

GO.AM.1 (PM:JP)

Contact: Paul Mann

26 June 2015

Dr Peter J Boxall
Chairman
Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal NSW
P O Box K35
Haymarket Post Shop NSW 1240

Dear Dr Boxall

Gilgandra Shire Council welcomes the opportunity to make this submission in support of Council being recognised as ***Fit for the Future*** as a rural council within an Orana Joint Organisation as recommended by the Independent Local Government Review Panel (Group C Council).

In reaching this decision Council did consider the option of a merger with Coonamble Shire Council but resolved not to progress as it offered no obvious benefits and would not be in the best interest of the Gilgandra community – (see Template 3.4 for detail of consideration).

Established in 1906, Gilgandra Shire Council is a unique, viable, multi-purpose council with stable finances and a very strong commitment to resource sharing with neighbouring councils and has, for many years, been willing to take advantage of every opportunity to provide services and facilities to ensure the future of the shire and community. Across all its functions Council currently employs some 200 FTE staff assisting in maintaining a strong employment base for the LGA.

In addition to traditional Local Government functions, Council owns a range of facilities and operates both extensive Aged Care and Disability support services under contract to Federal and State Government funding bodies.

Section 3.3 highlights the level of community involvement by Council in developing its Integrated Planning and Reporting and Special Rate Variation applications and was the basis of Council's consultation on the ***Fit for the Future*** proposal. The decision to stand alone also reflects a major plank in Council's Community Strategic Plan.

Since the commencement of this term of Council in September 2012, councillors and **senior staff have devoted many hours to workshops and meetings to review our strategic and long term financial plans and, in doing so, establish a long term direction for Council and the community it serves. As appropriate, Council has engaged external assistance with development of asset management but prides itself on the in-house commitment.**

The results of this review have included:

- An updated Community Strategic Plan (CSP) and Delivery Program (DP) that align with Council and community objectives
- The development of detailed infrastructure asset management plans for transport and building assets with stormwater, water and sewer plans currently under development
- The development of a local road hierarchy plan to assist in maintaining and renewing transport assets
- An updated Long Term Financial Plan (LTFP) that aligns with the Community Strategic Plan and Delivery Program and is reviewed on an annual basis and reported to the community.

Over the past two years Council has also been undertaking a review of its service delivery and operations and this process will continue into the future. This has assisted in achieving improved financial results in 2012/13 and 2013/14 with a further improvement projected in 2014/15.

Council's importance in the Community and its capacity to manage is highlighted by ownership of facilities and successful delivery of an extensive range of quality services provided in line with the Community Strategic Plan. This role complements Gilgandra Shire's unique identity - ensuring governance, the ongoing viability and stable management of the Aged Care, Disability and Community Care functions and providing some one hundred full time equivalent positions. These services are self funded and managed within Council's structure.

The additional services provided / managed by Council include:

- A substantial commitment to aged care including:
 - A retirement village comprising a 50 bed hostel and 61 self-care units
 - Management of a 13 place Aboriginal specific aged care service (hostel and community)
 - Management of 19 Community Aged Care Packages.
Operational budget 2015/16 - \$4.630m
- A disability accommodation service comprising 30 residential places in group homes and 21 supported employees in Council's recycling business.
Operational budget 2015/16 - \$3.853m
- Home and Community Services including meals, social support and community transport. Operational budget 2015/16 - \$414,815
- Youth Services – partner with Mission Australia and Family and Community Services - two youth case workers.
Operational budget 2015/16 - \$233,000

All these services have been accredited against relevant standards during 2014/15.

Council's role in ensuring health services extends to owning and maintaining three doctors' surgeries, executive style accommodation for one doctor and three cottages for health professionals working as registrars, nurses or locums in the various health services.

Council's willingness, ability and capacity to engage with Federal and State Governments in providing facilities and delivering services is highlighted in the following long term and more recent projects:

A partnership with State Government to deliver services to the community since 1990, firstly as RTA agency and expanded under the Government Access Centre program to include a range of NSW Government services and subsequently Centrelink agency. The partnership is now being rebadged as a **Service NSW** agency, the first NSW Council managed service.

A three way funding agreement with both the Federal and State Governments (2009/10), to relocate a recently established dental practice to a new dental clinic within the Multi Purpose Service (Hospital) and add a Day Care Room at the facility, and construct one of the accommodation units.

- The design and construction of two special purpose houses providing accommodation for people with intellectual disabilities with funding assistance from the NSW Government (2008/09 and 2013/14).
- The design and construction of a "state of the art" Doctor's Surgery (2011/12) with financial contributions by both Federal and State Government.

Council's extensive involvement with its community includes establishment of management committees for a range of additional functions and inclusion of community representatives on these committees enhances Council's role and awareness and strengthens the role of Councillors in the community.

In addition Council is a member of Orana Arts (a group of five Councils) and provides direct assistance to Gilgandra Preschool and the Gilgandra Museum and Historical Society.

The Gilgandra Community accepts and values Council's expanded role and has come to expect the ongoing successful management of these functions. This expanded role informs Council in planning for the community as a whole and delivers on many of the aspects of its Community Strategic Plan.

The range of services managed and delivered by Council is unique in this region and supports a very strong case for Council to remain independent as a stand alone council with the scale and capacity to manage and deliver for its community.

In line with the Minister's vision for Local Government, Council participates in a number of resource sharing projects (detailed in the template) and is committed to expanding opportunities in this regard.

Gilgandra Shire Council is an active member of the Orana Regional Organisation of Councils (OROC).which comprises twelve local government areas located in the west and northwest of NSW. The councils have been successfully collaborating and delivering regional level functions for over 25 years including representations on health services, law and order and water sharing. Major planks of this collaboration are resource sharing and joint procurement – e.g. major contracts for re-sealing, purchase of emulsion and electricity pricing.

In late 2012 Council accepted an invitation to join the successful Lower Macquarie Water Utilities Alliance (LMWUA) with 11 other Councils and is now an active member with an agreed strategic improvement plan (see Template Section 2.3). Joining this Alliance provides Council with access to technical support and the opportunity to participate in joint technical projects and technical and operational support networks.

Council has established a reputation as a more than competent civil contractor with a highly trained and skilled team and specialised plant managing major reconstruction contracts up to \$1.5 million on State and Regional roads & provides RMS contract management services for Warren Shire Council.

Council has also focused on delivering high quality contract services for surrounding councils with contract income in 2013/14 in the vicinity of \$900,000. During 2014/15 Council has again undertaken substantial works for neighbouring Councils.

Summary

Council's commitment to Integrated Planning and development of a solid LTFP as a means of ensuring financial sustainability together with the work undertaken to date to finalise asset management planning and review services means that Council can meet the criteria established under the ***Fit for the Future*** reforms.

The extensive role Council plays in the community and the successful management of the Aged and Disability services with some one hundred EFT positions confirms Council capacity to provide a range of facilities and services for the benefit community and to work closely with Federal and State governments

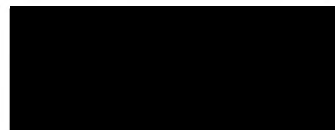
Gilgandra, as a community, has a strong sense of identity and independence and values the role Council plays in strengthening the Shire's social fabric and economic base

Council therefore believes it has a very strong case to retain its identity and independence as a rural council within a Joint Organisation while pursuing its commitment to financial sustainability, resource sharing and provision of improved services to the Gilgandra Shire community

Yours faithfully



D R Batten
Mayor



P A Mann
General Manager