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Submission: Whilst not strictly within the Methodology Assessment process, Council would like to state that it considers the FFTF process is pre-emptive in that the recommendations from the Local Government Review Panel are yet to be implemented. These have the potential to significantly change the shape of Local Government. In particular the Rating Review could have a significant impact upon the revenue potential of Councils and thus their sustainability.

Council welcomes the suggestion that IPART will contact Council's to clarify submission and just not make arbitrary decisions based on the information received. Whilst Council has attended many meetings on the FFTF process, the constant shifting of goal posts has left Council confused over the level of detail required and thus the amount of community resources it should divert to produce this document. Comments like "sound argument" and "robust information" leave plenty of room for interpretation.

Council would like IPART to extend the consultation process further by giving Council the opportunity to comment on any proposal by IPART to find a Council, Not Fit. In similar terms to above, it may be that some vital information has not been included or explained properly that has led to an erroneous decision. This is too important a decision to be left to chance.

It is unclear from the documentation that when you make your recommendation to the Minister, if local government will be advised of the decision at the same time. In the interest of Natural Justice Council contends that this dual notification should occur.

Council is concerned at the time frames surrounding the sustainability criteria. This Council like many has established a Long Term Financial Plan based on a 10 year time frame. The current IPR Document adopted after extensive public consultation is built on this plan. It is not possible and certainly unfair on the community to try and meet a seemingly arbitrary 5 year deadline. It would be more logical if the timeframes were linked to the existing 10 year Plans and the IPR process. Council has received previous assurances that such a measure approach would receive favourable consideration.

The auditing of the Sustainability Criteria is welcome and it is suggested that this become one of the items covered by the proposed recommendation that the Auditor General take charge of Council audits.

While we are pleased that IPART has indicated that there will not be a scoring system used to assess how each Council meets the criteria and that there will be some subjectivity in IPART's assessment and that Council's are urged to tell their story and make their case, we would encourage the tribunal to look at the additional factors (particularly social and community context) with due regard to the impact of future proposals on the communities we know well and that we serve.