

Great Lakes Council, Taree Council and Gloucester Council

Amalgamations is a good thing

As a rural resident in the Great Lakes Council jurisdiction living in [REDACTED] married to a farmer I would fully support an amalgamation of Great Lakes, Taree and Gloucester councils into one entity. I am a self funded retiree after working in the private sector for 45 years. My main reasons for supporting this Government initiative is due to the following :-

1. Great Lakes Council rural residents are the poor cousins and in the main ignored by council we have gravel roads that are only maintained when we submit service orders and then the maintenance is sub-standard. Council no longer carries out any weed clearing, scheduled road maintenance.
2. The additional funding support from Government offered if councils merge would greatly assist the budget deficits budgeted in 2015 -16 by all three councils. The only reason our local councils are opposing the merger and in the process wasting even more of ratepayers money commissioning worthless reports is due to self preservation of their positions which I fully understand. However putting their own personal interest ahead of the communities they represent is unacceptable. In any merger of similar or same entities or companies in the private sector it has been proven in the majority of cases the end result is a more efficient and cost effective entity and it would apply to the public sector.

A major problem regional councils face is the inability to attract professionals into the rural areas consequently General Managers are promoted from within with little or no general management experience, this also applies to engineering, planning, community services and corporate services. However major cost savings for ALL councils if a merger is implemented is in Payrole and there would be an immediate \$2M saving in a merger of all three councils. Another major cost saving would be in the procurement area. The majority of councils have a tendency to do their own thing. There needs to be centralised procurement especially for large ticket items. Also there needs to be a standardisation for the high ticket items including Computer Hardware & Software/Auditing/Website Development/Plant Equipment/Council Vehicles.

Curently all three councils use different computer hardware, different auditors and different website support companies. All three local councils do not communicate on major purchases and run different databases. In the case of Great Lakes council the computer budget is to spend \$800k on computer hardware and software and use Technology One as their prime supplier. This supplier recently reported record profits based on increasing fees for software licenses. The only Technology One Module Great Lakes Council shouls use is the DA Subdivision package same as Taree Council use all other packages are way to expensive and the council becomes locked into the supplier. All councils should use professional IT consultants. to

There needs to be purchasing contracts aligned with State Government in all areas especially Auditing/ Capital Equipment purchases, web site design and maintenance.