



File Ref: 2015/4235

17 June 2015

Dr Peter Boxall
Chairman
Independent Pricing & Regulatory Tribunal NSW
PO Box K35
Haymarket Post Shop NSW 1240

Dear Dr Boxall

Harden Shire Council has made Sutherland Shire Council aware of its merger proposal with Cootamundra Shire Council.

Some years ago the Local Government industry encouraged relationships between metropolitan and rural councils. In March 2007 the Sutherland Shire Council, being a strong and leading Council established a relationship with Harden Shire Council, which at the time was experiencing some difficulties. The then Director General of the Department of Local Government felt that Harden Shire Council would benefit from a relationship with the Sutherland Shire Council. The Department, under its Local Government Reform Program completed a Promoting Better Practice Report in July 2006 identifying many areas where the Council needed to improve but at the same time the Report recognised the openness and willingness of Harden Shire Council to engage in the process to improve the performance of the Council and noted that it had already acted to address many of the deficiencies identified in the Report.

The relationship between Sutherland Shire Council and Harden Shire Council has been of benefit, to both councils. Sutherland Shire Council has provided a range of assistance including:

- provision of locum staff including an Acting General Manager, engineering assistance and health and building officers
- legal advice
- assistance with assessing significant and complex development applications
- conducting strategic planning workshops
- providing professional advice

In addition following the 2010 floods in Harden the Sutherland Shire Council provided \$100,000 to Harden Shire Council to:

- improve the storage area in the basement of the Murrumburrah museum
- contribute towards the Murrumburrah Flood Study
- provide funds towards the Bathurst Street walkbridge reconstruction

During the relationship the Council has seen considerable progress made in the conduct of and the administration of Harden Shire Council.

The Council is now strategically focussed, has a good relationship with its community and the relationship between councillors and staff has improved significantly.

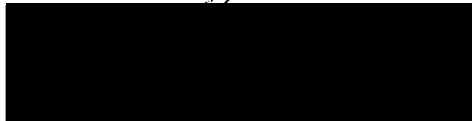
Sutherland Shire Council would not continue to partner with Harden Shire Council if its performance was not of a high standard. This Council however does not involve itself in Council policy issues or matters which relate to community priorities and relationships.

It is therefore pleasing to see that the Harden Shire Council has consulted with its community and I am told that there is overwhelming community support for the Harden Cootamundra merger in both communities.

This Council would be pleased to continue an ongoing "sister council" relationship if a Harden and Cootamundra merger were to go ahead.

The Sutherland Shire Council therefore has no objection to the proposed merger and wishes both councils every success in the future. Sutherland Shire Council will continue to provide expertise and support should it be required.

Yours sincerely

A black rectangular box redacting the signature of J W Rayner.

J W Rayner
General Manager