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|  | REPORT TO COUNCIL |

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| **Department:** | **General Managers Office** |
| **Submitted by:** | General Manager |
| **Reference:** | 6.06/15 |
| **Subject:** | Final submission– Fit for the Future (FFTF) Program |

LINKAGE TO INTEGRATED PLANNING AND REPORTING FRAMEWORK

Objective: Uralla leadership is visionary, compassionate, inclusive and promotes the needs of the community

Strategy: Advocate the needs of the Shire to State and Federal Government

Action: Address the requirements of the State Governments Fit for the Future Program.

SUMMARY:

The purpose of this report is for Council to receive and endorse Uralla Shire Councils final submission to the New South Wales Governments Fit for the Future program.

RESOLVED:

That:

1. The attached submission for Uralla Shire Council as required under the NSW Governments Fit for the Future program be received and endorsed; and
2. The submission, with any necessary amendments from the General Manager, be lodged with the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal.

OFFICER’S RECOMMENDATION:

That:

1. The attached submission for Uralla Shire Council as required under the NSW Governments Fit for the Future program be received and endorsed; and
2. The submission be lodged with the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal.

BACKGROUND:

A Local Government Review Panel was established by the NSW Government in April 2012 tasked with the formulation of options for governance models, structures and boundary changes for NSW Local Government.

In April 2013 the panel released *Future Directions for Local Government* a draft consultation paper and then undertook public meetings at various locations throughout the state to discuss the recommendations.

In October 2013 the Review Panel released their final report, titled *Revitalising Local Government*, which contained 65 recommendations for change in NSW local government.

On the 10th of September 2014 the NSW Government announced its response to the recommendations of the Local Government Review Panel and Local Government Act Taskforce by way of the *Fit for the Future (FFF)* program. A web link was distributed to all Councillors that evening to access the information that had been released by the state government.

The Fit for the Future program now requires all Councils in NSW to assess their sustainability position and submit a FFTF proposal to the State Government, via the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) before the 30th of June 2015. The submission is required to address how Councils meet a number of requirements that will have them identified as sustainable, or fit for the future, or otherwise.

Each Council has been asked to look at their current situation and consider the future needs of their community and the recommendations of the Review Panel. Councils are also to assess their current and future position against a set of sustainability criteria which address financial management, service delivery, infrastructure management and scale and capacity of operations.

The Review Panels recommendations will be the assessment criteria for Councils to achieve the scale requirements required under the fit for the future program.

A workshop was conducted with Councillors on the 15th of September 2014 to further discuss the FFTF program and what options, implications, challenges may arise from such.

A report was presented to the October 2014 Ordinary Meeting of Council detailing the Fit for the Future Program, analysing the implication to Council, the deliverables required and to ultimately adopt an approach to address the programs requirements.

Another Councillor workshop was conducted on the 16th of February 2015 to present the results of analysis conducted regarding the FFTF criteria for Uralla Shire Council and for all other considerations relating to such.

A report and major analysis was presented to the February Ordinary Council Meeting and a multi-point resolution was passed with regard to Councils continuing approach to the program and subsequent community engagement program.

In late March and early April Council undertook a rigorous community engagement program with regard to the fit for the future program, including newsletter inserts, press releases, advertising, web content, a mail-out to all residential addresses, community workshops at Uralla and Bundarra and then a community survey, both on-line and paper based.

REPORT:

Having now completed all of the elements of Councils strategy for the Fit for the Future program, the final submission for Uralla Shire Council has been constructed and is attached to this report.

It should be noted that the submission has to be constructed in-line with a set template and has number of word limitations for each section of the template.

The remaining milestones of the FFTF program are as follows:

* 30th June 2015 – Fit for the Future submissions due from all NSW Councils to IPART for assessment;
* 15th October 2015 – IPART makes recommendations to the NSW Government through the Minister for Local Government;
* November 2015 – Announcements made and Councils begin to implement their improvement program or the Governments alternate direction;
* September 2016 – Local Government elections; New Local Government Act; Regional JO’s commenced; any mergers completed.

COUNCIL IMPLICATIONS:

1. **Community Engagement/ Communication**

Council has undertaken a rigorous and multi facet community engagement program across the months of March and April, culminating in a number of community workshops in order to clearly inform the community and to gauge their opinions and preferences. A community survey was then undertaken with over 400 submissions received.

1. **Policy and Regulation**

* NSW Local Government Act 1993;
* NSW Local Government (General) Regulations 2005; and
* NSW Government Fit for the Future Program.

1. **Financial (LTFP)**

Financial analysis of numerous future options for Uralla Shire Council and the potential benefits/impacts were undertaken as part of the program. Councils Long Term Financial Plan has been reconstructed over the last six months and now models the identified initiatives, recurrent revenue and expense results to provide an operating surplus for general fund from 2016-17 onwards.

1. **Asset Management (AMS)**

No changes recommended.

1. **Workforce (WMS)**

No changes recommended.

1. **Legal and Risk Management**

Risk management issues identified in the previous analytical report to Council on the FFTF options.

1. **Performance Measures**

* All milestones of Councils FFTF strategy completed.
* Fit for the Future submission lodged before 30 June 2015.

1. **Project Management**

* Project close – following lodgement of submission to IPART.
* Project debrief – following project close.

**Damien Connor**

**General Manager**

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| Prepared by staff member: | Damien Connor |
| Approved/Reviewed by Manager:  Department: | Damien Connor  General Managers Office |
| Attachments: | Uralla Shire Council Fit for the Future Submission. |
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