



URANA SHIRE COUNCIL

In the middle of everywhere

ATTACHMENT D - URANA SHIRE COUNCIL - FIT FOR THE FUTURE

Becoming Fit for the Future – *Putting our Communities First* Community Engagement Outcomes – Summary Report – June 2015



*Good decision on managing local resources, resident needs and sustainability
decisions are best made by people living & working in the area,*

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URANA SHIRE COUNCIL

In the middle of everywhere

Cover Photos

Cover Photos

Top – The April 2015 Council Newsletter

Middle – The Mayor and local Oaklands resident/Business owner Jim Beale, discussing Fit for the Future, at the Oaklands Recreation Ground during Football/Netball game held 2nd May 2015

Bottom – Quote from Fit for the Future Survey giving reasons as to why Council should stand alone

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Purpose

This report summarises the outcomes of the Community Engagement actions undertaken to inform its Communities on the 'Fit for the Future' (FFF) process in Urana Shire. The outcomes of the engagement process have *strongly influenced* Council's decision to submit a stand-alone 'Rural Council' (RC) application to develop a pathway to becoming FFF.

This report forms part of Council's FFF application, to inform IPART as required under section 4.2 of the Final Methodology for Assessment of Councils FFF Proposals. .

Why did we do Community Engagement?

Urana Shire Council has, since its inception, (over 106 years ago) placed a heavy emphasis on ensuring its Communities are involved and informed about any relevant issues that affect their livelihood. Council firmly believes that the final decision made by the State Government regarding its FFF application, will for better or worse, have a substantial impact on the future of the Communities in Urana Shire. . For this reason a voluntary decision by the Council for structural reform including the possibility of a merger with Corowa Shire Council (one of the options given to Council) needed to be made with awareness across the whole Community.

Council has consolidated all comments and feedback received to assist in finalising its position, and to develop its FFF application. Council believes the application strongly reflects the views of the Community and the engagement was well informed, balanced and unbiased. Council is of the view that the engagement gave residents the chance to respond to their preferences on Council remaining a stand-alone Council, or merging with Corowa Shire or another Council. Views were also sought from the Community on the challenges that face Council going forward, and the in-principle changes that will be required, to allow Council to be more financially sustainable as a stand-alone Council. Further information is contained in the '[Summary of Survey Results](#)' section.

What did we do (Engagement activities)

Council used a range of methods, to ensure that consultation was effective and suited the Community. The overwhelmingly strong response to the FFF engagement proved that Council continues to be closely engaged with its Community. Council is confident that the high participant



rate in this process reflects the importance that the Community places on matters affecting the Shire as a whole.

Commencing in 2011, Council has been very active in ensuring the Communities are aware of the NSW Local Government reform process. This included participating actively in the lengthy consultation process conducted by the Independent Local Government Review Panel. This enabled Council to demonstrate the Communities interest in this process including the proposed Local Government Act review.

In Urana Shire, the smallest Council area by population in the state, the topic of amalgamations/mergers, has been seen as a threat for many and has never been far from the minds of those with an interest/involvement with the Community and Council. Refer to [Attachment A](#) for an example, dating back to 1980. For these reasons when the amalgamation/merger topics are on the table, it doesn't take much effort to re-engage with the Community.

The range of Community engagement activities undertaken are summarised in the following section of this report.

Council Newsletters

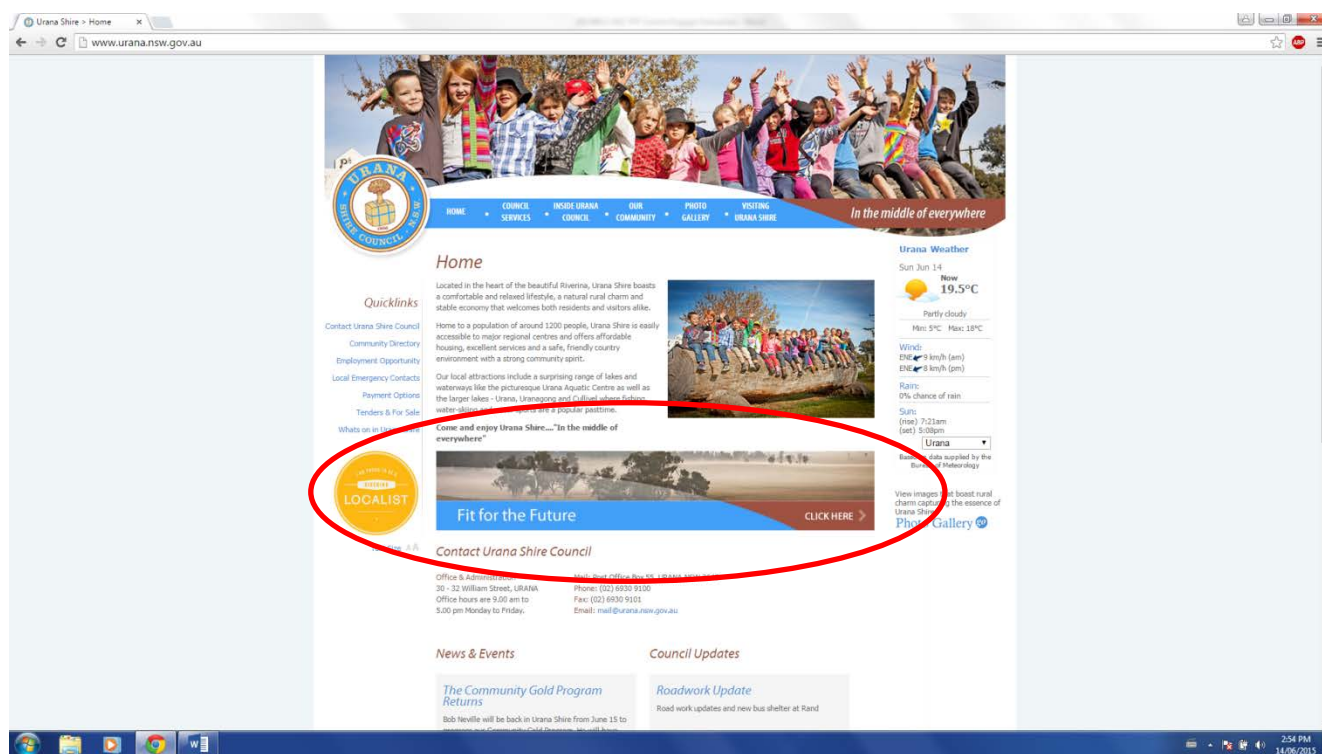
As there is no local paper in the Shire, Council produces a monthly 60 – 70 page Newsletter, which is effectively the 'local paper' for the Community. It has a circulation of over 900 plus copies. Council utilised the Newsletter as one key method to distribute FFF information and surveys. The response to the survey is a testament to the success of this Council initiative to communicate with the wider Community. Council is aware that majority of people prefer the Newsletter as the way to find out about activities within the Shire and other local news. For example each month, in the Mayors column, and at times in other parts of the newsletter, the Community have been fully informed of the latest developments in relation to the FFF and the general Local Government reform process.



Website and Facebook

A dedicated FFF page was created on Councils' Website, with an easy link from the Home Page and from Councils Facebook page. This contains; information on the process, a link to download a separate FFF Information pack, with Council specific information, see [Attachment B](#), along with links to the NSW Government FFF webpage, to ensure the Community received as much balanced information as possible. A checks of the 'number of times viewed' feature on the website, relevant to each area, showed that in some cases, particularly the on-line version of the Mayors Media release for April 2015 for example, had 235 views.

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The above screen shot shows Councils Website Homepage, with the link to the FFF information page.

Council Meetings, Committee Meetings, and other Community Meetings

Council has received monthly reports on FFF, since the reform process commenced. These documents have also been made publicly available. . At any other meetings or engagements with the Community, attended by either the Mayor General Manager or Senior Staff the Community has been updated on the FFF process.

Surveys

Council prepared a community survey. This survey was distributed by:

Hard copy – reply paid postage surveys were forwarded to every address in the Shire, along with all absentee ratepayers who have a service address out of the Shire. Surveys were left at most major Business Houses, and handed out at Public Meetings on FFF. Further information is contained in the [‘Summary of Survey Results’](#) section.



Online – an online survey was created, through ‘survey monkey’. This survey linked to the Council website and Facebook page. This link was sent to a wide range of the residents, including through Council’s database of the Section 355 Committees, Community Groups, Clubs and other Organisations across the Shire.

CountryWIN Expo | Sydney | Business Papers & Minutes | Sign In | SurveyMonkey Design |

https://www.surveymonkey.net/create/?sm=xDimMs%2f6QwVcb1ORRP3lg%2bXDSGSb5OhwGw7iuGKILko%3d

Apps | Urana Shire > Home | urana.gov.au | www.legislation.nsw... | HR Advance - Acco... | Leasing and Licens... | SAI Global Property... | People You May Know... | Preview & Test | Print | Next

BUILDER | QUESTION BANK | LOGIC | OPTIONS | THEMES

PAGE 1 | Page Logic | More Actions

URANA SHIRE COUNCIL - N.S.W.

URANA SHIRE COUNCIL - FIT FOR THE FUTURE COMMUNITY SURVEY

Putting our Communities first

The Council regards your input into our 'Fit for the Future' process as extremely important. Please take the time to complete this survey by Friday May 8.

1. Please select one of the following

☐ I live in Urana

☐ I live in Boree Creek

☐ I live in Morundah

☐ I live in Oaklands

☐ I live in Rand

☐ I live in a rural area/locality outside of these towns, but still in Urana Shire

☐ I live outside of the Urana Shire

2. How important is your local Council to you?

☐ Very important

☐ Important

☐ Somewhat important

☐ Not very important

☐ Not important at all

☐ Unsure

Start | 10:18 PM 16/05/2015

The above screen shot shows Councils on-line survey monkey FFF survey.

Public meetings

Public Community Meetings on FFF were held on the 4th and 11th May 2015 at the Urana Soldiers Memorial Hall, Urana. Public meetings were held in each of the five towns in the Shire, during May 2015, presenting on FFF, along with outlining key performance in 2014/15, and the draft Operational Plan and Delivery Program proposed for the next four years.

Record of FFF Meeting 1 – 7.00pm – Urana Soldiers Memorial Hall - 4th May 2015 – 52 in attendance

This meeting commenced with an address by the Mayor, followed by a detailed presentation by the General Manager, see outlining Council information on FFF and the entire FFF process. This was undertaken to ensure the Community were fully aware of the issues facing Councils across the State, and the State Governments response to ensuring a stronger system of Local Government. . During



the meeting, and at the end of the presentation, there were questions, and dialogue, which demonstrated the audience were informed and interested in the reforms proposed.

Although not a formal Council meeting, the audience were strong in their desire to support the Council stand-alone position, they moved the following –

'That a vote of confidence be issued to the Council, in unanimous support of the in-principle decision of Council to stand-alone, and not merge with Corowa Shire Council'.

Moved Denis Smith, Seconded Maurice Smith.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY



A photo taken at Public Meeting Number 1 at the Urana Soldiers War Memorial Hall – 4th May 2015

FFF Meeting 2 – 7.00pm – Urana Soldiers Memorial Hall – 11th May 2015 – 39 in attendance

The meeting format was the same as the meeting held in the previous week, with similar strong support and some engaging questions and conversations throughout.

FFF/Budget Meetings in each town –

Rand Hall – 18th May 2015 4 in attendance,

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Boree Creek Hall	– 19 th May 2015	16 in attendance
Oaklands Hall	– 20 th May 2015	28 in attendance
Urana Hall	– 25 th May 2015	36 in attendance
Morundah Hotel	– 26 th May 2015	14 in attendance

The total no of attendees at Community Meetings during May 2015 was 189. This represents 16.5% of the entire population (based on ABS estimated population for Urana Shire in 2014 of 1147 people. Taking into account, there is an estimated 227 people in the Shire aged between 0 – 14, (ABS 2011 data) who didn't attend the meetings, this effectively brings the meeting participation rate up to 20%.

As identified in Council's FFF application, this strong attendance at meetings, while not surprising to the residents of Urana Shire, demonstrates that a strong majority of the residents value the continued existence of the Council as critical to the future of their Communities.



This strong engagement was also demonstrated on the 30th of May 2013, when approximately 80 Urana Shire residents attended a forum in Corowa, to hear an address by the Local Government Independent review Panel Chair, Professor Graham Sansom. Residents from the Councils of Albury,

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Corowa were and several other Councils were also invited to this meeting. It is estimated that only 100 people attended in total, with 80% of those being residents of Urana Shire. . The Urana Shire residents who attended this meeting, included 6 speakers from various Communities spread across the Shire, made public representations to Professor Samson, on the need for Urana Shire to remain an independent identity to continue to support the Communities it represents.

This clearly demonstrates that the larger the population of a Council, the less involved and passionate people are about the role of that organisation in the Community. It was noted in a news article in the Cootamundra Herald, that Cootamundra Shire did not attract very high numbers to meetings to consult and engage their Communities, on the proposed merger between Cootamundra and Harden Councils,

Cootamundra Shire Councillor Mary Donnelly commented on what she referred to as the “apathy” of residents. “Out of 8000 people, we had 130 turn up,” Cr Donnelly said.

Source: <http://www.cootamundraherald.com.au/story/3149432/merger-gets-green-light/>





Printed Media Releases

The Mayor issued Media Releases periodically, to supplement the 'Mayoral Columns' in the monthly Council Newsletter. These have had a substantial impact, and these releases were used for 'grabs' for the Regional Print media including the Daily Advertiser (Wagga) and Border Mail (Albury), and at other times by ABC Riverina and Prime 7 news. The Mayor was interviewed for ABC Riverina. . FFF focused Media Releases were also issued towards the latter stages of the consultation, in order to increase Council's engagement with the Community leading up to the surveys and Public Meetings. This ensured the Community were fully informed of this process.

Refer to [Attachment C](#) for copies of several of the Media Releases.

Radio/Paper/Television

Council also engaged with ABC Radio, Television (Prime 7 Wagga) and Print media (Border Mail – Albury Wodonga, and Wagga Daily Advertiser) to advise its Communities of the FFF process. These engagements sought to encourage feedback, including those options available to communicate views with Council. This widened awareness of the FFF process. See [Attachment D](#), for examples of some of the media related articles, including those prepared before the FFF reform program was announced.

Information Packs

Council produced several Information Packs, dating as far back as the Independent Local Government Review Panel work in 2011. These Packs were designed to gain the Community feedback into the Councils submissions to that Inquiry. A copy of the most recent FFF Information Pack is included as an attachment to the overall FFF application. The FFF Information Pack was used to inform the Community prior to receiving community surveys and notice of public meetings, by way of providing balanced and unbiased information, including –

- 1) The background to the latest Local Government Reform process.
- 2) The opportunities available from the recommendations from the final panel report.
- 3) The incentives on offer in the overall FF Process.
- 4) Council's current position in regard to the FFF benchmarks of scale and capacity, and the other financial ratios.
- 5) Options available to Council to submit an FFF application
- 6) Efforts that Council has made, to consult with its Community, and consider both options of a merger with Corowa, and the Rural Council proposal.
- 7) Challenges facing Council, to increase its financial performance and improve its Scale and Capacity, including the likelihood of future rate increases to ensure sustainability.



- 8) In principle decision of Council to be strongly influenced by the Community engagement and their opinions on what direction Council should take.

Council considered overall that the Information Packs provided the Community with a higher level of information regarding the FFF process. The question and answer session at the Public Meetings, along with the answers to the community survey questions, regarding *'are you aware of FFF'*, and *'have you read the information pack'*, demonstrate the effectiveness of the FF Information Pack.

In analysing IPART's Methodology for assessing the FFF applications, particularly around the area of Community Engaging, Council is very confident that Community have been well informed, and have similarly responded to this, with informed views as to why they support the stand alone Rural Council option.

Summary of Survey Results

Survey Design

Council developed a Community survey, with external assistance from a firm who specialises in Community Engagement. See [Attachment E](#), for a copy of the survey.

The survey was designed to accommodate contact information on respondents. This has enabled Council to continue the engagement with survey respondents and avoid duplication of survey results.

The survey specifically targeted the Community to identify what their preference was in Council remaining as a stand-alone Council, pursuing a merger with Corowa, or other merger options including with more than one Council.

Methods of distribution and response from each method (all surveys included reply paid stamp)

- 1) Mailed to every household in the Shire. (54.33% of all returned)
- 2) Mailed to non-residential ratepayers who have a service address for their rate notice that is outside of the Shire. (5.8%)
- 3) Made available at most businesses in the Shire. (1.15%)
- 4) Made available at public meetings held by Council across the Shire. (1.3%)
- 5) 'Survey monkey' online version, link to Council Facebook and Website page. (5.1%)
- 6) Random phone surveys undertaken. (2.7%)
- 7) Stalls set up at 2 Football matches (attract a crowd of approximately 500) (29.62%)

Survey Results (Summary)

The following is a summary of the results of the community survey.

Total Survey Distribution – Approximately 1000

Total responses – 281

Participation Rate – from a current population estimate (aged over 14) of 920, the rate of participation in this survey equates to 30% of the population. This represents a very high response rate, and the data is considered to be representative of Community views.



Survey Analysis (Summary)

Analysis of the survey indicated that the number of responses to the community survey represents a credible statistical sample size to enable Council to draw reasonable conclusions and assumptions. From the sample size Council has assumed an error rate of + or - approximately 5%. In response to the question of 'Do you favour Council submitting a 'stand- alone' FFF application, or an amalgamation', the survey data demonstrated that 92% of respondents supported the standalone

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option. Council has assumed that between 87 to 97% of the population favour a 'stand-alone' approach.

Council also noted that Corowa Shire, who promoted their surveys widely, including offering a prize for filling them out, received approximately 280 responses, from a population of 11,455 (ABS estimates 2014), equating to around 2.5% of the population. . Urana Shire did not offer prizes, when asking the Community to give their opinion on such an important matter as the future of their Council. It was not surprising, that the larger the population of a Council area, the less likely the Community are to be engaged.

Most surveys were submitted in hard copy, with the online version attracting only 18 responses. This highlights the success of methods such as Face to Face meetings, utilising Council's Newsletter and mail outs are far more effective to reach the Community, than on-line methods.



The above photo shows the Councils Fit for the Future information stall at the local Football/Netball at Oaklands Recreation Reserve



Urana has a very bright future and it's important for us to maintain our autonomy for our future progress and development,

Good things come in small packages – a trade secret in Urana Shire,

Just leave things as they are. There's no need to fix things that aren't broken, Never merge with a large city but if forced to merge make it with Shire of similar interest such as Jerilderie,

To keep everything we have, I believe we will lose services, employment and our facilities will not be a priority of a larger amalgamated Council,

The captions above show some examples of some of the quotes from the surveys

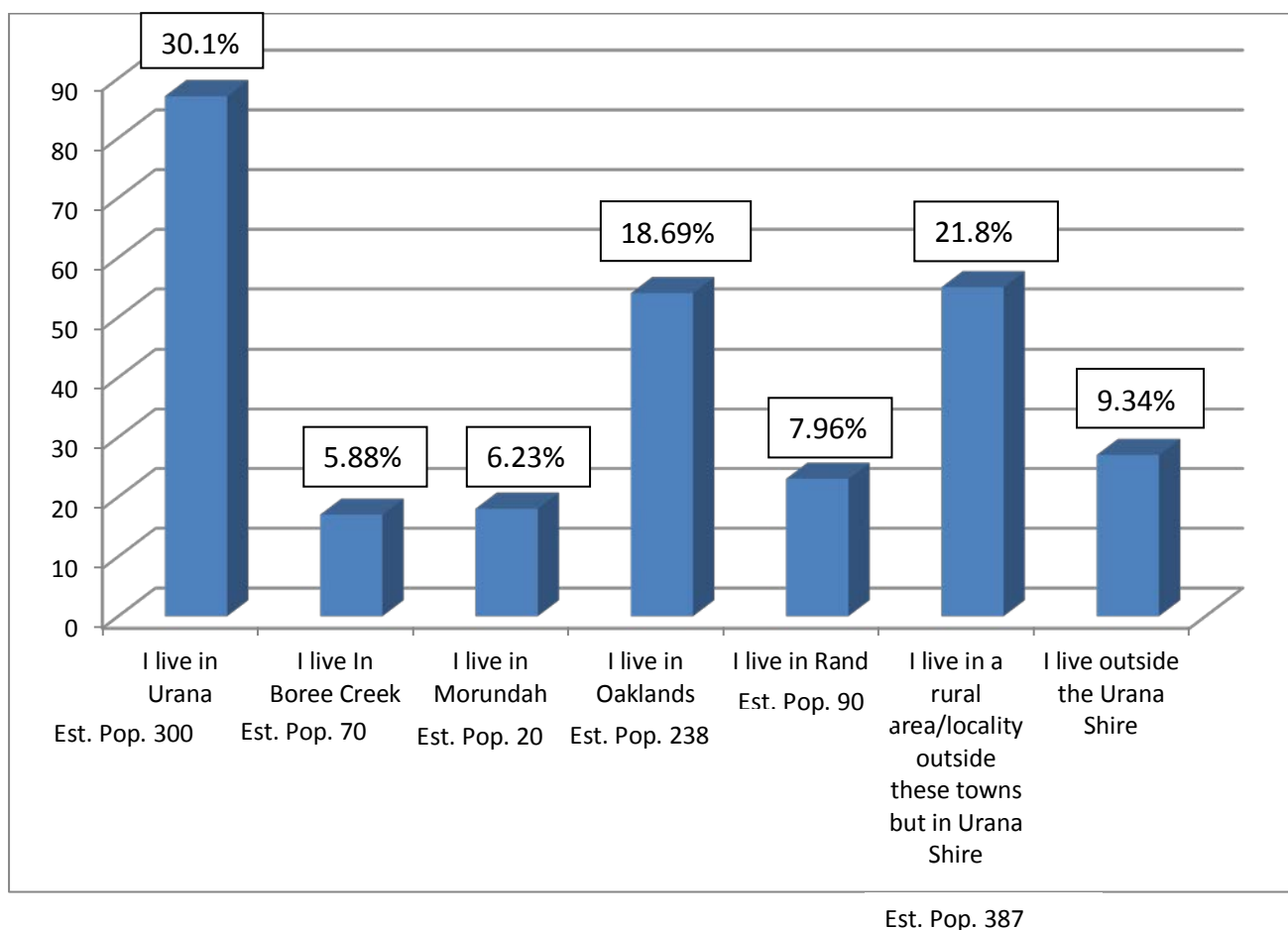
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Graphs of results

Survey questions and response data analysis

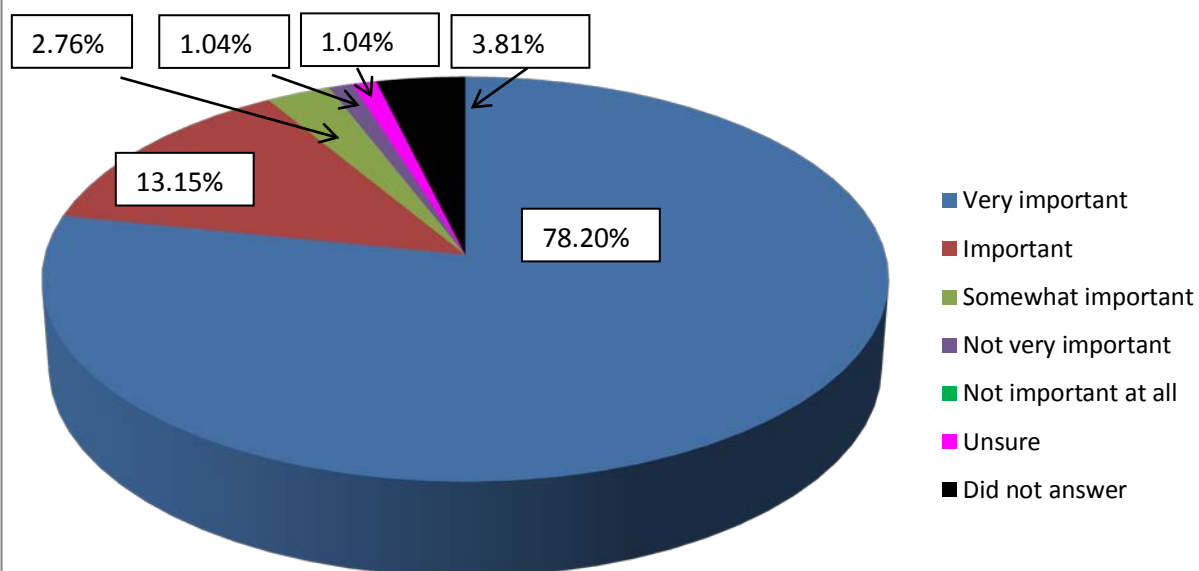
1) Where do you live?



Note: % for each column indicates the % of response to the survey from each area category, vertical axis indicates number of surveys returned.

The results of Question 1 demonstrate that on a no's of people basis, there was an even spread of responses proportionate to the local populations in the Shire. This gave Council confidence that a good representative sample from all sectors of the Community took part in the survey. This is particularly important for Urana Shire, considering the spread of Communities across the Shire and their varying Communities of interest.

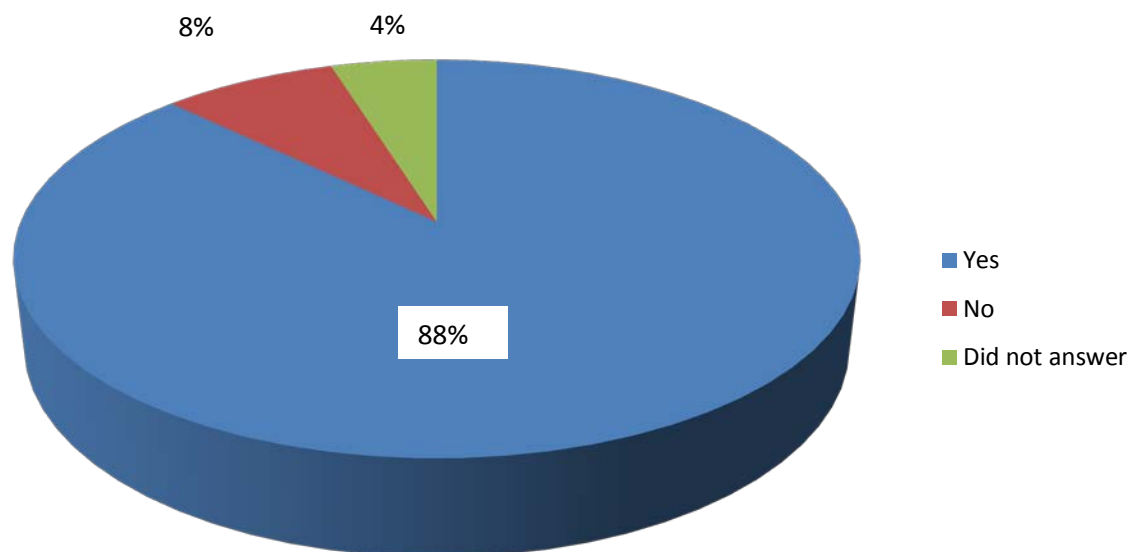
2) How important is your local Council to you?



The results of Question 2 demonstrate that people in the Urana Shire regard their Shire as very important. It is a strong sign that the Community differentiated between 'very important', more than simply 'important'.



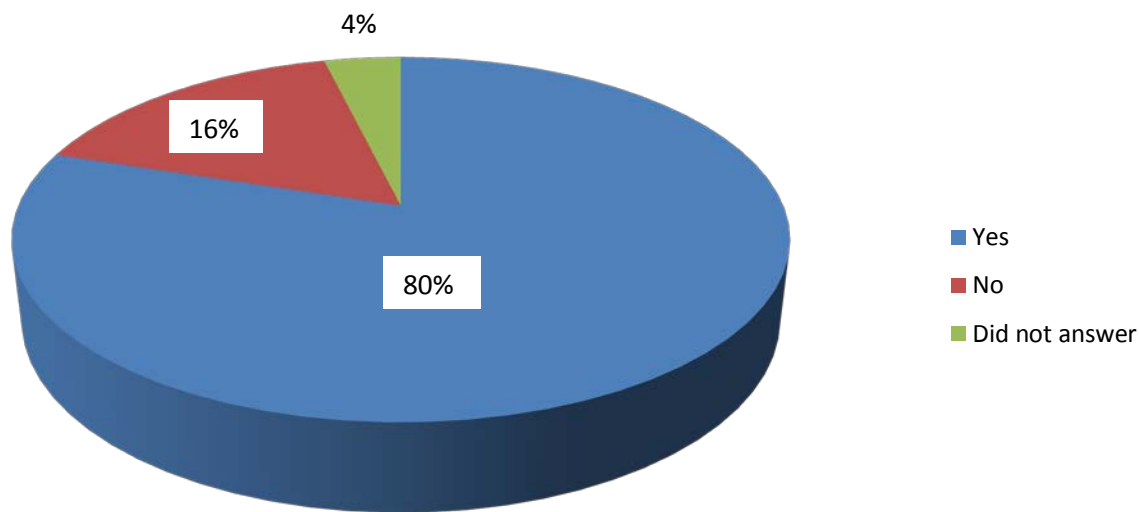
3) Are you aware of the NSW State Governments Fit for the Future proposals for the reform of Local Government?



The results of Question 3 demonstrate that the Community were aware of the Local Government reform, and it proves that the Council has been very successful in always ensuring information was presented on the reform processes. It further validates the responses to the other questions, that the survey respondents were well informed and aware of the reform issues.



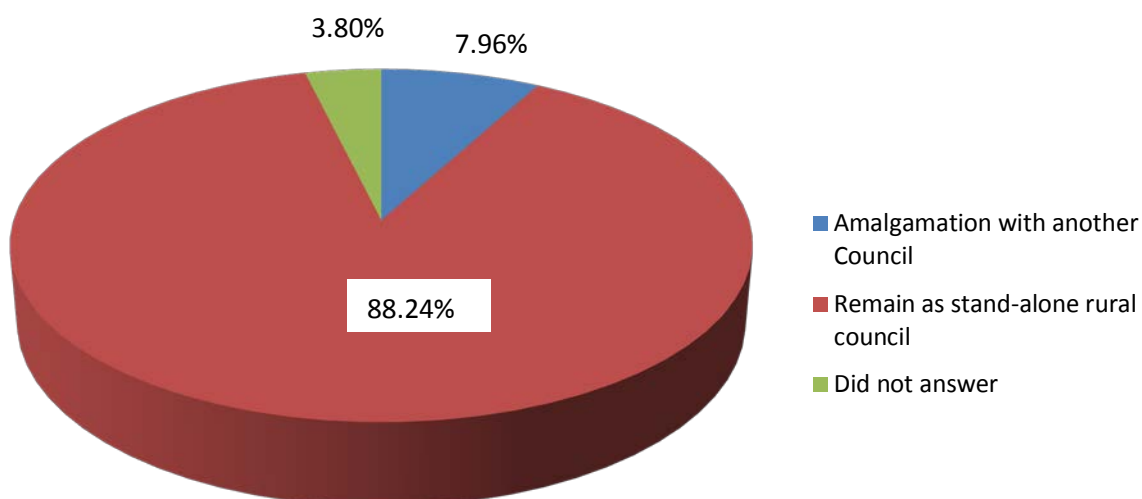
4) Have you read the Council information package including media release, (see Councils April Newsletter or visit Councils website) on its current challenges of the Fit for the Future proposals, on the future of Urana Shire?



Question 4 sought to gauge the audience's knowledge of the reform processes, the information that Council produced and the challenges that Council faces to 'stand-alone'. Considering the level of information provided regarding possible rate increases, and other structural changes proposed to ensure Council's long term financial sustainability it clearly demonstrated that the Community are willing to make sacrifices in order to ensure their Council remains, to continue to support the Communities.



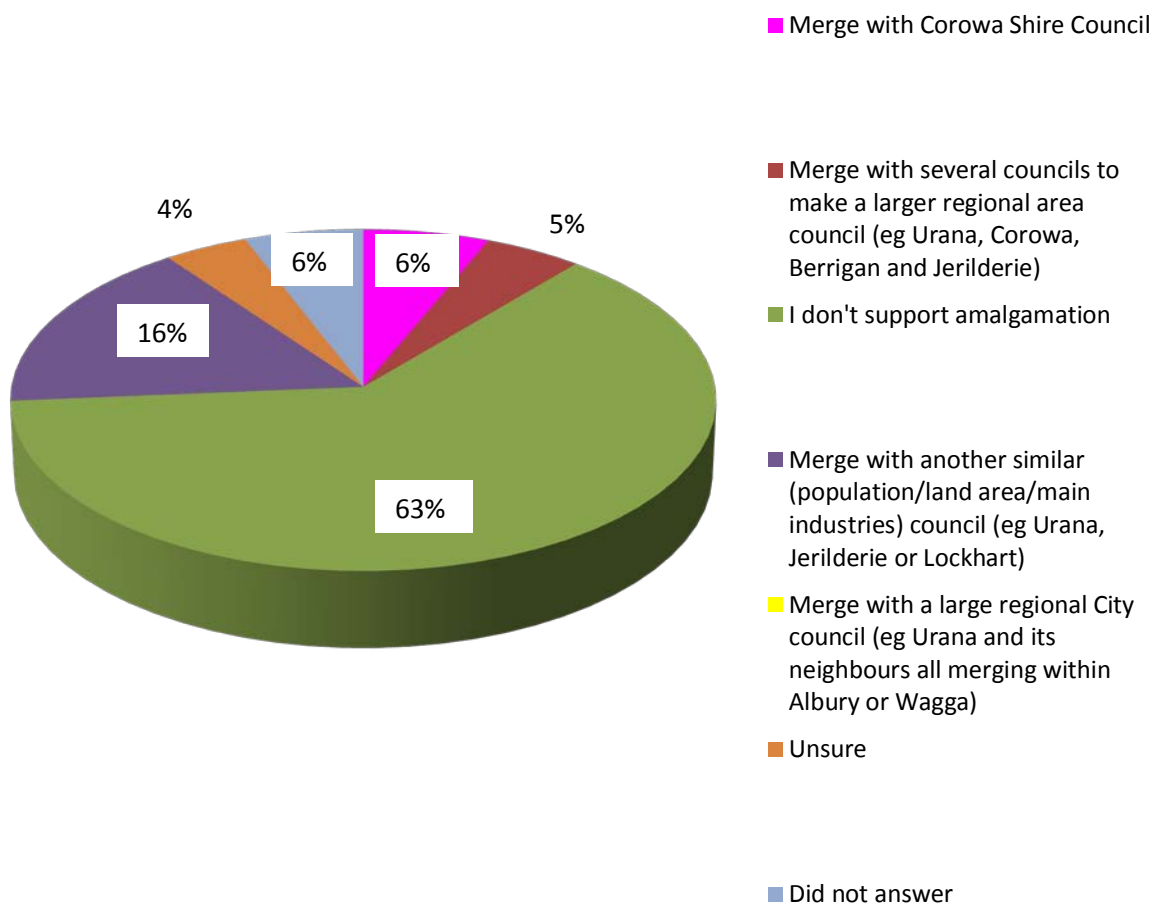
5) In the Council information package, two options are available for Urana Shire, under the Fit for the Future proposal, which do you support?



The results of Question 5 demonstrate that an overwhelming majority of respondents favour of Council submitting a stand-alone Rural Council proposal. The strong response, coupled with the fact of written comments received, validates the seriousness that the respondents placed on this issue.

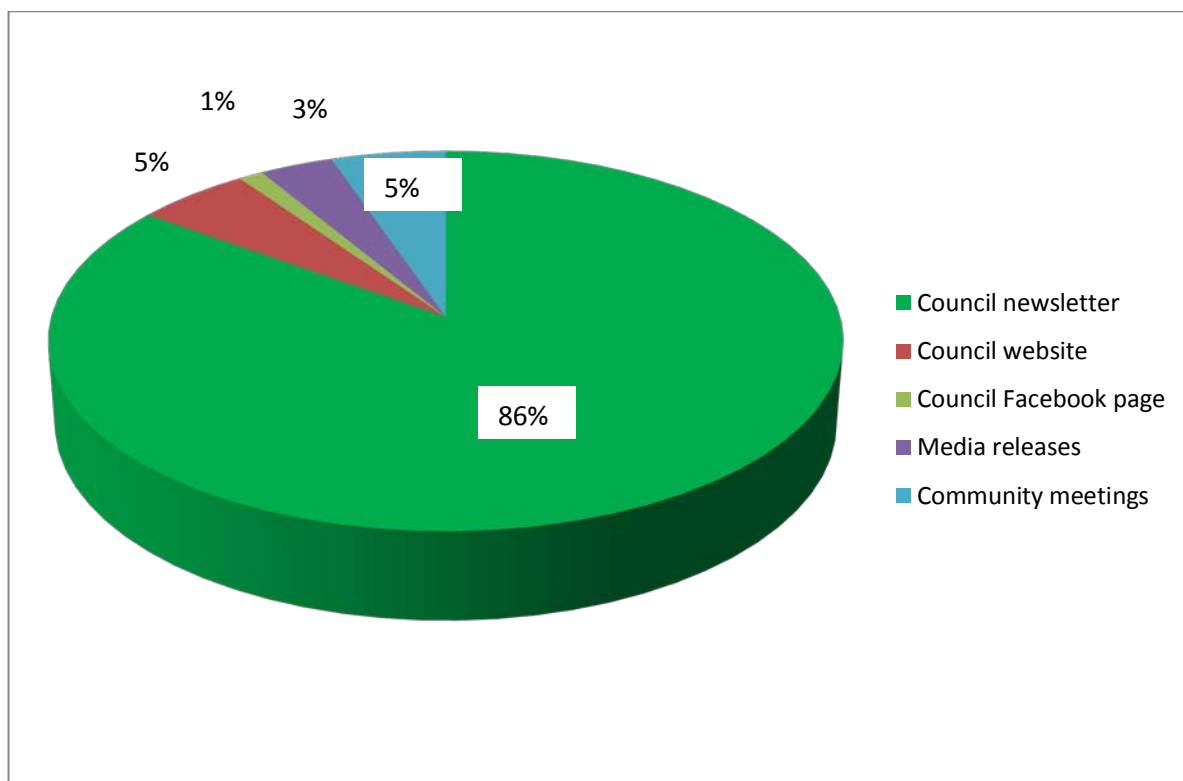
Strong recurring themes in the comments encouraging the Council to stand-alone, (the majority of which are re-printed below) include maintaining representation, to keep local services and jobs, to ensure the survival of towns – including the Businesses, and that larger organisations do not necessarily do things better or more efficiently.

6) If you support amalgamation with another Council(s), which one(s) would you prefer Urana Shire Council merges with?



Question 6 sought to gauge the opinions of the Community, regarding voluntarily mergers and what Council(s) should they merge with. The results identified that a strong majority (63%) still did not wish to consider this option at all. However of those who did, only 6% favoured a merger with Corowa, whilst 16% favoured merging with other more 'similar' Councils. A smaller % favoured a larger merger involving more than just Corowa and Urana, whilst there was no support to merge into larger Regional City Council.

Q7. What communication methods do you consider are the most effective ways for to communicate important messages to our residents?



Question 7 sought to establish the preferred method of Communication to its survey respondents and the Community. As Council had anticipated, the overwhelmingly strong response was to continue using of Council's monthly Newsletter. This explains why so many of the respondents were aware of the FFF process, and Councils need for Community feedback, given the monthly updates provided in the Council Newsletter.

The fact that the online survey monkey method received 18 responses out of a total of almost 300 surveys shows that predictably, with an ageing population and the limits of internet coverage/speed, that hard copy continues to be the favoured communication method.

Q8. Do you have any further comments you wish to make?

Question 8 sought to engage the community in identifying any particular views or comments associated with FFF. There were many positive comments made on the Council in general, and some other specific examples were also made, outlining peoples thoughts when filling out the survey,



when thinking of the importance of Council to them. Many of these comments are included in [Attachment F](#).

Conclusion

It is clear, that from the Community response, across all of the different engagement and communication methods, that by submitting a stand-alone Rural Council FFF application, Council reflects the majority (over 90%) of Community views. There are so many strong themes evidenced through survey responses, regarding the demise of the towns and Communities across in the Shire, if it was to be merged with a larger entity. Similarly, if the Council were to consider a merge option, it is evident that on the whole, the Community would want to see a merger with one or more similar Shires, such as Jerilderie or Lockhart.

Council is extremely confident that it has fairly and independently explained the incentives on offer with the voluntary mergers under the FFF process, along with explaining the financial sustainability challenges that will face Council and the Community over the medium to longer term. It is clear that it is the preference of the majority of residents, that Council remains independent to best serve Urana Shire Communities into the future.

Acknowledgment by the Mayor

Council would like to sincerely thank all of its Community members who responded to Council during the ongoing FFF engagement. Council is extremely confident it has undertaken effective and strong engagement across the Shire consistent with the requirements for FFF. Council also believes that the



application represents the future wishes of the majority of the residents of the Shire.

Council places a heavy emphasis on being answerable to, and being there for, its Communities. The opinions expressed in the surveys, at the meetings, and in other contact with Council, has greatly assisted Council to formulate a final position on the FFF process. The input from the Community has also greatly assisted Council in proposing some of the key measures in order to become Fit for the Future, and to continue working in partnership with our residents in line with our motto, 'Going forward with Pride'.

Cr Pat Bourke
Mayor
Urana Shire Council



Contacting Council

If you have any questions about the Fit for the Future application, please contact Council on 6930 9100 or email mail@urana.nsw.gov.au

To obtain a copy of the final Fit for the Future application, please go to www.urana.nsw.gov.au and click on the Fit for the Future link, to download a copy. Hard copies can be available on request, at the Council Offices, 30 – 32 William Street, Urana NSW 2645.





Attachments

11/6/2015

Mr. Bruce Cooper,
Secretary,
Rand Cricket Club,
RAND. 2640.

24th July, 1980.

Dear Mr. Cooper,

The amalgamation by legislation threat to Local Government remains. In spite of vigorous and widespread objection the Minister for Local Government is quite adamant and has stated categorically that "If there is to be any change, it will be as a consequence of the Shire and Local Government Associations discussion with the Premier", thus until the Premier returns in about two weeks no final decision is anticipated.

On 14th July last, seven members of Council and the Shire Clerk attended the public meeting held in Sydney to protest against the proposal. Up to 1500 people attended and were unanimous in their objection. Representation came from the whole of the State, both country and city. The Minister was in attendance and addressed the Conference, he attempted to justify the proposal to amalgamate 40 Councils into 18 areas, stating that it was the Government's opinion that in every case there was a community of interest between the towns and the surrounding rural areas and the result would be a more efficient and economical administration. Further, the reason for legislation was to avoid the disruption, divisions and hard feelings that resulted from public enquiries such as those held by the N.S.W. Boundaries Commission. He did however state that whilst he was Minister for Local Government that there would be no further amalgamation by legislation, other than that proposed with the exception of Councils in the Deniliquin area. A decision in that area would be arrived at in the near future. He further stated that he intends to retire from Parliament within the next twelve months. In short the Minister did nothing to assure the residents of New South Wales that they will be afforded the opportunity of consultation should it be proposed to amalgamate their local government area with others.

The Meeting had full and forthright discussion on the Government's proposed action and the Minister's statement. As a result the principal motion carried among many others was as follows:-

"That this Conference express its total and complete condemnation of the proposed action of the New South Wales Government to amalgamate Councils by legislation without any opportunity for consultation with the people or the Councils concerned."

Following the close of the Conference an estimated 1500 citizens quite orderly marched from the Town Hall to Parliament House. A Deputation waited upon the Deputy Premier and presented to him the resolutions of the Conference. He advised that the Premier would consider the matter when he returned to Office. The Premier has agreed to meet representatives of Local Government when he returns.

Since Council's earlier letter, considerable interest has been shown by a great number of organisations and individuals throughout the Shire. Many telegrams were sent to the Premier on 14th

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Community Engagement Information Package – April 2015

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From the Mayor

Thanks for taking the time to read this important document regarding the future of the Urana Shire Council. I am sure by now many of you would have heard of “Fit for the Future”.

Council has prepared this document to provide some key information to assist our residents in becoming informed about the process, and on Councils current position. We need to hear from you. Council will also provide summaries of the key proposals we will consider submitting in our application, as they are further developed, and before we publicly exhibit the application for comments. We must provide the State Government with suitable evidence to reflect that we are prepared to commit to realistic, achievable changes to enable the Council to be able to continue as an independent Council into the future.

For all Councils, “Fit for the Future” brings to an end over 3 years of a major State wide review into looking at new ways of strengthening Local Government including a comprehensive independent review, culminating with the panels final report. Urana Shire Council spent many hours attending meetings and other forums; sharing ideas with other Councils, and talking to the State Government about ways in which Councils can become more financially sustainable.

The “Fit for the Future” package offers \$5 million dollars in funding for two Councils to merge. Many Councils including Urana, were recommended to consider a merger, in the panel’s final report. The panel felt that the State Government does not have the resources to support 152 Councils. They believed that some Councils should be merged with others. They feel that greater efficiencies can be gained by creating larger units of Councils.

In Urana Shire’s case, it does not feel a merger with the proposed partner, Corowa Shire Council, would deliver the Communities any more benefits than they currently receive now. Council also believes the funding of \$5.4 million dollars, would be largely, if not entirely, taken up in merger costs, without any on-the-ground results being realised. Council, based on the many discussions it has regularly had with the Community over the past few years, feel that a merger could very likely have severe negative social and economic effects on our Communities over the medium to longer term. Mergers would likely result in the loss of representation and the ability we currently have to spend the rates and other grants that are currently received by the Council, within our current boundaries.

This in-principle decision to stand alone and not merge with Corowa Shire, is not a gut feel decision. The Council has spent many hours including workshops with independent facilitators, to gather evidence and reach consensus on this decision. As Councillors, we have also talked to many of you in the Community



about this issue. ***We now need the Community to formally respond to this in-principle decision with their thoughts.***

The draft “Fit for the Future” application will be publicly exhibited for 28 days. Council will then meet in late June, and consider any submissions, and ultimately adopt a final application, and submit it to the State Government by 30th June 2015.

The outcomes of the applications are expected to be announced in October this year. The State Government has not indicated what it intends to do with Councils that are not deemed to be “Fit for the Future”. They have not made any clear statements to suggest that they intend to force mergers/amalgamations after this process.

In the next two months, we hope to reach out to as many of our residents as we can. I encourage you all to be engaged in the “Fit for the Future” reform processes underway for all Councils in NSW, and I strongly urge you to fill out the surveys available in the Community, and to also attend the public meetings, and contact us in any other way you feel comfortable with, to provide us with your thoughts.



Cr Patrick Bourke
Mayor – Urana Shire Council



Message from the General Manager

“Fit for the Future” is the name of the State Governments reform package offered to Councils and it was released in September 2014, although much of the required details were only released in February 2015 after further consultation with Councils.

The package was in response to the release of the final report of the Independent Local Government Review Panel and many other reviews conducted in the last few years. An independent panel was established in March 2012, in response to a request to the State Government, from all Councils to do something about the declining ability of Councils to be able to be more financially sustainable and independent over the longer term. The review concluded with a final report in October 2013, released publicly in January 2014. The report contained 65 recommendations, all aimed at improving the operations and performance of NSW Councils. The recommendations included proposed merger options for many Councils – Urana Shire Council were recommended to merge with Corowa Shire, or submit a stand-alone ‘Rural Council’ application. The other recommendations are aimed to improve the ability of Councils to be able to generate additional revenue and generally be stronger and more effective. This includes importantly, to be able to work more closely with the State Government to deliver on their priorities. Other initiatives in the recommendations include improving financial arrangements, such as placing all Councils under the auspice of the State Governments Auditor General, along with other ways to streamline processes and reduce reporting and red tape.

For most Councils including Urana, an increased ability to generate revenue along with finding further savings and efficiencies is essential to continue to be able to maintain our existing assets adequately, and to also address the infrastructure ‘backlog’ - these are the current assets that are below the required standard, such as Community Buildings, roads and bridges that need work. For Urana Shire, there is an estimated \$10 million dollars of work to be done on our existing assets (mostly roads) to bring them up to an acceptable standard. It must be noted however that this figure is an estimate only and further research work is required on this.

Urana Shire, in all of its submissions has embraced these changes in many ways, excepting for the recommended mergers. Council is extremely positive, that if it is allowed to remain as a stand-alone Council, with increased revenue options, it will be the best vehicle to effectively and efficiently deliver services to the Community into the future.

Regardless of if Council were to voluntary merge or not, it is clearly apparent to this Council, that from the new financial benchmarks and ratios that the State Government has given Councils to meet, significant



changes are required, to increase our own source revenue (rates, charges and user fees) to make us more financially independent and less reliant on grants from State and Federal Government.

Council will be conducting a number of public meetings, and there will be plenty of opportunities to have your say in the future of this Shire over the next two months.

The success or otherwise of our application, will be influenced in a big way, by the evidence that our Community is aware and supportive of our final proposals.

We look forward to hearing from you.



Adrian Butler
General Manager
Urana Shire Council

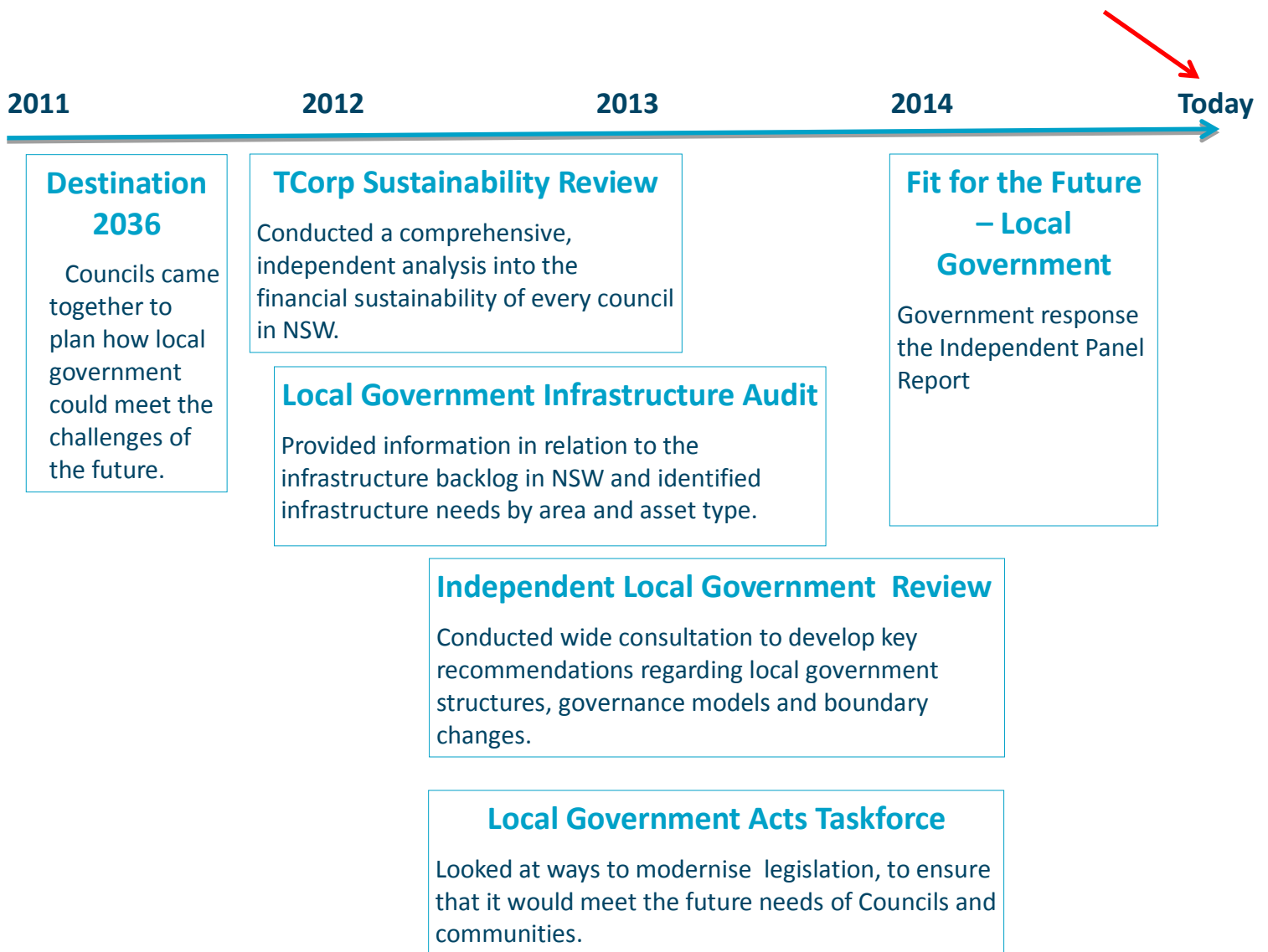
Fit for the Future



Where have we come from?

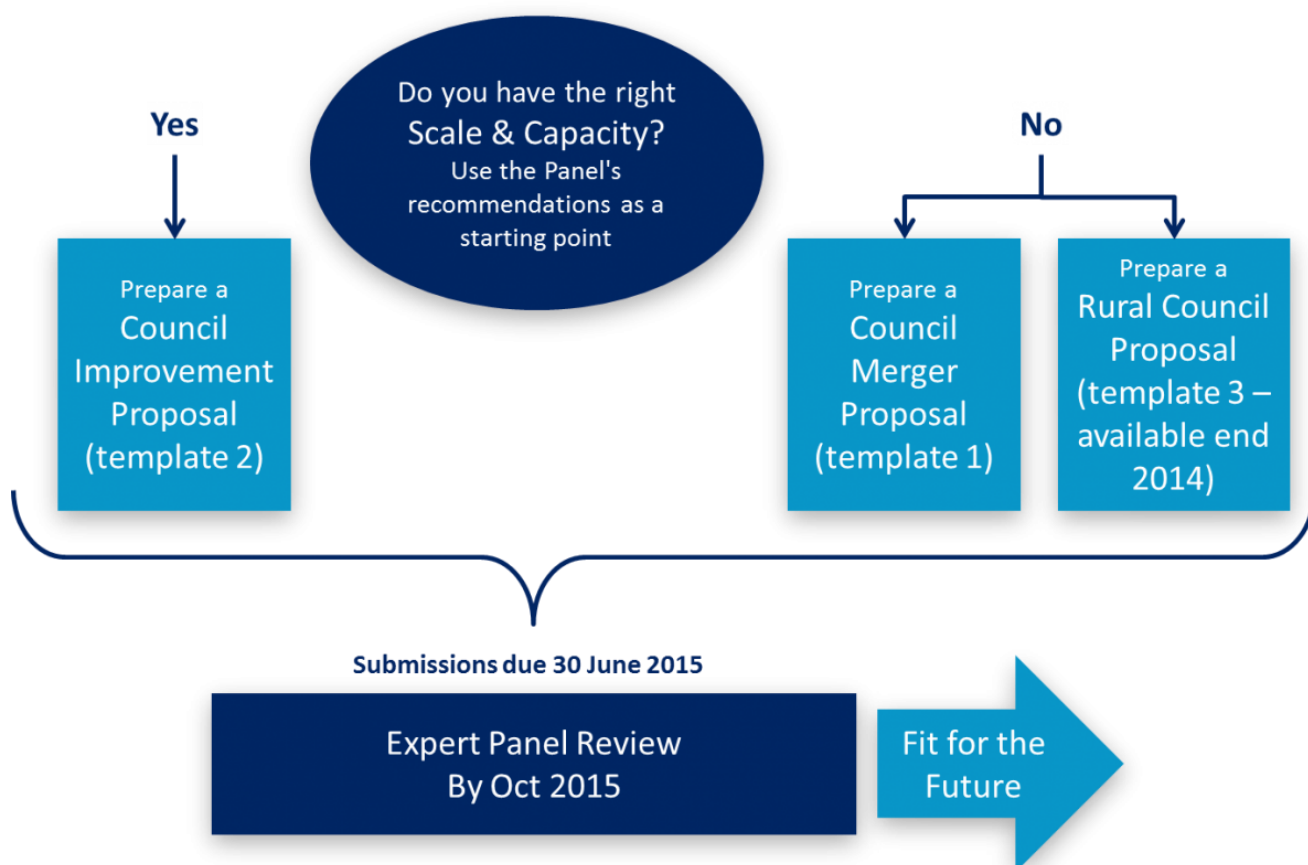
The journey so far...

This is where we are up to





Fit for the Future Process



The above flowchart outlines the path Councils can follow to submit an application. In Urana's case, based on the Government's considerations of scale and capacity, Council feels it is best suited to prepare a Template 3 application, and highlight the unique challenges facing rural Councils in achieving financial sustainability. There are a range of options available to commit to changes, in order to improve Councils financial position over the longer term.

What does Financial Sustainability mean for Council?

Put simply, a Council needs to be able to responsibly manage its assets, to the levels that are safe, and acceptable to the Community. This includes not only our roads and bridges and footpaths, but our Community based assets such as our Recreation Ground Buildings and Halls.



In Urana Shire's case, it is clearly evident that enormous voluntary efforts ensure our Community Facilities are maintained and improved. In many cases, these facilities were even built by volunteers. The challenge facing Councils is that under Accounting Standards and Codes, Councils are still required to account (in actual dollars) for the depreciation on these assets. We need to significantly improve our annual operational revenue, along with reviewing our expenditure, to meet this depreciation expense.

What have we been doing wrong?

Council has been very well managed for over 106 years, and has a current position of zero external debt (after a minor sewer loan is paid out this year). It also has cash reserves of almost \$6 million dollars. These reserves are required to be maintained for major expenses and commitments, and to enable Council to have a level of liquidity for events such as unseen emergency expenditure. Cash reserves also provide for some revenue from interest on these investments.

The issue now is, at worst, less guaranteed funding likely to be coming from the State and Federal Governments, or at best, no significant increases in this funding. The State Government is requiring Councils to source more revenue from its ratepayers. Most if not all of our neighbouring Councils have either submitted rate rise applications above the rate peg limit (typically in the order of 7 – 10% and higher in some cases). In fact in recent years, the number of applications from rural Councils has risen dramatically in relation to the usual higher number of applications from city Councils. Urana Shire has never applied for a rate increase above the rate peg according to current records.

What is the issue with Councils budgets?

Most if not all rural Councils have balanced their operational budgets each year, or achieved minor surpluses or deficits, **without depreciation**, carried out maintenance as funds allow, and undertaken capital works mostly from grants. The reality is however that costs have increased each year at a higher rate than rate pegging (the State Government sets the amount by which annual rates can be increased – typically 2 – 3%). This has meant the gap between the balanced budget, **excluding depreciation**, and the result including depreciation, has not been able to be bridged. Effectively in real terms, this means our assets are deteriorating.

What assets do Council own?

Council has approximately \$97 million dollars of non-current assets. The bulk of these are our roads. It is difficult to accurately measure the useful life, replacement value, maintenance costs and depreciation values to apply to these classes of assets. There are many different factors that can influence their condition, such as floods and droughts, truck movements including harvest times, and changes in



construction methods and costs. Council also has many other assets such as Community Halls and Recreation Ground Buildings, Houses, and Units/Aged Care flats, and our plant and equipment.



What do we have to do?

Council is required to improve its financial position, including our cash reserves, to show the State Government, that it will be in a position, when required, to replace these assets. It also needs to improve its *year on year* available revenue, to fund the maintenance on these assets as and when needed. Like many smaller Councils with limited staff, the documentation and management of our assets from an administrative point of view, needs to improve. This includes more surveys of the assets, and importantly more conversations with our Community on what are acceptable levels of service.



The ways in which different Councils record their depreciation also varies greatly, and importantly this can sometimes unfairly reflect on the real performance of Council. This Council considers its road network and most other assets to be in a condition that is as good, or better, than its neighbouring Councils. Notwithstanding this, our asset data shows we need to increase our revenue (to then spend on the assets on maintenance and renewal) by figures of up to \$800,000 per annum.

When Councils current rate income is only approximately \$1.7 million, the challenges can be clearly seen. The State Government has indicated however, that it does not expect Councils, especially the small rural ones, to be able to reverse these deficits in one or two years. Council must consult with its Community over the next 12 months particularly, and identify agreed levels of service. Council must also review all of its services, and look at other ways to find further efficiencies.

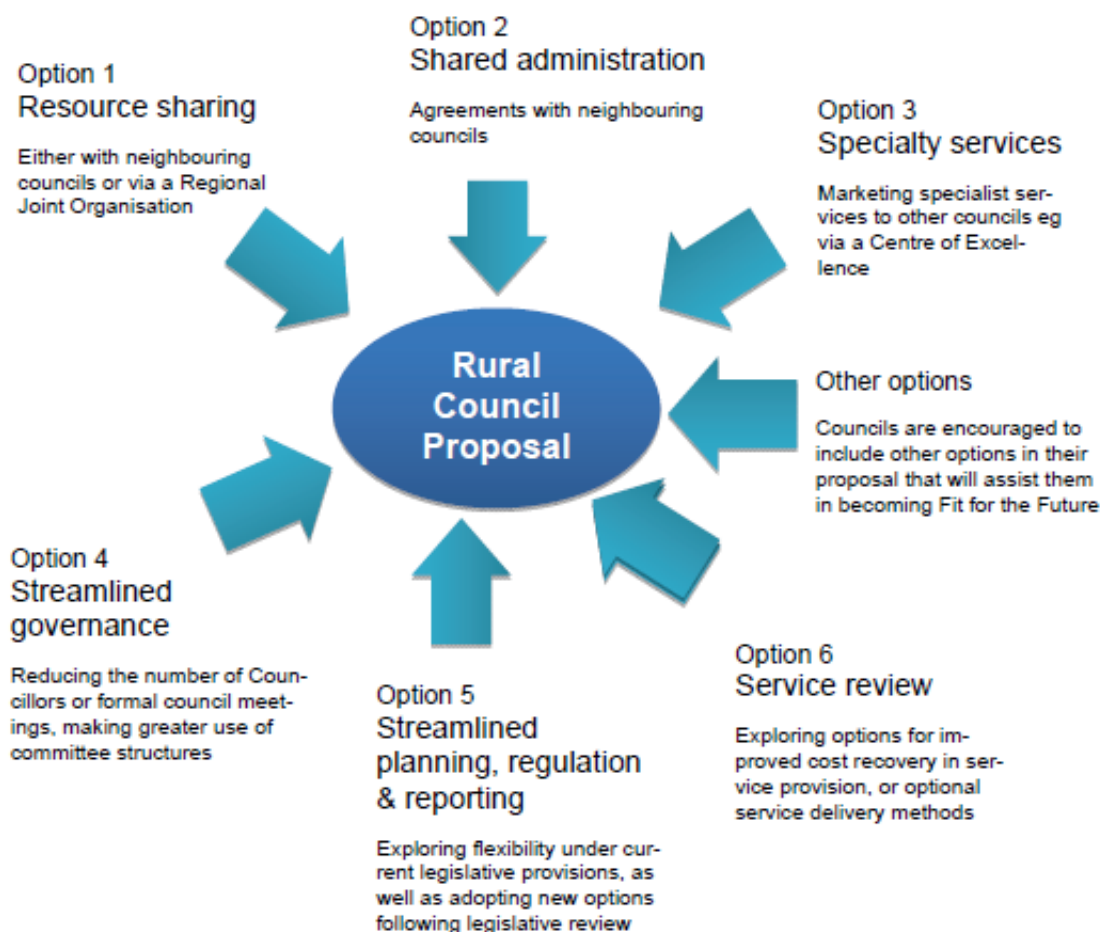
What have we been doing?

Council has for the past two years, undertaken many reviews of its operations. This has included a major organisational review, aimed at looking at ways to improve the overall performance. Council has also initiated a number of other important reviews, including plant/vehicle management that has resulted in savings. Further reviews are currently underway in areas such as buildings, waste management, swimming pools and the Urana Caravan Park. Council is also undertaking a zero budget approach, to totally reconsider every facet of Councils operational expenditure. Council is also constantly looking at ways to improve our ability to resource share with neighbouring Councils.





The “Fit for the Future” template that Council is going to complete, gives a number of options for Council to consider, to show an improvement in performance over the longer term. These are –



Option 1 - Resource Sharing – Council currently has a number of resource sharing arrangements in place, and will look to further increase these as part of our application. Currently resource sharing occurs in many ways including –

- Road Safety Officer – shared with Lockhart and Greater Hume Shire Councils
- Youth Services Officer – shared with Lockhart and Greater Hume Shire Councils
- Ranger (Dog Catcher) Services – Contracted from Greater Hume Shire Council
- Riverina Regional Library – providing Mobile Library Services.

Option 2 – Shared administration – with such a small indoor staff number, Council does not currently see how any savings could be gained from outsourcing or sharing administration with a neighbouring Council.



Council will still consider this to see if there are any opportunities for any clerical or other works to be shared across neighbouring Councils.

Option 3 – Speciality Services – this is a difficult area for Council, as whilst we have some strong individual skills and specialists, again due to a small staff number, their time is not readily available to sell to other Councils, without adversely impacting in some other area and creating shortages. Again this will still be further explored.

Option 4 – Streamlined Governance – Council at this stage has not resolved to reduce the number of Councillors or Council meetings. The overall costs for Councillors and meetings are very low for this Council, in the broad scheme of things, and any changes to this could prove counterproductive. This may be relevant for Councils who carry heavier costs in these areas. Council currently has an effective Committee structure.

Option 5 – Streamlined Planning and Reporting and Regulation – Council is hopeful that with a new Local Government Act to be delivered as part of the review, further reductions will be made to the reporting requirements to reduce the time taken on these tasks. This should free up staff to undertake more important roles, for example in better asset data collection and management.

Option 6 – Service review – As mentioned earlier, this is a major area of focus of the current Council. Areas such as the light vehicle management have already been reviewed and measures have been implemented to improve financial performance. Further strategic service reviews are underway into Waste Management, Swimming Pools, and Buildings Management. These are all expected to significantly improve the Councils financial performance over the longer term.

Other options – Council will also be considering numerous other options and will discuss these with the Community if relevant, as they are further developed.



Community Engagement Timetable

The following timetable details how Council will engage with the Community and the key deadlines for the “Fit for the Future” Application. It is important that everyone has the opportunity to be involved if they want to, and that every person feels that their thoughts and ideas are valued.

Engagement Activity	When	Details
Ensuring the Community are aware of the Local Government reform, and the Independent Panel and now “Fit for the Future” Reports	On-going since the Local Government Independent Review commenced in March 2012	Council has been providing regular updates, including on its submissions in the earlier stages of the reform. This has included over 80 Urana Shire residents attending a meeting in Corowa in 2013, to voice their strong desire for Council to remain an independent Council, to the Chair of the Local Government Independent Review Panel, Mr Graham Sansom.
Regular Newsletter reports (Mayor’s column and Council updates)	On-going each monthly Newsletter	Since the process commenced in 2012, Council has been providing regular updates in its monthly newsletters of major stages.
Media Release 1	Friday 17 April	Outlines Councils current preferred position to standalone.
Information Pack 1 (Hardcopy in major businesses and also online)	Friday 24 April	This will contain an outline of the current position of Council, the options available to it under the “Fit for the Future” process, and the current position of Council. It will also touch on some of the possible changes that Council will be required to submit to the State Government, to give it the best chance of passing the “Fit for the Future” application. Possible YouTube clips/video of key messages.
Community Survey	Released Friday 24 April	Survey distributed to every household within the Shire and also online.
Community Meeting 1	Monday 4 May 7.00 pm	Urana Hall – seeking Community views on Fit for Future
Close of Community Survey 1	Friday 8 May	Review and collate, summary report for May Council workshop and meeting, discuss if we need further more detailed survey and or follow up public meetings
Community Meeting 2	Monday 11 May 7.00 pm	Urana Hall – seeking Community views on Fit for Future
Council Budget and Fit for Future Workshop	Tuesday 12 May 10.00 am	Budget and Fit for Future Workshop
Council Meeting May	Tuesday 12 May 1.30 pm	Includes summary of Community Consultation to date
Media Release 2	Wednesday 13 May	Update on Council reports and Community Feedback
Public Exhibition of Fit for Future application and 2015/16 and Beyond Budgets/Plans	Friday 15 May	28 day public exhibition of “Fit for the Future” Application and Council’s 15/16 and Beyond Budget/Plans

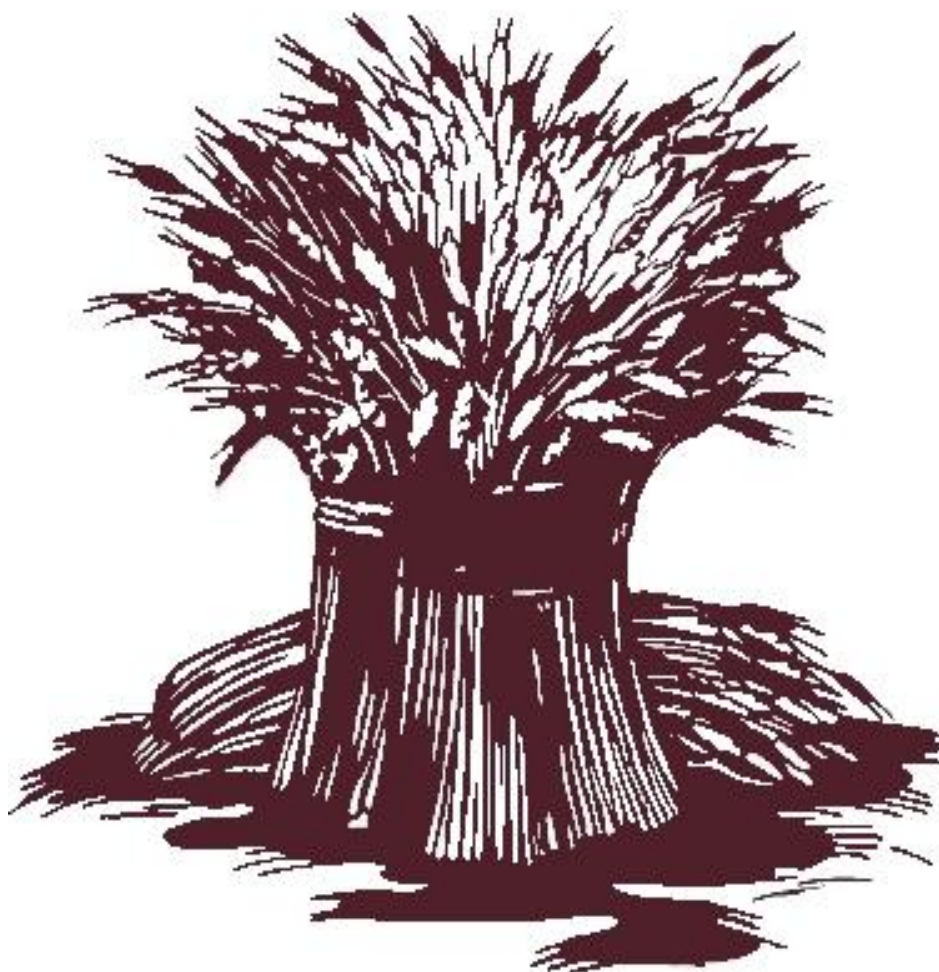


Information Pack 2 (Hardcopy in major businesses and also online)	Friday 15 May	This will contain an outline of the key elements of the “Fit for the Future” application; a summary of what the Community told us, and how that informed the application. Also includes ways to comment on the draft application that is currently on exhibition
Possible Second Survey	Friday 15 May	Follow up to first survey and seeking feedback on draft application
5 Town evening meetings – Budget Road shows	Monday 18 May 7.00 pm – Rand Hall Tuesday 19 May 7.00 pm – Boree Creek Hall Wednesday 20 May 7.00 pm – Oaklands Hall Monday 25 May 7.00 pm – Urana Hall Tuesday 26 May 7.00 pm – Morundah Hotel	Brief snapshot of last 12 months, exhibit major elements of next 12 months and beyond, plans and budgets, and update on “Fit for the Future” process
Council Meeting June	Tuesday 9 June 1.30 pm	Summary report on exhibition process
Close of Exhibition	Friday 12 June 5.00 pm	
Media Release 4	Monday 15 June	Update on “Fit for the Future”
Council Extraordinary Meeting June	Tuesday 23 June 1.30 pm	Consider draft “Fit for the Future” application and adopt, consider submissions, adopt 15/16 and Beyond Budget/Plans
Media Release 5	Wednesday 24 June	Advising of Council’s adoption of Fit for Future application document, key elements
Future Media/Information	Ongoing until October 2015 or Fit for Future application determined	Keeping Community informed of any updates and when the final decision is made by the Government on the “Fit for the Future” Application



Contacting Council

If you have any questions about “Fit for the Future”, please contact Council on 6930 9100 or email mail@urana.nsw.gov.au



URANA SHIRE

In the middle of everywhere...

**URANA SHIRE COUNCIL***In the middle of everywhere*

MEDIA RELEASE – For Immediate Release

OFFICE OF MAYOR

URANA SHIRE COUNCIL 'FIT FOR THE FUTURE'

Urana Shire Councillors and Staff held a number of important workshops recently to consider the State Government's "Fit for the Future" Local Government reform package. The package includes options to either merge with Corowa Shire Council **OR** to remain a stand-alone Rural Council. After assessing the risks and benefits of both options, the Council now intends to consult with the community on its preference to remain a Rural Council.

Mayor, Pat Bourke, said "It is important that our Community become involved in this discussion on the option of merger or rural council. We must have our application on the chosen option to the State Government by 30 June 2015".

The purpose of the reform is primarily to make Councils more financially independent to allow them to better fund the maintenance and renewal of assets in the longer term.

"Let's be clear, insufficient funds for assets in the long-term, does not mean we are broke. Our financial position is sound, it's more a question of how we can afford to keep our assets going in the future", says Mayor Bourke.

Regardless of either option, the application must show how the Council intends to improve its long-term financial performance and be less reliant on external funding from other levels of Government.

Mayor Bourke, commented "Councillors were unanimous in their views that at this time that the best interests of its residents would come from being a locally managed sustainable Rural Council. Local people managing local resources within a unique local context will always produce a better result in the longer-term".

Mayor Bourke said "there were examples in the Queensland and Victorian Government's decisions over many years, to produce a number of larger Councils where there was no clear evidence that the smaller Communities were any better off, and in some cases there were applications for de-amalgamation".

"A NSW State Government 'forced merger' in Urana Shire's case would significantly reduce our resident's representation. We feel it's important that we have a say in the funding and Community development that occurs in our area. It would put a wedge into the ownership



and self-determination that currently exists in our Community. The negative social and economic ramifications that could result, are not worth the risk of assuming a 'bigger is better approach', particularly when we have such strong Communities who are working so hard to continue to make our towns and areas pleasurable for residents and visitors alike".

The Urana Shire Council's next step to be 'Fit for the Future' is to prepare information to enable the Community to be fully consulted on this process, including details on our proposals to increase our available revenue to manage community needs over the longer-term.

The Council is extremely interested in hearing the Community's views on its reform proposal.

Mayor Bourke, says "the future of the Council and the Community is an important discussion, and we encourage everyone to be involved. Please take the time to make your views known".

Information about the reform and the Council's intended application for to remain a Rural Council will be made available next week. Submission/feedback forms to collect your views will soon be available in hard copy from Council's Offices, delivered by post, and also online at www.urana.nsw.gov.au

For more details, please contact the Mayor or General Manager, on the contact details below.

Cr Pat Bourke

Mayor, Urana Shire Council

Phone 0429 208267

Adrian Butler

General Manager, Urana Shire Council

Phone (02) 69309100



Background

The Fit for the Future package, announced in October 2014, is the State Government's response to the earlier reform work including the final report of the 'Independent Local Government Review Panel' released to the Government in October 2013, and to the public in early 2014. For more information on these matters, refer to www.fitforthefuture.nsw.gov.au and www.localgovernmentreview.nsw.gov.au whilst Councils website at www.urana.nsw.gov.au also contains other important information.

Council have been waiting for all of the required information (finally released at the end of January this year) on the details to submit a Rural Council stand-alone application. After carefully analysing this information, and assessing the current position of Council, Council have determined to consult the Community on preparing a stand-alone model, believing that this will be in the best interests of our Communities future.



MEDIA RELEASE – OFFICE OF MAYOR

Becoming 'Fit for the Future' - Putting our Communities first... What the Community is telling us.

Urana Shire Council has received resounding support from the Community for the in-principle decision to choose the 'stand-alone' option and not pursue a merger with Corowa Shire Council. After careful consideration, research and meetings over many months, Council chose this option in-principle, to then gauge the support or otherwise of this approach with the Community. The Community has since responded showing strong support, with over 90% of survey responses favouring this approach. To date more than 270 surveys have been received, and over 70 people have attended public meetings to learn more about becoming 'Fit for the Future'.

Mayor Pat Bourke said "This sends a clear message that a very strong majority of our Community place an enormous importance of the continued existence of this Council". As a Council we are fully aware of the challenges that lay ahead. We have made this very clear to our residents and ratepayers. We believe that they are aware that we will have to implement some changes going forward to shore up our financial sustainability, to convince the Government that we deserve to stand alone to best service our small Communities. These challenges will include reviewing all of our services to find more efficiencies, and making an application in 2015/16 for rate increases above the ordinary allowance, for the following four years. We will also be calling on the State Government, to significantly increase the share of the Federal Assistance Grants for smaller Councils who do not have the luxury of things such as population growth and many other avenues to assist in revenue. On behalf of Council, I would like to sincerely thank the people who have responded to the surveys and attended the meetings. Council looks forward to hearing from you further once the draft 'Fit for the Future' application is publicly exhibited. We expect to finalise the draft application and place it on exhibition on Friday the 22nd May 2015."

A summary of the Community Engagement process will be available late next week, including more details on the survey responses.

For more information about Fit for the Future, please visit www.urana.nsw.gov.au or refer to www.fitforthefuture.nsw.gov.au to learn more on the State Government details on the overall process, or contact the Mayor on 0429 208267 or the General Manager on (02) 69309100.

ADRIAN

EDITORIAL

Merger matters

Every now and then opportunities arise that give our community the chance to change the future.

The talk, and as our mayor says it is just talk, surrounding the possibility of NSW council mergers affecting Corowa Shire is one such opportunity to either fight against or accept change.

This week's public information session is a chance to hear the facts surrounding the draft plan and hear from those who have an interest or an opinion.

The merger is not a done deal by any means and this is the first step in determining where the best interests lie for our council and community.

It is important that, as a community, we take the opportunity to listen, learn and ultimately have our say.

Often in the pages of the newspaper we find ourselves asking our readers to speak up and share their views on an issue — this is another chance to do just that and an important one.

Don't sit back, say nothing and complain about the result.

Letters to the Editor

Amalgamation will destroy small country towns

Recommendations from the Review Panel commissioned by the NSW Government if implemented would decimate country towns.

The minister says there will be no forced amalgamations in the knowledge that a lesser share of the tax dollar makes it near

impossible for them to remain viable.

Under the proposal we are told there will be savings for rate payers but in Greater Hume Shire they have increased with less service.

A similar scenario has occurred with Pastures Protection Boards.

The Urana Shire Council, [area 3,356 Sq kilometres, 5 towns/villages, population 1,261] is located in the "Heart of the Riverina" where

the main source of income is from grain, with huge receivables at Oaklands and Boree Creek servicing farmers 300 Km radius, thence sheep and cattle.

It is the largest employer followed by Urana Hospital. With amalgamation employees would leave the district. This would affect our schools, sporting bodies, food outlets and most business houses.

In a small township every family counts.

The Multi-Purpose Health Service Complex is fully functional with a highly skilled resident Doctor on call 24/7 with regular surgery [bulk billing].

Why destroy it?

We play a vital role; 1 - putting food on the table for our city cousins and 2 - boosting our countries exports.

We pay our taxes and deserve a reasonable quality of life.

To sustain this we must have the essential services the shire provides.

We have endured drought, fires and floods but they would not compare with the devastating effects of some of the review panel proposals if implemented.

We want our shires retained. They will survive provided they receive a fair share of the state's coffers.

Denis Smith

PAGE 3

Hear the concept — mayor

Corowa Shire residents are being urged to attend the community regional hearing meeting in the Corowa Memorial Hall tomorrow, Thursday, May 30 from 6.00pm to 8.00pm regarding the shire's future make-up.

"I encourage people to come along and hear the

concept. Merger is only part of the dialogue," Corowa Shire Mayor Fred Longmire told The Free Press.

"People feel it's a done deal, that we're going to merge with Albury tomorrow."

The draft plan also mentions the possibility of Corowa, Berrigan, Jerilderie and Urana Shires merging as a concept idea.

"Nothing is set in concrete," the mayor said. "There's a lot of dialogue in the report by the Independent Review Panel."

"Not all of it's good. Not all of it's bad."

Representatives from neighbouring shires, as well as Independent Review Panel members, will be in attendance.

Before the 6.00pm meeting, Corowa Shire

Council representatives will be attending a workshop in Albury, from 1.30pm to 4.30pm, along with other councils' representatives in the Upper Murray Councils Group.

At Corowa council's monthly meeting last week, all councillors indicated they would attend the Albury meeting. "It's a show of strength

all councillors attending," Cr Longmire said.

He said people are "jumping to conclusions about outcomes" regarding Corowa Shire's future composition.

"People need to look positively and hear from various people," Cr Longmire said.

"Corowa was lucky to have tomorrow night's meeting. I'm hoping the Memorial Hall is full."

ART-ADRIAN
F. Dennis

Letters to the editor Opinion c/o *The Land*, PO Box 999, North Richmond, NSW, 2754 or email letters.theland@ruralpress.com. Letters should include a contact telephone number and be no longer than 250 words. Submissions may be edited.

THE LAND | Thursday, May 23, 2013 **OPINION 23**

No room for giant councils – or LLS areas

PEPPERCORN

Peter Austin



DENIS Smith of Urana, in his letter to *The Land* published last week, raises an important issue when he warns of the implications of a new round of country shire amalgamations.

The State government has given assurances that no forced amalgamations will occur in the wake of the Local Government Review Panel's latest report, but as Mr Smith wryly observes, there are more ways than one to kill a cat: starve the unwanted shires of funds and they will have no option.

What everyone needs to realise is that local councils are not just about bureaucratic efficiency and service delivery: they are also a vital expression of a country community's identity.

When a local council is disbanded, the town and district which once constituted its administrative

bailliwick lose something of their stature, their self-respect and their sense of relevance.

Some would argue the previous round of local government amalgamations in 2003-4, which reduced the number of NSW councils from 177 to 152, already went too far and created some unwieldy and illogical territories.

In my old stamping-ground of Crookwell, the former Crookwell Shire Council was merged in 2004 with parts of the Gunning, Mulwaree and Yass shires to form the present Upper Lachlan Shire

amalgamation: it became the headquarters of the enlarged shire, with added jobs to boot. Gunning, on the other hand, lost something of itself.

The report states there is "simply not enough revenue or sufficient numbers of skilled staff to maintain 152 councils across NSW", and that's probably unarguable, as things stand.

Surely, though, there is scope for more pooling of costly resources like skilled specialist staff and machinery within a regional county

What everyone needs to realise is that local councils are not just about bureaucratic efficiency and service delivery: they are also a vital expression of a country community's identity.

Council, whose boundaries extend from Mt Werong in the Blue Mountains to just short of Lake George – a vast area for such an intensively-settled, topographically challenging region.

But at least Crookwell was a winner out of that

council framework, leaving existing councils with their meaningful geographic boundaries, their local shire offices and maintenance staff, and locally elected councillors.

The issue of protecting local identity in rural areas is one

that goes well beyond the shire amalgamation debate. It has reared its head also in the determination of boundaries for the new Local Land Services (LLS) districts.

If the majority recommendation from the LLS stakeholder reference panel is adopted, the Central Tablelands would become subsumed under a vast Central West region stretching to Nyngan and Coonamble.

This surely makes no sense at all, and one hopes the minister will heed the like concerns of NSW Farmers, the Local Government Association and the Livestock Health and Pest Authorities when making her final decisions.

The intensive and climatically discrete nature of the Central Tablelands demands that its "local land services" be appropriately located, focused and badged.

It will be bad enough for farmers to have to pay new LLS rates for services now funded (rightly) by taxpayers, without losing their geographical sense of place in the process.

NSW FARMERS
VIEW

Ed Storey

Wool committee chairman



New plan for OJD

THE Australian sheep industry has agreed on revised arrangements for the management of Ovine Johne's Disease (OJD).

The National OJD Management Plan 2013-18, which comes into effect on July 1, enables producers to take a risk-management approach to their farm biosecurity.

The plan was developed by the Sheepmeat Council of Australia and WoolProducers Australia following extensive consultation with producers, industry and State governments.

Central to the plan is a new national Sheep Health Statement (SHS), which is the most important disease management tool buyers can use.

The SHS has been designed for adoption nationwide and includes recognition of OJD vaccination,

Please show us the money

'We'd just be outback pads'

BY TAMMY MILLS

URANA real estate agent Denis Smith was candid last night speaking against moves to see his shire swallowed up by a municipal merger.

"If you continue to pursue our small shires you will reduce them to the status of outback pads for the convenience of grey nomads on their annual migration north for the winter," he told a visiting panel at Corowa Memorial Hall.

About 100 people were there to have their say on the independent local government review panel's investigation into merging NSW councils.

It has proposed a merge of Corowa, Urana, Berri and Jerilderie shires — and last night, most of the audience came from Urana.

That was not surprising, given the shire and its council and mayor had strongly worded its oppo-

sition to a merger earlier this year.

Mr Smith said a merger would mean smaller towns such as Urana losing out.

"We have five towns all with their parks and gardens, sports grounds, halls, cemeteries, swimming pools, pre-school, library — all to be maintained," he said.

"Do you really think linked up with a major shire that service would be maintained?"

"That school bus runs out the back of Morundah or Boree Creek would it get consideration?"

"There is only one winner with mergers and that is where the headquarters are based."

Panel chairman Graham Sansom said the merger proposal was just that — a proposal — and the government had said it would not force mergers.

Submissions to the panel's Future Directions report can be made until June 28.



● Local government NSW president Keith Rhoades makes a point at the councils workshop in Albury yesterday. Picture: MARK JESSER

■ Council chief's advice to O'Farrell

BY DAVID JOHNSTON

LOCAL Government NSW president Keith Rhoades has challenged the state government to provide financial incentives for councils willing to merge.

And he predicted there would be no move on mergers until after the 2015 state election.

Cr Rhoades, of Coffs Harbour, heads the organisation resulting from the recent merger of the Local Government Association and the Shires Association.

He was in Albury yesterday for a workshop of southern Riverina councils following the recent release of findings by the independent local government review panel which put amalgamations back on the table.

The workshop was one of 37 being conducted around the state including 29 in country areas.

Cr Rhoades urged coun-

cils to keep an open mind and reminded them the O'Farrell government has still got a commitment of no forced amalgamations.

"But if councils want to talk to one another about some benefits of getting together, the government has to give incentives," he said.

"Just by changing a boundary the problems won't go away.

"There have to be financial incentives."

Cr Rhoades said it was always beneficial for councils to analyse how they were performing.

"We know the effects of rate pegging have had over the past 35 years in NSW," he said.

"It has not only crippled local government, but has been the catalyst that has crippled NSW from an economic point of view."

About 60 councillors including Albury mayor Alice Glachan and senior staff from local councils attended the workshop.

[Previous Story](#)

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Article rank 25 Mar 2015 : Yarrowonga Chronicle BY ROBERT MUIR

A Corowa/Urana scenario

Very early indications are that Corowa Shire Council has a positive approach to restructure and should preferably have an additional smaller partner like Urana according to completed 'Have your Say' survey forms received by council as at March 17.

But it will be up to the NSW State Government to decide the future of the state's 152 councils. A Government appointed panel believes it "a good idea" if Corowa and Urana Shires amalgamate.

Cr Daryl Davey enquired at Corowa Shire Council's monthly meeting on March 17 about the make-up of councillors and demographics, should that merger occur, and said Urana representatives have negative thoughts in the event of amalgamation.

"We have six Corowabased (town-based), councillors if you like, including the mayor, and three 'outriggers' (two Howlong, one Mulwala). What would be the plan for fair representation?" Cr Davey said.

Council's General Manager Chris Gillard said Urana's biggest fear is losing jobs in the township and the belief that in eight to 10 years there'll be no staff living in town.

"I think we'd have nine councillors in an unsubdivided municipality with perhaps four 'outriggers' which would include a Urana representative," he said.

However, the General Manager emphasised it is far too soon to predict with confidence. Any future shire make-up would present the growing Mulwala with an opportunity to revert to its previous long standing arrangement of having two councillors.

Cr Fiona Schirmer mentioned that Urana, unlike Corowa Shire, has ridings and if an enlarged shire was unsubdivided, Urana residents would feel "very uncomfortable about it in that they may not get representation". "That would be cruel."

Mr Gillard added that if such a merger and an unsubdivided shire took place, he believes the voting community would ensure Urana representation, whether that be total Urana polling for their own candidate or a combination of Urana and votes from elsewhere.

"When we get all the results of all the surveys we might meet with Urana again," he said.

<http://yarrowongachronicle.newspaperdirect.com/epaper/showarticle.aspx?article=61f...> 26/03/2015

* Community Information Sessions in Corowa, Howlong and Mulwala on March 2, 3 and 4 indicated a preference by the communities for a stand alone Corowa Shire, in its current format.

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Council merger not wanted

The public meeting held at the Corowa Memorial Hall on Thursday, May 30 to inform the community of future shire options gave only one clear indication – people do not want a council merger.

JASON MARKS June 5, 2013 9:33am

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eURHYTHMICS
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"If you continue to pursue our small shires you will reduce them to the status of outback pads for the convenience of grey nomads on their annual migration north for the winter," said Urana real estate agent Denis Smith.

"With respect to members of the panel, all we ask is that you exercise common sense."

This concern was echoed by others at the meeting, including speakers from Mulwala, Howlong, Oaklands and Corowa.

Oaklands farmer Anthony Sandral expressed his concern at the loss of employment that would come from a merger.

"The Urana Shire is the biggest employment body in the shire," he said.

"These councillors live in the community."

Mr Sandral suggested that councils and governments should "celebrate our differences" and fight to "keep the doors open".

Another concern raised by former Corowa mayor Gary Poidevin was the boundaries of the merger, which suggested Corowa would combine with Urana, Berrigan and Jerilderie.

"Why go back inland?" he asked.

"We have been classed along with Albury and Hume for the past 50 years."

Speaking with experience in mergers from when the Corowa Shire took in Howlong, Mr Poidevin said the cost involved in creating new shires would be difficult to cover.

"Not unless there is new money out there somewhere," he said.

"There are no facts that these changes will benefit the towns."

yourcomments



viewlatestedition

<p>The image shows the front page of the 'Benalla Ensign' newspaper. The headline reads 'Freak storm hits'. Below the headline is a photograph of a stormy landscape with trees and a building. The newspaper's masthead 'Benalla Ensign' is at the top. At the bottom, there are advertisements for 'Benalla Toyota' and 'Benalla Nissan'.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Benalla Cobram Finley Corowa Deniliquin Echuca Yarrawonga Seymour Heathcote Kyabram Shepparton Tatura Rochester
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News

Survey prefers 'power of one'

BY DAVID JOHNSTON

COROWA Shire has been sent a strong message from residents to cease merger talks and remain a standalone council.

Findings of a recent shire-wide survey found 70 per cent of respondents supported the council submitting a standalone option to the NSW government which is assessing the viability of local government areas.

Also, 46 per cent of respondents saw amalgamations as a threat and if a merger had to occur, those who responded to the survey favoured joining with a smaller council such as Urana.

The survey was conducted last month and the findings will be tabled at today's council meeting.

More than 280 people completed the survey after a combined 177 people attended public meetings in Corowa, Howlong and Mulwala.

The majority of respondents resided in Corowa (42.5 per cent) followed by Howlong (23.05) and Mulwala (18.9).

Corowa has been the

most pro-active council in seeking a merger but the likelihood of any amalgamations taking place in southern NSW without government intervention is fading fast.

Urana Shire has re-affirmed its desire to also remain standalone.

Mayor Pat Bourke said a forced merger case would significantly reduce resident representation.

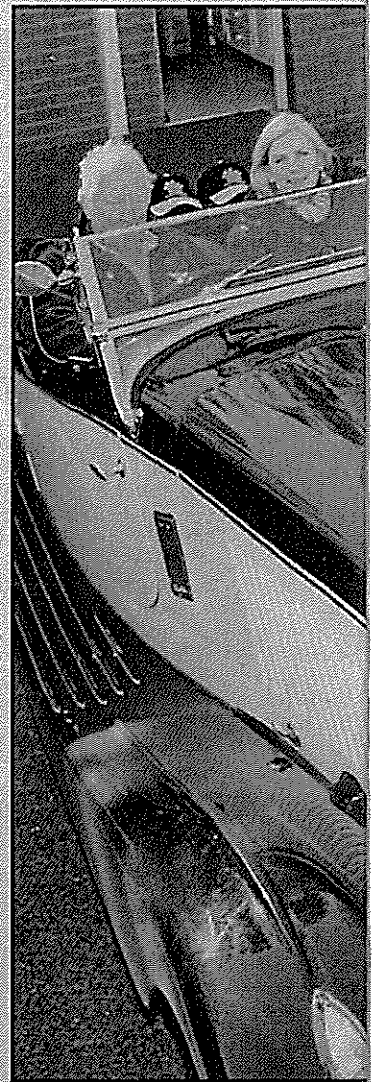
"Let's be clear, insufficient funds for assets in the long term, does not mean we are broke," he said.

"Our financial position is sound. It's more a question of how we can afford to keep our assets going in the future."

Greater Hume Shire is also committed to remaining a standalone.

But mayor Heather Wilton said the council understood the government's message about "no change was not an option".

"Despite significant challenges faced following the 2004 amalgamation, council has since built a strong record of achievement," Cr Wilton said.



● SMOOTH SAILING: Mike and Barbara

Meet the

BY SARAH DEAN

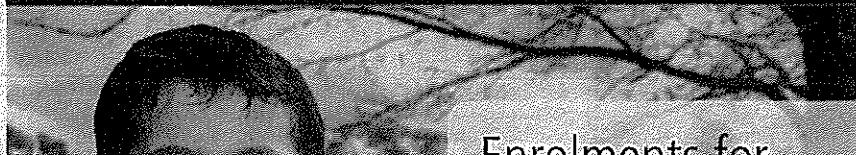
HEADS turned in Beechworth yesterday as 50 Bentley cars — with a value of about \$50million — rolled into town.

Many were older models with the oldest dating back to 1923.

Organised by the Bentley Drivers Club of Western Australia, the tour started on April 18

and finished with drinks at the work the Melbourne to Derby, Barbara Hotham to read after Hotham. "We absolutely while I

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PUTTING OUR COMMUNITIES FIRST - 'FIT FOR THE FUTURE' COMMUNITY SURVEY

The Council regards your input into our 'Fit for the Future' process as extremely important. Please take the time to complete and mail back this survey to Council by Friday 8 May 2015

Q1. Please select one of the following

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I live in Urana | <input type="checkbox"/> I live in Rand |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I live in Boree Creek | <input type="checkbox"/> I live in a rural area/locality outside these towns but in Urana Shire |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I live in Morundah | <input type="checkbox"/> I live outside the Urana Shire |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I live in Oaklands | |

Q2. How important is your local council to you?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Very important | <input type="checkbox"/> Not very important |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Important | <input type="checkbox"/> Not important at all |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat important | <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure |

Q3. Are you aware of the NSW State Government's 'Fit for the Future' proposals for the reform of local government across NSW?

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|

If you are interested in learning more, please visit the 'Fit for the Future' website www.fitforthefuture.nsw.gov.au or provide an email or postal address below and we will send you an information sheet.

Q4. Have you read the Council information package including the recent media release (see Council's April newsletter or visit www.urana.nsw.gov.au) regarding the current challenges of the 'Fit for the Future' proposals and the future of Urana Shire?

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|

Q5. In the Council's information package the State Government proposes two options for Urana Shire under 'Fit for the Future'. Which do you support?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Amalgamation with another Council | <input type="checkbox"/> Remain as a stand-alone rural council |
|--|--|

Why? _____

Q6. If amalgamation was to be considered by this Council at all, which option would you prefer for Urana Shire?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Merge with Corowa Shire Council | <input type="checkbox"/> Merge with another similar (population/land area/main industries) council (e.g. Urana, Jerilderie or Lockhart) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Merge with several councils to make a larger regional area council (e.g. Urana, Corowa, Berrigan and Jerilderie) | <input type="checkbox"/> Merge with a large regional City council (e.g. Urana and its neighbours all merging with Albury or Wagga) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I don't support any amalgamation | <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure |

If Urana Shire is to remain a stand-alone rural council we must submit an application that proposes changes to strengthen our ability to adequately meet the needs of our communities. This will include reviewing services and looking at other opportunities for increasing revenue, including increasing rates. It is important to note that even if we become part of a larger merged council, service reviews and rate rises are still likely to occur as our neighbouring councils must also prove they are 'Fit for the Future' through reducing costs and increasing revenues. At this stage the State Government has not announced what happens to Council's whose applications do not pass "Fit for the Future"

Q9. What communication methods do you consider are the most effective way for us to communicate important issues to our residents? Please number in order of importance, with 1 as the most important and 5 as the least important.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Council newsletter | <input type="checkbox"/> Media releases |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Council website | <input type="checkbox"/> Community meetings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Council Facebook page | |

Q10. Do you have any further comments you wish to make?

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Please insert your name and contact details below as this will add to the strength of our application. This will also ensure that survey responses are genuine. All personal details will be kept confidential and responses (with any personal information deleted) may be used as part of the Council's 'Fit for the Future' application, for example as quotes. Please indicate if you do not wish this to occur.

I do/do not authorise any comments I have made in this survey to be used for the 'Fit for the Future' application.

Name:

Mailing address:

Phone:

Email:

PLEASE FOLD WITH REPLY PAID BEING VISIBLE AND POST BACK TO COUNCIL BY FRIDAY 8 MAY 2015



URANA SHIRE COUNCIL

In the middle of everywhere

NO POSTAGE REQUIRED

URANA SHIRE COUNCIL

REPLY PAID NO 55

URANA NSW 2645

GOING FORWARD WITH PRIDE



Attachment F– examples of survey comments made

General survey comments made

- 1) Urana has a very bright future and it's important for us to maintain our autonomy for our future progress and development,
- 2) Good things come in small packages – a trade secret in Urana Shire,
- 3) Keep our money in the shire,
- 4) Rates– if merge with another larger Council whose rates are a lot higher than Urana's – would not be happy,
- 5) Don't merge,
- 6) For us to remain Fit for the Future amalgamations will not work,
- 7) If have to merge prefer Narrandera, Have to stay in the west, Won't get a say if go with Corowa.
- 8) Have we had further meetings with Berrigan & Jerilderie?
- 9) Prefer communication by phone,
- 10) Get out and have a go,
- 11) Yes, just leave us alone,
- 12) We want to remain as we are, stand-alone rural Council.
Without our Shire you are condemning our businesses and our local community.
- 13) I think the Urana Shire Council is going well & I think if it was to amalgamate I don't think we would see to many road graders on our rural roads,
- 14) Our Shire should or must stand alone.
- 15) Without our Shire there is no community or businesses.
- 16) Urana has the Hospital and a very good Doctor, aged care facilities, monthly newsletter (see for activities), caravan park for visitors, aquatic centre for boating & fishing, football oval for



football, basketball courts, museum, airstrip, bowling club, hotel, swimming pool, IGA grocers, Tennis Courts, Post Office, Police Station, Fuel Depot, Stock Agent, Chemist, Sale Yards, catholic school, state school, news agency, Billabong Agriculture and 9 hole golf course.

- 17) Population is declining which is impacting on Council and services.
- 18) Would like the Council to be stand-alone but accept this may not be possible in the future.
- 19) Happy with Shire. Always had a good relationship.
- 20) Rand Facebook page, I think we will be lost in a larger Council.
- 21) Things work better in a smaller Council, If Urana was to merge with say Corowa, it seems illogical. Corowa would be the main office & it would be on the edge of the merged Shires. Such a long way to service our area in total.
- 22) If we are forced to merger, it needs to be with a rural Shire, similar issues, similar outcomes.
- 23) Can representation be based on area instead of only population.
- 24) How will our views be heard,
- 25) Very happy as is,
- 26) USC has proved very efficient and economical and is always there to help with emergencies.
- 27) Unsure boundary realignments,
- 28) I love Urana Shire, don't change it,
- 29) I think that if an amalgamation were to occur, which I don't support, it would be better to go with other Councils which are farming not which are town based Councils e.g. Corowa,
- 30) Amalgamations will lose efficiencies
- 31) Good wishes for success,



- 32) Yeah don't destroyed the town,
- 33) Fight to keep a stand-alone Council please,
- 34) Merge with Narrandera if any.
- 35) Bigger does not mean better. The Urana Shire is big enough now without any more,
- 36) If Shire amalgamate it will lose it identity along with maintenance, support and likely employment of staff,
- 37) No, all live in peace,
- 38) What happens to other services in the town. E.g. Hospital,
- 39) Merge with similar Councils Lockhart if we have to,
- 40) Prefer Berrigan Shire, as it is well funded and well organised, But not Corowa, as Corowa is too close to Albury and subject to outside business.
- 41) We want our Shire to focus on local interests and look after the locals. Berrigan is the best choice in that regards.
- 42) To merge with which Shire, please consider the local interests and select the best one to benefit all locals in,
- 43) If we were to amalgamate we would lose our identity & there would be less employment in the Shire which is a major concern.
- 44) Thank you for keeping us all informed. I was also impressed with the Fit for the Future meeting held on Monday. Very informative.
- 45) Thank you for keeping us all informed on what is happening,
- 46) Perhaps there are some cost cutting methods the Council could make.
- 47) Be Ready. Have a plan/list in place as to why we would be better off a Rural Council.
- 48) Bigger Councils can share machinery and services.
- 49) Well done to the Council for fighting for our existence,



- 50) There needs to be a greater resource sharing & the use of contractor to do major works.
- 51) The number of Councillors could be reduced to 6 or 7.
- 52) Urana cannot justify the cost of the modern equipment to satisfactorily construct roads for modern transport.
- 53) Amalgamations will not be of benefit to Urana Shire Council,
- 54) Urana going forward with pride,
- 55) I would prefer the Shire to be broken up rather than entire amalgamation i.e. Morundah to Narrandera, Oaklands to Berrigan,
- 56) Recycle bins in Oaklands please
- 57) Once if Council amalgamates it will lose its identity and probably lose quite a few staff etc,
- 58) All organisations should be subject to an efficiency review from above to gain the most sustainable communities from the rate revenue raised,
- 59) Despite some assurances, first movers will be winners,
- 60) Councillors would assess the best option and support this publicly with appropriate arguments.
- 61) Congratulations on the great work Council continues to do along with the added workload associated with "Fit for the Future",
- 62) We need community awareness & community strengths by working together for a stronger future by supporting each other in our town. Example camp draft/tractor pull/ blue light for youth,
- 63) We as a community need to stand & support each other.
- 64) By farm produce & community involvement.
- 65) I do believe Councils have addressed costs, labour, productivity, capital used in plant, underutilised plant.
- 66) Need to make some courageous decisions.
- 67) Do not waste money trying to fight the State Govt, Amalgamate intelligently, Keep standing alone if you can, I



appreciate the effort Urana Shire Council is making to keep our Shire viable in these challenging times

- 68) Thank you to all the staff for all services, the best.
- 69) Please fight to maintain our fantastic Shire. Will never be as efficient as it is now if we join another,
- 70) They are trying to break our resolve and that won't happen.
- 71) Congratulation to Ade and staff for putting up a good fight. Hang in there.
- 72) We need the voice in the community - not in the city. We need to look after the country folk
- 73) I believe that if amalgamation has to take place the Urana shire should be split between Corowa and Narrandera, Lockhart and possible Greater Hume, so that people living in the various towns/districts can relate to the Shire most relevant for them.
- 74) Over staffing in Council Offices should be looked into
- 75) As a stand alone Council/Shire we will need to have an even share of Urana Shire coffers
- 76) The issue at State Government is not too many local government areas but they are under resourced and can't do all they need to do with what they are given. Fund them what they need.
- 77) Well done for standing up for us for Urana Shire residents who have never wanted to be amalgamated, we would be a ghost town.
- 78) There will be no town if we merge, bigger does not mean better,
- 79) The shire is keeping our five townships alive.
- 80) Please make sure you tell the government to leave us as we are. We do not want to amalgamate.



- 81) Just leave things as they are. There's no need to fix things that aren't broken, Never merge with a large city but if forced to merge make it with Shire of similar interest such as Jerilderie,
- 82) If to merger merge with another that has similar population, land, industries Jerilderie or Lockhart.

Samples of "Why not merge" Comments made in the surveys (where names were given)

- 1) *No benefits to amalgamate,*
- 2) *No Service, Reduced services,*
- 3) *No identity,*
- 4) *Retain the local in local government,*
- 5) *Retain services,*
- 6) *No financial or service delivery benefits for amalgamation,*
- 7) *Loss of identity and services,*
- 8) *Shire is important to our structure - If it goes so will Hospital and doctor.*
- 9) *There is no thought for rural living, population at all.*
- 10) *If we amalgamate we would be forgotten.*
- 11) *Shire covers a large area.*
- 12) *Council representation will be lost.*
- 13) *Service levels will decline and employment loss from town - All to detriment of town and lifestyle of residents,*
- 14) *To maintain services and quality of services for our community on all levels,*
- 15) *Lack of services if amalgamation goes ahead.*
- 16) *Loss of jobs.*
- 17) *Keep our town going, keep our services, people, shops, post office and sporting activities.*
- 18) *Maintain services and a local economy very important to local business i.e. local contractors v outside of district,*



- 19) *Spend our money here in the Shire & not somewhere else,*
- 20) *So that we can retain the facilities we have at the standard we do now,*
- 21) *Retain our identity & live up to our motto as a Shire "Going forward with pride"*
- 22) *No efficient with administration officers & workforce living in Shire as well as assisting our towns to remain viable and to many Shire jobs will be lost and I think we will miss out financially for our grants*
- 23) *Because big is not always best,*
- 24) *Good decision on managing local resources, resident needs and sustainability decisions are best made by people living & working in the area,*
- 25) *Because the rates will go up and tip fees,*
- 26) *We are very small town and they might not bother with us being so small,*
- 27) *If merge with another Shire they may not be interested about us or in our best interest,*
- 28) *Purely I believe if amalgamate we will be on the fringe & will receive minimal service,*
- 29) *No sense in amalgamation in the country areas. Doesn't do anything, I do not believe a larger Shire could service Urana better than our present Council.*
- 30) *We have worked hard to keep our community viable, If we lose our Council, Hospital will go Doctor, Chemist and Supermarket,*
- 31) *For the future and survival of Urana we must remain as a stand-alone Rural Council.*
- 32) *Our Shire is the backbone of our community.*
- 33) *Without our Shire this town will suffer immensely,*



- 34) *To retain our identity and independence. Survival of our five towns and keeping all our local staff employed in our town.*
- 35) *To have more personal knowledge and interest in our Shire roads and infrastructure,*
- 36) *Financial, community feeling, community accessibility to Council,*
- 37) *Council assistance to local organisations,*
- 38) *I believe that if Urana amalgamated with say Corowa, it would be the finish of Urana as a town. All of the Council staff would lose their jobs & Urana would become a ghost town,*
- 39) *No benefits in amalgamation, Why would Corowa care about our loss of Council jobs, Like out of sight out of mind,*
- 40) *I feel we would be forgotten about if we merged and our town would die as there would be no incentive for people to come here and live,*
- 41) *Because Urana Shire Council is our heart and soul of our community,*
- 42) *We are a very efficient and well run organisation, Other Shires should use this model, how a Shire should function,*
- 43) *With the right Fed and State support the community of Urana Shire Council will be best supported by Urana Shire standing alone,*
- 44) *We are in the middle of everywhere, halfway between Melbourne & Sydney on the tracking route for Truckies,*
- 45) *Urana Council handles Urana, Oaklands, Rand, Morundah and Boree Creek with good Council & staff,*
- 46) *Recycling of cardboard by two volunteers,*
- 47) *To keep locals in charge of this area instead of outside influence - What is good for their area may not suit,*
- 48) *Distances to big if we'll amalgamate, we are a small town,*



- 49) *Local remains local i.e. jobs & investment in local amenities, Rand will be forgotten if we are amalgamation,*
- 50) *We will be lost in a bigger Council.*
- 51) *It's not broke don't fix it,*
- 52) *Because Boree Creek is a village not a big city or town & different laws apply (example) I, being victimised & hassled because I own a rooster & it annoys my neighbour (who is from the city) 12 mths ago (not on),*
- 53) *Because this Council has managed to serve it's residents without outside interference to date so why change what doesn't need any change now, No benefit in amalgamation,*
- 54) *Loss of services due to size of Shire,*
- 55) *We think the motto says it all "Going forward with Pride",*
- 56) *To keep everything we have, I believe we will lose services, employment and our facilities will not be a priority of a larger amalgamated Council,*
- 57) *So local people like me can keep their part time jobs (the Pool) in the local area,*
- 58) *Possible loss of local services (doc, hospital) if amalgamation,*
- 59) *Council services will suffer, As the owner of a business in Urana I feel amalgamation with another Shire (e.g. Corowa) would detrimental to the people & businesses in Urana & Shire and we would lose services,*
- 60) *I am against amalgamation because past examples show small community's wishes are ignored by the greater number of organisers from the larger community,*
- 61) *Would like to remain independent and retain control of our Shire & communities,*
- 62) *Keep it local, No gain all pain,*
- 63) *Our views and representation will be lost in a bigger less rural Shire,*



- 64) *Our roads, services will be over looked as less important the further we are from Council base, We don't want to lose our independence,*
- 65) *Because we are better and stronger on our own,*
- 66) *Smaller towns would be non existent if we get into the bigger fish bowl,*
- 67) *Rates are an issue,*
- 68) *If the area of the Shire becomes too large, less attention will be payed towards the smaller towns, resulting in little improvements,*
- 69) *Because we do not want to lose our independence,*
- 70) *Local services is good,*
- 71) *Larger Council takes service,*
- 72) *Sustainability, Size, population, representation of Councillors,*
- 73) *Best representation,*
- 74) *Maintain jobs,*
- 75) *USC has proved to be economically sound keeping closely touch with citizens & aware of immediate needs of the people in times of need,*
- 76) *Employment in the Shire does depend on local Council, over the years a huge asset to the population,*
- 77) *Keep the town alive, keep the employment in the town,*
- 78) *Don't believe we will be fairly represented in a bigger Shire,*
- 79) *Our Shire would be taken over by a more populated Shire,*
- 80) *We will have a stronger focus on the welfare and day to day runnings of our local communities,*
- 81) *We will also have a greater say in where budget are allocated,*
- 82) *Loss of services, loss of representation, loss of identity,*
- 83) *Local people will do more for their Council if it is their responsibility,*



- 84) *Our Council closer relationship with residents, and all look after each, worry about balance of equity,*
- 85) *It would be hard to attract workers to the town and also no would want to come to Urana to live,*
- 86) *Because the rural communities need their local Council,*
- 87) *If we amalgamate the money and other opportunities will be spent elsewhere and not where it is needed,*
- 88) *We need to retain the personalised representation delivered by Urana Shire rather than having a smaller representation if part of another larger local Govt area, Local means local,*
- 89) *The services provided by Urana Shire are excellent & tailored to the needs of the small rural towns & villages it services,*
- 90) *I strongly believe that we would be better to run our own Shire & are very concerned that it would be to the detriment of our town if we were to amalgamate with another Shire,*
- 91) *I definitely are not in favour of amalgamation,*
- 92) *Our little town would not survive. We don't want to lose our identify.*
- 93) *We don't want to lose employment,*
- 94) *Some savings may be made for the state government in administration but that would not justify the loss of outdoor services and our Shire's identity,*
- 95) *Value the local access to and support of a local council to local issues in our community,*
- 96) *Could affect businesses, jobs etc,*
- 97) *No Shire can see no jobs in this area down the near future, also hospital where I work - I feel with no Shire support it would be effected as well big time!,*
- 98) *I think it is important Urana keeps its identity hard won facilities & plans for the future - Amalgamation would seriously jeopardise this,*



- 99) *I feel it is essential that all decisions made regarding allocation of funding, rates payments are done with the local community as a priority,*
- 100) *Easier access to elected representatives,*
- 101) *Services delivered more quickly & equally,*
- 102) *Keeps local in local Gov't,*
- 103) *Amalgamation won't work,*
- 104) *Don't change something that isn't broken - Shire do a great job the way things are now,*
- 105) *If Urana Council is merged we will lose services and in turn population - This would result in towns and communities basically shutting down,*
- 106) *Our Council has always provided for our community,*
- 107) *You have always been supportive to our projects,*
- 108) *It would give more flexible Council,*
- 109) *There needs to be a number of changes but still retain a stand-alone Council,*
- 110) *If Urana were to amalgamate with 2 other Shires e.g. Jerilderie & Lockhart Councillors would be reduced to 2 for the whole of Urana Shire instead of 9 & may be less on a voting scale because of population in Urana,*
- 111) *To amalgamate with Corowa we would only be represented by 1 Councillor,*
- 112) *Because by amalgamating we would not have the representation needed against the more populated areas,*
- 113) *Cannot see how the Council would be better off, Loss of jobs, facilities in towns i.e. preschool, Councillor representation if amalgamated with another Shire,*
- 114) *We are a rural area,*
- 115) *Urana as a town will diminish in importance without the Shire Council as an employer and as a service centre,*



- 116) *It will not be beneficial to Urana Shire Council and all communities within,*
- 117) *We need to stay alone because if we merge, jobs will be lost and our town will disappear into another Shire,*
- 118) *Keep our local Council a community base which supports local employment, community services, business & looks after our future needs,*
- 119) *Decisions made at a local level should have the best chance of getting a most efficient outcome (financially).*
- 120) *Local rates spent in the local area,*
- 121) *Council currently operates effectively and efficiently; amalgamation means loss of identity and often a viable/effective/efficient Council taking on the opposite, We believe we get better service from our local Council than we would by amalgamating with another,*
- 122) *Price attachment for travel byways our local Council being closer & requirements are met,*
- 123) *We have a well-managed vibrant Council who provide efficient use of funds to provide improvements throughout the whole Shire,*
- 124) *People/Rural need structure/support Council attends, Important to remain heard, Retention of Services,*
- 125) *If amalgamated the small Maintain services, Small rural communities will be lost in a larger Council,*
- 126) *Local representation/Focus on rural roads & small community projects, I think stand alone is a better option for Urana shire as if we were to amalgamate then we would be forgotten,*
- 127) *We are more likely to have our needs met and listened to as part of a smaller Shire,*



- 128) *All amalgamations result in less services and higher rates e.g. Holbrook into Hume, Less waste & Resources,*
- 129) *Because Urana Shire Council is doing a fine job in Rand,*
- 130) *Because I fear living at the end of an even bigger Council would leave me completely forgotten about, nor do I think we would be "going forward with pride",*
- 131) *Our rates would be 10X higher according to say Corowa a given,*
- 132) *In the best interests of our community,*
- 133) *As a Council we have been doing a good job and they haven't shown us that bigger is better - Let us get on with the job,*
- 134) *Disgusting waste of taxpayers money,*
- 135) *Community/ jobs, people in the Bush,*
- 136) *Because we will be like a bird on a biscuit tin an outside looking in,*
- 137) *I chose this because this is the best option at the moment,*
- 138) *Amalgamation would be a very bad idea,*
- 139) *Why change the local Council does a very good job,*
- 140) *We would have a loss of services and less involvement from Councillors in our town and a loss of identity,*
- 141) *Because we would be swallowed up and what would happen to our outdoor staff our schools would close and we will die (town),*
- 142) *Being independent will make it easier to obtain our fair share of Urana Shire coffers,*
- 143) *Do a good job in a very big Shire,*
- 144) *Should leave as is. If merged will become less important,*
- 145) *Our small town may become "lost" in a larger Council,*
- 146) *Allocation of funding may not be fair,*
- 147) *May not have representation in larger Council,*
- 148) *Higher rates,*



- 149) *Remain stand-alone rural Council because I believe in Urana Shire they are doing well,*
- 150) *Because this kind of amalgamation's never work,*
- 151) *I'm concerned amalgamation with a larger Council we could be as a small town be forgotten,*
- 152) *Close larger Councils e.g. Corowa, Wagga they seem to be hopeless with money and split with smaller Councils,*
- 153) *Bigger will mean less services, we don't get much now but at least we have local representation,*
- 154) *Bigger is not better, we are on the edge of the shire and would be forgotten,*
- 155) *Keep our identity,*
- 156) *We are capable of standing alone with a little fine tuning,*
- 157) *Because we don't want to lose our identity,*
- 158) *I feel an amalgamation with another council will be detrimental to the future of our area,*
- 159) *I'm worried if we amalgamate we will be of higher risk at losing our community ran, council owned facilities,*
- 160) *Because with too broad an area the little details will be overlooked and the fact that jobs will possibly be lost for the stand alone shire if there was an amalgamation,*
- 161) *Because I fear living at the end of an even bigger Council would leave me completely forgotten about, nor do I think we would be "going forward with pride",*
- 162) *In the best interests of our community*

Sample of "Why merge" Comments made in the surveys (where names were given)

Strong themes in the comments from those respondents who felt that Council should pursue an amalgamation were that bigger organisations are ran better, and that mergers are inevitable and that Council should pursue this on a voluntary basis rather than face a forced merger.



- 1) *Streamline administration & put more outdoor staff on,*
- 2) *Why not?,*
- 3) *Get rid of 90% office staff, may increase outside staff and have a go at doing some useful work,*
- 4) *I feel we will be seen and not just a mark on a map It is inevitable because need to be efficient,*
- 5) *Need to be bigger to run as a business, same as other businesses, Coles etc.*
- 6) *We feel that we will get better service,*
- 7) *If it must happen either join with another one of similar size or ensure each community has the same number of people on the management,*
- 8) *We will be made amalgamate in future any way. By doing it now will save hassles later,*
- 9) *So that we can get more resources if we need to,*
- 10) *Efficiency and economies of scale, Opportunity for improved services and infrastructure,*
- 11) *To small population to stand alone, increasing rates to met the needs communities would not be a reason,*
- 12) *It will eventually be forced, it would be better to be proactive. Urana has declined to an extent it is no longer a larger centre. i.e. No bank, PP Board, Graincorp etc.*
- 13) *Locana (Lockhart & Urana combination) Shire is a dynamic natural fit, secondly it will allow some modest administration savings, With prudent management there can be some cost savings with larger area. Give access to developing all area along Murray River,*
- 14) *Not sure - probably better,*
- 15) *Urana Shire struggles to look after an enormous area underfunded by State and Federal Governments may be more economically viable and allow for greater services to be provided,*



- 16) *Because if we don't all our towns in the Shire as it is now, will die, If we have to merge with Councils with similar populations, Jerilderie or Lockhart,*