

**SUBMISSION TO
FIT FOR THE FUTURE INQUIRY REGARDING
WYONG SHIRE AND GOSFORD CITY COUNCILS**

My position:

I support the amalgamation of Wyong Shire and Gosford City councils.

My perspective

I have been a rate-paying resident of Wyong Shire (in Wyong) since June 2014. Prior to that I was a non-rate-paying resident of Gosford City Council (Wamberal and North Avoca) from 2002.

I was the Chair of the NSW Government's Central Coast Regional Coordination Management Group (RCMG) from 2005 to 2010. The RCMG, which was managed from the Department of Premier and Cabinet, was an inter-agency forum for the development of:

- a regional perspective for the Central Coast
- productive working relationships between state government agencies, and with local government.

The main issues dealt with by the RCMG were:

- employment and education opportunities, including tourism-related employment
- transport and health services provision
- working with the Aboriginal community and organisations.

One of the complications of achieving the RCMG's aims resulted from the presence of two separate councils on the Central Coast which unnecessarily complicated the identification and resolution of region-wide issues.

Why amalgamate?

Amalgamation of the two councils would bring the following benefits:

- a strengthened, unified 'voice' for the Central Coast as regards funding of programs from both federal and state governments in the areas of education and employment opportunities, and transport and health services

- removal of the unnecessary competition between the two councils which has seen both councils at times working against each other on Central Coast-wide issues, as occurred most recently with the push by Wyong Council to establish a 'university precinct' at Warnervale despite there already being a university presence in Ourimbah (within Wyong Shire) that has the potential to be developed into a viable, stand-alone university
- removal of duplication of effort by the two councils in areas such as tourism and the environment which unnecessarily complicates the development of practical responses to issue that are region-wide and would benefit from there being 'one voice'
- a stronger, more strategic approach to the identification of solutions to longer term issues such as population growth, and environmental and heritage concerns
- a more cost-effective approach to the provision of specifically local government services such as recreational facilities, waste management, and local road maintenance by combining and rationalising these services.

What not to do:

The worst outcomes of the Fit for the Future initiative would be for:

- a half-way-there solution, such as the sharing of corporate and/or back office services which, from the experience at state and other local government levels, does not result in efficiencies and economies of scale if amalgamation is not across the full range of council functions
- the dismembering of Wyong Shire and its absorption into the current Gosford and Lake Macquarie local government areas. This would only exacerbate the current problems outlined above by creating two distinctly different geographic areas that would require significantly different approaches than currently prevail.

**SUBMISSION FROM
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