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Submission: Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Bombala Council's proposal under the Fit for the Future process to remain as a stand alone rural council. The Association wholeheartedly supports the proposal submitted by Bombala Council.

Our Association is a small community based group run by volunteers and centred on the village of Delegate. It has a very good relationship with Bombala Council. We have partnered with Council on a number of innovative and interesting projects designed to sustain our community in the long term. These include the establishment of a small art gallery and also an indigenous art gallery in Delegate. Also a number of tourist attractions in town are regularly visited by tourist buses that are organized through Council. We have had a number of improvements made to our infrastructure over the past few years, including footpaths, walking tracks and the construction of a new amenities block at the sportsground.

We have studied the KPMG Merger Business Case for Bombala, Cooma-Monaro and Snowy River Shire Councils and can see little advantage for either of the three council areas involved in pursuing this course of action. We consider that the small amount of savings identified (and we question if these savings would eventuate) would in no way compensate for the loss of jobs and negative flow on effects to the local economy.

We are also concerned that should amalgamation occur, and the main service centre is then 150kms away that we as a small village on the outskirts of the area would receive very little in services and improvements to our infrastructure. The amalgamated entity would stretch from the Victorian to the ACT border and this would have to result in the loss of local representation and local identity.

At a recent public meeting held to discuss this issue, one of the attendees told of their experience of amalgamation in Victoria. They were adamant that Council needed to fight to stay as a stand alone entity because the result had been increased rates and less services for the area that they lived in.

Whilst we acknowledge that Council has its challenges, we feel that the options it has provided in its proposal in Section 3 go a long way to overcoming some of the issues faced. We also note that Council is working towards the Fit for the Future benchmarks and find it difficult to understand that at the present time Council does not meet the Debt Service Ratio benchmark purely because it has no debt.

We note that Council will be pursuing shared service arrangements with the neighbouring Councils and that a number of these arrangements are already in place. We think this would be a far better option for Bombala Council than amalgamation that would result in loss of jobs, loss of local identity and a detrimental effect on the local economy.

Please consider these comments when making your decision.