan

8. References

- Hunting, S. A., Ryan , R., & Robinson, T. (2014). *Service Delivery Review: A How To Manual for Local Government*. Australian Centre of Excellence for Local Government, University of Technology Sydney.
- Samson, G., Munro, J., & Inglis, G. (2014). *Revitalising Local Government*. Sydney: NSW Government.

9. Appendices

Merged Berrigan and Jerilderie Shires Data Profile

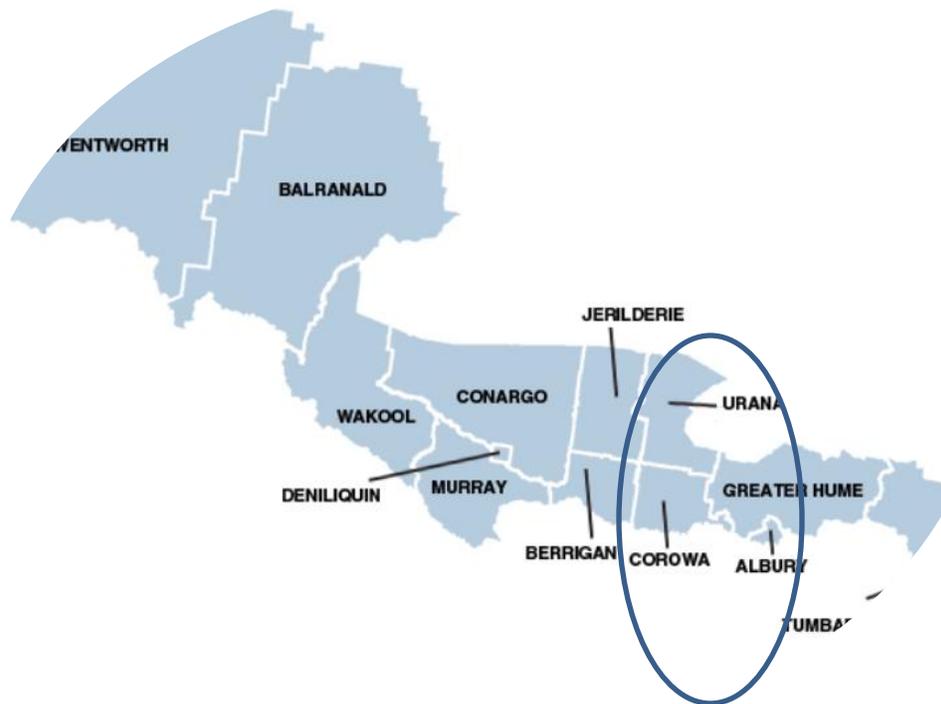
Appendix 1

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1. Introduction

The profile has been developed to inform the development of a business case canvassing a merger, in response to Independent Local Government Review Panel’s recommendation that the Berrigan and Jerilderie Shire Council’s merge.



(Map: Division of Local Government NSW)

2. The Shires’

Jerilderie Shire (pop. 1,526⁸) is a rural area covering 3375.4 sq kms approximately 0.42% of the total area of the state, situated in the Riverina Region of NSW. Jerilderie Shire is located between Conargo, Murrumbidgee, Urana and Berrigan Shires.

The Jerilderie area was originally inhabited by the Jeithi (meaning ‘no man’) people prior to white settlement. Today, Jerilderie produces wool, rice, wheat, canola, mung beans, onions,

⁸ 2012/13 OLG NSW Comparative Data

olives and grapes to name just a few of the diverse range of commodities grown in this irrigation area. Jerilderie produces 24% of Australia's tomatoes.

Local industries include agricultural support industries, metal fabrication, fertilizer and seed outlets and transport.

Jerilderie Shire is serviced by one town. Jerilderie has a State Public School and a Catholic Primary School together with Pre-School, Play Group and Long Day Care Service, Early Intervention Centre and Occupational and Speech Therapy.

Jerilderie has a Multi-Purpose Health Facility which includes acute beds, accident and emergency facility and Aged Care beds. Jerilderie provides a wide range of recreational activities and is home to strong sporting groups such as Football, Netball, Cricket and Tennis, Bowling and Golfing Clubs. Jerilderie also offers a public swimming pool, a sporting oval and parks with generous play equipment and public toilets. There is also a Multi Sports Complex which offers regular structured activities for children and adults.

The Berrigan Shire (population 8,337)⁹ is situated in New South Wales' Mid Murray planning region. It is bound to the south by the Murray River and the Victorian local government area of the Moira. It is a Shire characterised by its efficient and productive irrigation-based agriculture industry: historically rice and dairy, and Murray River based tourism.

Council boundaries encompass the towns of Barooga, Berrigan, Finley and Tocumwal. These towns act as service hubs for the Shire's population¹⁰ (median age 48 years), water-based agri-businesses, and agri-businesses in the neighbouring New South Wales Shires' of Conargo and Jerilderie.

The towns of Berrigan, Finley and Tocumwal provide hospital facilities with acute care beds, emergency facilities and range of allied health services including maternal and child health.

⁹ 2012/13 Office of Local Government NSW Comparative Data

¹⁰ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2011) Census: Community Profile

http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2011/communityprofile/LGA10650?opendocument&navpos=230 accessed 10 January 2013

Early childhood services include: long day care facilities in Berrigan and Barooga, occasional care, pre-schools, and early intervention and support services.

Primary schools public and private are located in the Shire's towns; secondary students from the Jerilderie, Conargo and the Berrigan Shires' attend Finley High School.

A number of families also take advantage of the Shire's proximity to Victorian secondary schools – Cobram Secondary College, Christ the King Anglican College (Cobram), Nathalia's St Marys of the Angels Secondary College; and Goulburn Valley Grammar School – Shepparton with approximately 40% of the Shire's secondary school age residents attending schools in Victoria.

Excellent recreational and sporting facilities eg: pools, golf, tennis, netball, equestrian, bowls etc and licensed clubs are also located in each town.

3. Socio-Economic Profile

The Shires' local economy depends heavily upon irrigated agriculture, food processing and tourism. The Shires' communities 2006 – 2010 experienced significant drought induced hardship, and continue to experience hardship, and anxiety due to social and economic uncertainty associated with Murray Darling Water Reform: its impact on tourist operations and challenges and climate change. Additional challenges include:

- The ageing profile of the Shire's and surrounding communities' active fulltime and part-time labour force
- Current and future demand upon health and social support services due to the age of residents in both LGAs
- Increasing number of residents (Berrigan LGA, Jerilderie LGA)dependent on government pensions and allowances
- Increasing number of residents receiving either carers payment and or Disability Support Pension
- Higher than national and state average dependency ratio ie: population not in the workforce (Table 3)
- Decline in youth population¹¹
- Exposure of the Shires' economy through agriculture and tourism to fluctuations in international currency

¹¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2010) National Regional Profile (SLA Berrigan) People accessed 7 January 2010

- Social and economic decline before onset of drought and concerns about water security measured by ABS: 2001 & 2006 Social Economic Indices of Advantage and Disadvantage
- Below NSW and National average taxable incomes

Basic Social Profile Berrigan and Jerilderie Shires

	Population	Median Age	% of Pop. Provided unpaid assistance to a person with a disability (last two weeks)	Median Age Employment Status		Median Weekly Household Income	Population 55+ years	
							No:	%
Berrigan Shire (LGA)	8066	48	12.3	45	49*	\$776	3313	41
Jerilderie (UCL)	775	49	13.8	44	52*	\$775	336	43.5

(ABS: 2012 Quick Stats – Berrigan LGA; Jerilderie UCL and Cobram UCL accessed 3 May 2013)

* Part time

Berrigan Shire Residents Receiving Selected Government Pensions and Allowances

Berrigan Shire		2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Age Pension - Centrelink	No.	1200	1210	1242	1306	1368	1412
Age Pension - DVA	No.	0	0	0	5	4	4
Carers Payment	No.	31	39	46	55	64	85
Disability Support Pension	No.	300	309	307	330	349	359
Newstart Allowance	No.	168	154	188	171	206	224
		1699	1712	1783	1867	1991	2084

Jerilderie Shire Residents Receiving Selected Government Pensions and Allowances

Jerilderie Shire		2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Age Pension - Centrelink		159	168	164	167	178	234

Age Pension - DVA	0	0	0	0	0	0
Carers Payment	0	0	0	0	0	15
Disability Support Pension	48	45	50	48	48	68
Newstart Allowance	28	24	28	28	23	34
	235	237	242	243	249	351

(ABS: 2010 National Regional Profile).

Population not in the Workforce

	Dependency Ratio	Labour Force Participation Rate – August 2011	Unemployment Dec 2012
Berrigan (LGA)	78%	53.5%	4.7%
Jerilderie (LGA)	65.85%	60.29%	3.4%
Cobram (UCL)	73%	57.6%	*6.6 %
Murray Region	56%	-	
Australia	54%	61%	

Dependency ratio: % population aged under 15 years and over 65 years as a % of working age population (15 yrs – 64 yrs) calculated from Census 2011 data

Labour force participation rate: labour force as a % of the population 15 – 65 years

Unemployment: number of unemployed persons as a proportion of the labour force

(Source: ABS 2011 Census, DEEWR Small Area Labour Force Berrigan, Jerilderie and * Moira (SLA West) Dec 2012)

SEIFA Index of Relative Advantage / Disadvantage x Postcode

Postcode	2006	2011
Berrigan 2712	907	927
Finley 2713	926	944
Tocumwal 2714	946	937
Jerilderie 2716	944	944
NSW Rank Berrigan Shire		48/152
NSW Rank Jerilderie Shire		78/152

ABS: SEIFA accessed 20/5/2013¹² & OLG 2012/13 Comparative Data re: SEIFA Rank 1= least disadvantaged

¹² ABS SEIFA Tables 2006 and 2011 <http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/censushome.nsf/home/seifa> accessed 20/05/2013

Mean Taxable Income 2009/10

Town	Postcode	\$
Berrigan	2712	42,387
Finley	2713	44,165
Tocumwal	2714	46,403
Jerilderie	2716	43,732

ATO Taxation Statistics 2009/10 Selected Personal Items Table 3¹³**Housing and Tenure Sept 2012**

	Two Bedroom Unit		Three Bedroom House	
	Change Median Qtly \$	%	Change Median Qtly \$	%
Median Weekly Rents Berrigan Shire	115	0	215	0
Median Weekly Rents Jerilderie Shire Not available due to small number				
NSW	400	0	360	2.9

Table developed from: Dept Human Services (Vic) Rental Report 2012 and Housing NSW Rent Reports 2012¹⁴**Occupied Dwellings and Tenure 2011**

Housing	Berrigan Shire	Jerilderie Shire	Aus
% Occupied Dwellings owned outright	44.2	45.2	32.1%
% Occupied dwelling with a mortgage	28	23.3	33.3%
% Occupied Dwellings Rented	23.1	23.1	28.7%

ABS 2011 Census

¹³ Australian Tax Office (2013)http://www.ato.gov.au/corporate/content.aspx?menuid=0&doc=/content/00305922.htm&page=8#P382_12935
accessed 20/05/2013¹⁴ NSW Government Rental Reports<http://www.housing.nsw.gov.au/About+Us/Reports+Plans+and+Papers/Rent+and+Sales+Reports/> and Victorian Government Human Services Rent Reports http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/research_-data-and-statistics/current-rental-report

4. Social Determinants of Health/Wellbeing

High rates of volunteerism characterise both Shires and offer a range of services that in both Shires would otherwise not be offered or available. Socioeconomic disadvantage is associated with a higher prevalence of health risk factors and higher rates of hospitalisations, deaths and other adverse health outcomes¹⁵

Low crime rates add to the liveability and wellbeing but in small communities care must be taken when interpreting crime statistics.

Community Strength

Voluntary work for an organisation or group (ABS Census data)	People aged 15 years and over who participated in voluntary work	Population aged 15 years and over	% volunteers
Berrigan Shire (LGA)	1,969	6,669	29.5
Jerilderie Shire (LGA)	432	1,208	35.8

Unpaid Child Care	People aged 15 years and over providing child care	Population aged 15 years and over	% providing child care
Berrigan Shire (LGA)	1,624	6,668	24.3
Jerilderie Shire (LGA)	313	1,207	25.9

Crime Rates Jan – Dec 2011

Offence type	Berrigan Shire Rate per 100,000 population	Jerilderie Shire Rate per 100,000 population	NSW Rate per 100,000 population	Higher or Lower NSW State Rate +/-
Assault - domestic violence related	231.37	nc	370.66	-
Assault - non-domestic violence related	196.67	nc	512.49	-
Sexual assault	11.57	nc	59.58	-
Break and enter dwelling	370.20	nc	80.00	+
Break and enter non-dwelling	312.36	nc	544.85	-
Motor vehicle theft	80.98	nc	235.49	-
Steal from motor vehicle	185.10	nc	270.28	-
Steal from retail store	34.71	nc	665.86	-

¹⁵ NSW Government (2010) *Report of the New South Wales Chief Health Officer* accessed 7 January 2010 http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/publichealth/chorep/beh/beh_smoafdh_lgamap_full.asp#table

¹⁵ NSW Government (2010) *Report of the New South Wales Chief Health Officer* accessed 7 January 2010 http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/publichealth/chorep/beh/beh_smoafhos_lgamap.asp

<i>Offence type</i>	Berrigan Shire Rate per 100,000 population	Jerilderie Shire Rate per 100,000 population	NSW Rate per 100,000 population	Higher or Lower NSW State Rate +/-
Steal from dwelling	266.08	nc	286.00	-
Steal from person	23.14	nc	287.77	-
Fraud	104.12	nc	117.58	-
Malicious damage to property	948.63	nc	503.57	+

NSW Police (2012)¹⁶ (nc: not calculated due to small number of incidents)

http://www.bocsar.nsw.gov.au/Lawlink/bocsar/ll_bocsar.nsf/pages/bocsar_lga_crimemaps

5. Regional Competitiveness Merged Berrigan & Jerilderie Shire

The [In]Sight: Australia's regional competitiveness index¹⁷ has been designed to capture data on the competitive position of Australian Local Government areas. This index ensures that regional decision making reflects local conditions: not national or state averages... Furthermore, it facilitates targeted strategic planning and comparison between neighbouring LGAs and the identification of the unique characteristics, in terms of the competitive advantages or disadvantages of a location and in doing so can provide some insight into the future economic sustainability or otherwise of a community / region.

Nationally the competitiveness of the Berrigan Shire local government area is, relative to neighbouring NSW LGAs, 74 points higher than its proposed merger partner Jerilderie

LGA National Competitiveness Index out of 563 LGAs - mid point of index = 281	Competitiveness Index 1= most competitive 563 = least competitive
Berrigan	315
Jerilderie Shire	389

The following table and figure breaks down further the Berrigan Shire's competitiveness and in doing so provides a clear picture of the Shire and the Jerilderie Shire's competitive strengths and weaknesses – the least competitive LGA x theme is shaded

¹⁶ NSW Police (2012) http://www.bocsar.nsw.gov.au/Lawlink/bocsar/ll_bocsar.nsf/pages/bocsar_lga_crimemaps

¹⁷ Australian Institute of Regional Studies – INSight <http://www.regionalaustralia.org.au/insight/>

Comparison LGA National Competiveness Index Themes (Least Competitive Shaded)

	Institutions	Technological Readiness & Essential	Business Sophistication	Economic Fundamentals	Innovation	Human Capital	Natural Resources	Labour Market Efficiency	Demography	
Berrigan	288	237	233	341	295	397	212	322	301	506
Jerilderie	108	315	315	524	397	446	254	464	30	485

The future economic sustainability of ex Berrigan Shire communities is likely to be compromised as the competitiveness of these communities will (for planning and future investment purposes) be subsumed by the relative competitiveness of the newly created LGA.

6. SWOT Analysis – Mid Murray (NSW) Murray Goulburn (VIC) and Southern Riverina Region (NSW)

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newell Highway access to National Highway / transport /freight hubs • Proximity to Melbourne – NSW gateway for visitors • Irrigated export oriented agriculture industry • Diverse and productive economy – agriculture, construction, social support services, transport, local retail, tourism • Assets – natural, historic and cultural attractions, access to the Murray River and Murrumbidgee River – Northern border of Jerilderie • Affordable Housing / property • Education & Training School bus access to Victorian and NSW Secondary and Primary Schools – Public and Independent; TAFE • Community facilities /assets above ‘urban growth area benchmarks’ in each of the Shire’s towns assets include: recreation – sports grounds, playgrounds, community halls/centres, bowls and golf, libraries, hospitals/community health centres, pools, aged care beds / support packages, child care Slow but steady growth in population • Family friendly, community spirit • Life style values: Time, clean, natural environment, community spirit/volunteerism • Safe – low crime 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Politically a ‘safe seat’ – state and federal • Competiveness of local business – in small town environment • Lack of coordination and strategic approach business development / local economic development ie: Networks that identify and harnessing resources and opportunities to stimulate economic and employment activity • Tired’ tourism services (restaurants and hotels) • Lack of cohesion and co-operation in tourism development and marketing across the region – includes two Tourism Regions – competing for market share Murray and Riverina Tourism • Achieving buy-in from tourism stakeholders for cross-promoting the Murray region and the Riverina Tourism Region • Location of the visitor information centre off the Newell Highway • Town Entries • Ageing population, ageing labour-force impact upon skill shortages, community capacity to volunteer

OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tocumwal Intermodal – Port to Rail Access Victoria • National trends micro business and online business models – increase local business and ownership – subject to Internet connectivity • Value add and promote innovation / product and processes in current industries • Greater Melbourne – northern growth corridor – attract tree changers wanting safe, clean and green family oriented communities • Population growth (Murray River Towns) through attraction of immigrant families • Growth of Victorian provincial centres – Greater Shepparton • Pedestrian Access and Tourism Development Murray River – Barooga/Tocumwal eg: Tocumwal Boardwalk • Special interest – Sport / Active Recreation Tourism • The Barmah-Millewa National Park • Promotional initiatives with partner organisations • Improved packaging of products and experiences to particular market segments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact of River town growth exacerbating population decline in Jerilderie • Broadband connectivity – failing copper network, retailers shaping broadband speeds and delays to roll out of NBN • Impact of NBN installation in neighbouring Victorian communities drawing people, business away from the merged Shires’ for the foreseeable future • Cost of fuel and power – equity Victorian / NSW supplies • Freight and Transport Planning – Port of Botany Centric • Impact of growth and Victorian investment in Victorian provincial centres upon local business capacity to attract investment • Population forecasts - fewer families and children impact upon retention of current services and facilities • Exposure of the Shire businesses / local economy to fluctuations in commodity pricing / global markets • Rural decline accelerated by NPM policies at all levels of government contributing to contraction of human capital in rural communities • Policy driven water insecurity and impact upon irrigated agriculture, open space passive and active recreation, water based tourism • The Barmah-Millewa National Park and issues related to development and public access • Compliance issues re: community activities / funding impacting on volunteer recruitment / coproduction of community services • Extent of inward/outward migration and its impact upon the Shire’s social profile, diversity, and community ‘spirit’

8.1. Our Strategic Challenges

- Competitiveness/equity NSW/ VIC (it costs more to do business in NSW e.g: fuel, power etc)
- Balancing disparate growth trajectories of Murray River towns with inland towns of Berrigan, Jerilderie and Finley
- Internet Connectivity
- Freight and cross-border transport planning
- Cost of energy and fuel prices
- Political and population based pragmatism
- Lower than Murray Darling Basin average per capita income

7. NSW Local Government Comparative Data – Merged LGAs



The existing Jerilderie Shire has an area of approximately 3,373.1 km² with a population of 1,526. The Berrigan Shire has an area of approximately 2,065.9 km² and a population of 8,337. The merged LGA will have an area of 5,439 km² and population of 9,816. As the main income of both Shires is derived from the agriculture – the main industry and employer will continue to be agriculture.

Expenditure on Services	BSC	Merged
Governance & Admin (%)	5	12
Public Order Safety (%)	26	21
Environment, Water, Sewer, Waste (%)	10	7
Community Services (%)	7	5
Recreation / Cultural (%)	10	9
Road, Bridges, Paths (%)	29	31
Other Services (%)	11	15

Population	BSC	Merged
Five year population change (5)	1.6	-2.3
Population aged 19 or less %	23.4	24.3
Population aged between 20 & 59	43.1	45.7
Population aged above 60 %	33.5	30.0
ATSI	2.0	2.5
Language spoke other than English (%)	2.2	2.8
Socio-Economic Index Rank (1 low, 152 high)	48	75

Local Economy	BSC	Merged
SALM Rate (%)	4.5	4.2
Average Taxable Income	30,362	31,080
Average Household size	2.8	2.9
Largest Industry Employer	Agri	Agri
Value of DA determined (\$'000)	15,000	16,572
Active Businesses in LGA	1,148	1,371
Regional Competitiveness Index Rank 1 = Competitive 563 - Least Competitive	315	389*
* Regional Competitiveness Rank of existing Jerilderie LGA		

Public Facilities	BSC	Merged
Swimming Pools (No.)	3	4
Public Halls (No.)	5	8
Public Libraries (No.)	4	5
Open Public Space (ha)	138	160
Total Road Length (km)	1,375.1	2,476
Access to Internet at home	63.6	63.9

Council	BSC	Merged
Councillors	8	8*
Pop per Councillor (No.)	1,042	1,232*
Equivalent FTE (No)	87	128#
2012/13 Revenue (\$'000)	18,958	28,042
2012/13 Expenses (\$'000)	18,788	28,431
Pensioner Rebates (%)	29	29.3
Population Density (residents per km ²)	4.04	1.81
* Assumes no increase in number of Councillors in a merged LGA # Assumes loss of 4 Contract EFT		

TCorp 2013 Financial Sustainability Rating & Outlook & OLG 2013 Infrastructure Audit Rating	BSC	Merged#
Sustainability	Moderate	Weak#
Outlook	Neutral	Negative#
Infrastructure Management	Strong	Weak#
# Assumes that increase in public facilities, road length, socio-economic disadvantage ranking, transfer of strategic roles (contract) to JOs, increase in road, bridges and path expenditure, together with decrease in community services, public order and safety and recreation expenditure, together with decrease in regional competitiveness ranking and decrease in population density impacting scalability of operations will add to cost of operations and in doing so impact unfavourably on merged Council's Financial Outlook and Infrastructure Audit Rating		

Population & Economy

A merger of the two Shire provides no discernible benefits in terms of population and economy with the positive and marginal population growth trend in the Berrigan Shire shifting to a negative trend. Nor will it change significantly, for planning and service delivery purposes, the overall population profile of the new LGA. The new LGA will still have 30% of its population aged above 60 years of age. The biggest impact of a merger is likely to be viewed in ex Berrigan Shire national regional competitiveness rankings.

Public Facilities

The distance between the urban communities of Berrigan and Jerilderie suggests that there will be few if any opportunities to de-commission public facilities or reduce rural road service levels – items that contribute to cost of facilities maintained by both Councils. A merger of the two Councils will therefore not introduce economies a scale with re: public facilities. And, may on the grounds of equity, require that the new Council re-develop Jerilderie's facilities to ensure a comparable level of service.

Expenditure on Services

In common with rural and regional neighbours the rural road network accounts for approximately 30% of Council's expenditure. A merged Council is likely to make no significant savings in this regard. Of concern to Berrigan rate payers is the potential for a reduction in public order, community services and recreation services suggested by this exercise.

8. Fit for the Future Benchmarks – Comparison BSC / Merged LGA

Berrigan Shire Council

	BENCHMARK	RESULT	MEETS FFTF BENCHMARK	
 SUSTAINABILITY	Operating Performance Ratio (greater or equal to break-even average over 3 years)	-0.030	NO	✗
	Own Source Revenue Ratio (greater than 60% average over 3 years)	48.91%	NO	✗
	Building and Infrastructure Asset Renewal Ratio (greater than 100% average over 3 years)	80.67%	NO	✗
 EFFECTIVE INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICE MANAGEMENT	Infrastructure Backlog Ratio (less than 2%)	2.18%	NO	✗
	Asset Maintenance Ratio (greater than 100% average over 3 years)	100.75%	YES	✓
	Debt Service Ratio (greater than 0 and less than or equal to 20% average over 3 years)	1.23%	YES	✓
 EFFICIENCY	A decrease in Real Operating Expenditure per capita over time	Increasing	NO	✗
	OVERALL RESULT			✗

The Council does not meet all seven of the Fit for the Future Criteria

Results as at 3rd
November 2014
Pre-Improvement
Planning

MERGED JERILDERIE AND BERRIGAN SHIRE

	BENCHMARK	RESULT	MEETS FFTF BENCHMARK	
 SUSTAINABILITY	Operating Performance Ratio (greater or equal to break-even average over 3 years)	-0.080	NO	✗
	Own Source Revenue Ratio (greater than 60% average over 3 years)	47.89%	NO	✗
	Building and Infrastructure Asset Renewal Ratio (greater than 100% average over 3 years)	74.64%	NO	✗
 EFFECTIVE INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICE MANAGEMENT	Infrastructure Backlog Ratio (less than 2%)	2.67%	NO	✗
	Asset Maintenance Ratio (greater than 100% average over 3 years)	111.17%	YES	✓
	Debt Service Ratio (greater than 0 and less than or equal to 20% average over 3 years)	1.70%	YES	✓
 EFFICIENCY	A decrease in Real Operating Expenditure per capita over time	Increasing	NO	✗
	OVERALL RESULT			✗

The Council does not meet all seven of the Fit for the Future Criteria

Results based on
published
Financials
24 November
2014

8.2. Comments: Comparison of existing structure and Merged Council Results

1. Operating Performance Ratio - Does not meet benchmark

This is a unfavourable result from the perspective of current Berrigan Shire ratepayers – as the ratio shifts further into negative territory from current – 0.030 to -0.080

2. Own Source Revenue - Does not meet benchmark

This is a unfavourable result from the perspective of current Berrigan Shire ratepayers – as the % of own source revenue drops from 48.9% to 47.8%

3. Building and Asset Renewal Ratio – Does not meet benchmark

From the perspective of the Berrigan Shire Council and ratepayers this is an unfavourable result – as the building and asset ratio which needs to be above 100% declines from 80.67% to 74.64%

4. Infrastructure Backlog - Does not meet benchmark

From the perspective of the Berrigan Shire Council and ratepayers this is an unfavourable result – as the infrastructure backlog % increases from 2.18% to 2.67%

5. Asset Maintenance Ratio – Meets benchmark

6. Debt Service Ratio – Meets benchmark

7. Real Operating Expenditure per capita – Does not meet benchmark

From the perspective of the Berrigan Shire Council and Jerilderie Shire ratepayers this is an unfavourable result as the social, organisational costs associated with change in a major employer within a region / district should be accompanied by tangible improvement in operating expenditure per capita. Based on this result a merger will not achieve reduce operating expenditure per capita.

Endnotes

- ⁱ Berrigan and Jerilderie Socio-Economic Profile pp.16-17
- ⁱⁱ Berrigan and Jerilderie Socio-Economic Profile pp.11
- ⁱⁱⁱ Berrigan and Jerilderie Socio-Economic Profile pp.11
- ^{iv} Berrigan and Jerilderie Socio-Economic Profile pp.16-17
- ^v Berrigan and Jerilderie Socio-Economic Profile pp.16-17
- ^{vi} Strategic Service Delivery Review: Review of Berrigan Shire Council Scale and Capacity
- ^{vii} Berrigan and Jerilderie Socio-Economic Profile pp.16-17
- ^{viii} Berrigan Shire Review of Council Services: Scale and Capacity
- ^{ix} Berrigan and Jerilderie Socio-Economic Profile pp.11
- ^x Strategic Service Delivery Review: Review of Berrigan Shire Council Scale and Capacity
- ^{xi} Berrigan and Jerilderie Socio-Economic Profile
- ^{xii} Strategic Service Delivery Review: Review of Berrigan Shire Council Scale and Capacity
- ^{xiii} Berrigan and Jerilderie Socio-Economic Profile