

## **FEEDBACK SOUGHT ON COUNCIL FIT FOR THE FUTURE ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY**

**27 April 2015**

The Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) is seeking local government feedback on how council Fit for the Future proposals will be assessed.

Under the NSW Government's Fit for the Future reforms, all councils in NSW are required to submit a proposal demonstrating how they meet the criteria by 30 June 2015, which will then be assessed by IPART, as the appointed Expert Advisory Panel.

IPART is seeking submissions on its proposed approach and will hold public forums in four locations across NSW, during May, before finalising the Assessment Methodology. Councils are then required to submit their proposals by 30 June, with further opportunities for community comment and additional information to be sought from councils before IPART makes its recommendations to the Minister for Local Government in mid-October.

A temporary part-time Tribunal member, John Comrie, is being appointed to assist IPART with the assessments.

IPART Chairman Dr Peter Boxall said council applications will be assessed against the four criteria identified through the Fit for the Future reforms. A council's scale and capacity is the threshold issue to be addressed before consideration of the benchmarks for financial sustainability, infrastructure and service management, and operating efficiency.

"Our methodology proposes that in cases where the Independent Local Government Review Panel (ILGRP) recommended a merger, councils not proposing a merger in their applications would need to provide a sound argument that it is not the best option in their case," Dr Boxall said.

"We are also seeking feedback on how benchmarks should be assessed including what are reasonable timeframes for councils to improve their performance to reach these benchmarks, and how we should consider the social and community context and the community consultation undertaken by each council.

"Our goal is to establish a transparent process where councils are aware of whether they are likely to be rated as either 'fit' or 'not fit' under the Fit for the Future criteria, and are consulting with their communities on that basis before they lodge their proposals in June," Dr Boxall said.

"Councils that do not submit a proposal cannot be properly assessed and, aside from the exempt Far West councils for which proposals are optional, will be 'deemed not fit' as a result."

Stakeholders will have the opportunity to comment on IPART's proposed methodology at public forums to be held in Sydney (11 May), Dubbo (15 May), Coffs Harbour (18 May) and Wagga Wagga (21 May). The Sydney forum will also be webcast.

Submissions on the Consultation Paper will be received until 25 May 2015. A copy of the Consultation Paper and information about how to make submissions can be found on the IPART website [www.ipart.nsw.gov.au](http://www.ipart.nsw.gov.au).

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