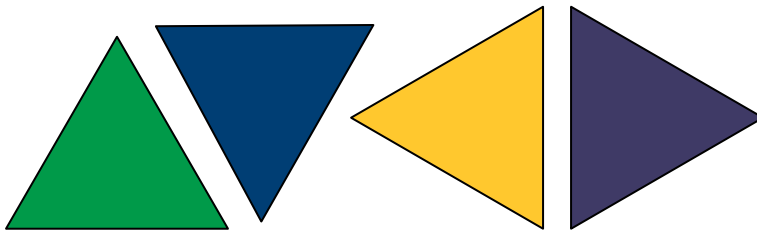


SOUTHERN COUNCILS GROUP SUBMISSION TO THE INDEPENDENT PRICING AND REGULATORY TRIBUNAL OF NSW

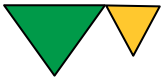
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Review of the Funding for Local Land Services



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Introduction

The Southern Councils Group (SCG) is the peak organisation representing Local Government in the Illawarra and South Coast regions. Member Councils include Bega Valley Shire, Kiama Municipal, Shellharbour City, Shoalhaven City, Wingecarribee Shire and Wollongong City Councils.

SCG has not had the opportunity to consider the recent proposal put forward by the Local Land Services Board of Chairs (LLS BoC), so the following comments in response are provided on the basis of known SCG policy positions.

Response

- 1) SCG member Councils would not support the application of LLS rates to properties below 2 hectares, unless used for intensive agriculture. The proposal for a base rate, and an NRM/Environment rate would in many cases be additional to rates already levied by councils for NRM/Environment purposes. These rates have been established following intensive consultation, with clearly designated timelines and for agreed outcomes. In other cases, the community's ability to pay is already overburdened.
- 2) SCG member Councils would oppose the proposal that they act as a collector for LLS rates. Even if recompensed for providing such a service it is not a role identified by communities, nor its attendant debt collection, complaint handling and poor image roles.
- 3) Member Councils of SCG, and SCG itself already contribute substantially to natural resource management, biosecurity, and very active weed management roles, often to a greater degree than State Government and using well established and agreed risk frameworks. They do not however receive rate income from the State Government for public land and would be strenuously opposed to contributing further by way of LLS rates for these lands.
- 4) SCG, its member Councils, and its communities would vigorously oppose the imposition of measures which cost-shift to local government or contribute to an increased bureaucratic system removed from direct accountability to its rates base.

SCG looks forward to consideration of these matters, in the determination of a rating framework for the new Local Land Services.