

Submission to Fit for the Future Plan

Jennifer Kealey

Re: Support of Walcha Council Rural Council Proposal

I write in support of the Walcha Council's Rural Council Proposal which I support in its entirety.

I have been a resident of the Walcha Council since 2009 and during that time have been actively involved in support of the Walcha Council and its endeavours to remain an independent and vibrant source of local governance throughout the process of local government review. My initial resistance to amalgamation rose solely from my first-hand experience of the disastrously ineffective forced amalgamations in Queensland on smaller communities prior to moving to Walcha. However, my commitment to ensuring that Walcha retains its autonomy as a council is now based on the evidence that it can convincingly do so now and into the future.

The characteristics and assumptions of inefficient and unproductive stagnant small councils are simply not present or representative of the Walcha Council. This is a council that acts with foresight and skills in ensuring that Walcha is an extraordinary place to live, work, run a business and raise a family. Walcha Council is proactive and diligent in the application of its services. There is an enormous knowledge, skill and experience resource within the council and its staff, both administrative and operational. They consistently demonstrate the proven ability to be innovative and adaptive, and this has been apparent throughout the process of local government reform through the manner in which Walcha Council has applied itself to the challenges and demands of reform. Instead of resisting the change, Walcha council has used it as the impetus for progress and improvement. Examples of this attitude and aptitude to be adaptable and innovative are provided throughout the Walcha Council Rural Council Proposal and without reiterating them here, I draw attention to them specifically as the real evidence of commitment to efficiency, sustainability and growth that our council is so highly regarded for. This is not rhetoric about "we want our council left alone". This is evidence of a council being asked to consider its future realistically and fiscally and make the changes required to not only survive but thrive.

Walcha Council is entirely committed to ensuring that it can provide for this community and represent it fully at the highest levels of government and has repeatedly delivered results of this. When the combination of skill, knowledge, experience, commitment and vision that we are represented by here in Walcha is given an opportunity to progress with new benchmarks, tools and practices to support it in delivering core functions we are faced with an exciting future. The process of local government reform has delivered us the mechanics required to achieve the benchmarks set. We do not need to forego our identity and representation through amalgamation.

Walcha Council is a truly reflective place based decision making entity guided by the influences of the wider regional, state and national context. They are adaptive, innovative, resourceful and frugal. We are in good hands and armed with the governance, human resources, tools and actions required to embrace the challenges we face as a community. I respectfully ask your consideration of our unique position.

One visit to Walcha will make it obvious that these claims are well founded.

Sincerely,

Jen Kealey