



MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Application to merge three County Councils progresses to community consultation

Councillor Sue Meehan, Chair of Rous County Council today welcomed the announcement by the NSW Minister for Local Government to progress with public consultation on the proposed merger of Rous County Council, Richmond River County Council and Far North Coast County Council. The decision follows a lengthy five year process by the Counties to effect change to improve financial sustainability and on-ground outcomes.

Following the five year development process resulting in this merger proposal, Mr Kyme Lavelle, General Manager for each of the three County Councils, is pleased with this announcement. He said "The proposal to merge was initiated locally and is endorsed by councils across the region and is separate to the Fit for the Future program currently covering reform for general purpose councils".

The proposed merger intends to increase operational efficiency and financial sustainability across the organisation. A 2012 UTS study on the viability of reform recommended restructuring or reform for the three County Councils, and after careful consideration the merger was chosen as the strongest way forward.

Cr Meehan said that "The cost of doing nothing is mounting every day and the merger is an option that will provide immediate real and tangible benefits. While not yet a certainty, it represents a course of action that we believe is in the best interests of the Counties and the region. The fact that we have got this far illustrates the appetite that exists for and our capacity as a region to champion reform".

The proposed merger will allow for an immediate reduction in administrative workload and associated costs, thereby garnering prompt savings, reducing unnecessary administration and improving the quality of services to the region. If the merger is to progress, it is expected to result in an immediate net cash saving of \$130,000 per year.

Mr Lavelle said that customers should be reassured that in the meantime it is business as usual. At this stage the proposal is in the hands of the State Government who will now conduct a public consultation process. Following the public consultation process, the Minister will provide a recommendation on the proposed merger.

Submissions on the proposal will soon be invited by the Minister in mid-July. Further details will be made available on our website at www.rouswater.nsw.gov.au early next week.

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