

Author name: G. Markwell

Date of submission: Monday, May 25, 2015

Submission:

I am applying your methodology to Strathfield Council which since inception in 1885 has been proud of their financial restraint and "correct frugality".

Result - No Debt, Low Overheads, Minimal Infrastructure Backlog.

Yet Strathfield seems to be a prime target in the push to merge councils.

It should be used as an example of how a small council can successfully meet the needs of the community. This simply demonstrates that your methodology is flawed.

There is no "one size fits all" solution to the problems councils face. This has long been recognised in all areas of life and business.

- a. Scale and Strategic capacity criteria should not be threshold criteria. There is no evidence that a large council is more effective, has better rates nor that it provides better services that a small council Scale and Strategic capacity should not be threshold criteria.
- b. Scale and Strategic capacity should not be linked. There is no evidence to link the scale of a council with its strategic capacity therefore: The two criteria should be assessed separately.
- c. Scale – Minimum population: There is no evidence that bigger is better in fact the evidence is the opposite – that smaller is better for councils.
- d. Scale – Target number of councils in metropolitan/regional areas. IPART itself has clearly acknowledged that there is currently no evidence base whatsoever for such targets.
- e. Strategic Capacity- The 10 Elements to measure Strategic Capacity should have benchmarks.
- f. Strategic Capacity – is proposed to be measured as well by the degree with which the local council co-operates with the State Government in rolling out their “planned development”. This prejudices local councils which are standing up for the rights of their residents as they can be seen to be impeding the State Government’s planned development. Scale and Strategic capacity measured by enabling the State Government’s planned development should be removed.
- g. Joint Organisations were originally recommended by the Independent Panel then the Government ruled them out in metropolitan Sydney. Regional Organisations of Councils (ROCS) are doing a great job in enabling significant savings for councils and should be able to be built on as a further business case model. Joint Organisations should be returned as an option for all councils and time allowed to develop business cases.
- h. All submissions to IPART should be made public as soon as possible.
- i. The timeline goes against good process and needs to be extended.