



**The Hon Paul Toole MP**  
Minister for Local Government

Clr Katie Milne  
Mayor  
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18 December 2015

Dear Clr Milne

Today the Government has announced merger proposals for NSW councils and new measures to strengthen the system of local government. While your council is not the subject of a merger proposal, the Government's announcement includes a response to the IPART assessment of councils and changes that will impact on all councils.

The Government's position has been informed by four years of consultation involving every council in NSW, independent assessments (including IPART's recent report on the health of councils across NSW), merger preferences submitted by councils to the Government last month, and feedback from communities and stakeholders.

Detailed merger proposals are now being finalised and will be referred to the Chief Executive of the Office of Local Government for examination and report in accordance with the requirements of the *Local Government Act 1993*.

The Chief Executive will delegate this function to other people (Delegates). In examining and reporting on merger proposals the Delegates will conduct a public inquiry (which is a public meeting at which members of the public can express their views on the proposals), call for written submissions, and prepare a report against the criteria in the Act.

The report from the Delegate will go to myself as Minister, and also to the Boundaries Commission for comment. The Boundaries Commission will provide me with their comments that, along with the report from the Delegate, will allow me to complete the process and make a decision on final boundaries.

This process will provide an objective assessment of the merger benefits and impacts, and give the community a chance to have a say before Government makes a final decision.

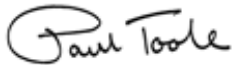
The Government has announced today that it:

- has commissioned IPART to review the rating system, and has asked IPART to advise on the best way to achieve the policy commitment on freezing rates as part of the rating review. IPART will provide its report to the Government by the end of 2016;
- will commence consultation on proposed amendments to the Local Government Act, including previously announced changes such as two year terms for mayors and new financial intervention powers;
- will provide councils that IPART deemed Not Fit due to not meeting the financial benchmarks with an opportunity to be reassessed in 2016; and
- will provide rural councils with the option of streamlining governance arrangements.

Further details on the Government's announcement and what it means for each council can be found at [www.fitforthefuture.nsw.gov.au](http://www.fitforthefuture.nsw.gov.au)

The NSW Government is implementing changes to local councils that will deliver benefits to local communities for generations into the future. On behalf of the Government, I thank you for your input into this process.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Toole". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Paul Toole MP  
**Minister**