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Submission: There are a range of concerns apparent in the Local Council Fit for the Future proposal. Foremost is the necessity of providing a financially-based argument which demonstrates that a council's proposed approach is superior to the recommended merger. Given the costs of changing systems, and the lost productivity and poor service for the local population while staff are adjusting to imposed reforms, surely the preference should be that a merger, at the very least, must demonstrate that it is superior to a council's proposed approach. Under the current proposal, where the councils and ILGRP's approaches are equivalently viable, the ILGRP's option would be preferred, despite widespread opposition and a lack of clear evidence to its superior efficacy to the current system.

It also seems that in order to be deemed a sound argument in response to proposed mergers, councils must demonstrate the financial savings of their proposed approach. The emphasis on saving money is inconsistent with the purpose of local government, particularly as there is no evidence that large councils are more effective in delivering services or have better rates.

As a resident that lives in a council area which is very attractive to developers, I am also concerned about the proposal that strategic capacity be measured in terms of the degree to which the local council co-operates in State Government plans for development. This measure would prejudice against councils that are approaching development in a socially responsible way, including negotiating for affordable housing and appropriate infrastructure for residents before development proposals are approved. It is easy for such delays to be viewed as impeding the State Government's planned development and prejudice against the proposed approaches of such councils. As such, I believe that the Scale and Strategic capacity measured by enabling the State Government's planned development should be removed.