



Narrabri Shire Council

Fit for the Future Frequently Asked Questions

You may have heard recently about the NSW State Government's "Fit for the Future" program.

In 2014, the State Government announced a major local government reform program known as "Fit for the Future". This reform program requires many NSW councils to consider amalgamation options with neighbouring councils, as the Government looks to investigate the efficiency and financial sustainability of councils.

For Narrabri Shire Council (NSC), the Government is suggesting we remain a stand-alone Council by proving we are "Fit For the Future" and form a Joint Organisation to work in partnership with other Namoi Councils. Proof of our financial sustainability is to be provided by submission of a 10 year financial and business improvement strategy.

How does Council prove it is Fit For the Future?

Basically by showing that Council is financially sound, operating efficiently, delivering quality services and is in a position to exercise strong community leadership.

What are the options for NSC?

The NSW Government's starting point is the recommendation made by the Independent Local Government Review Panel being:

1. Narrabri Shire to remain a stand-alone Council and form part of the Namoi Joint Organisation.

What does it mean when you say "Form a Joint Organisation with Namoi Councils?"

Joint Organisations (JO's) are a proposed vehicle to connect ideas and priorities of State Government at a regional level to help communities prosper. They will be empowered to establish key regional priorities.

The core functions of JO's are likely to be:-

- Regional strategic planning
- Inter-government collaboration
- Leadership and advocacy

JOs are currently being piloted around NSW. There are five pilot JO's that will operate for about twelve months, prior to further implementation.

Is doing nothing an option?

If NSC does nothing then, without any community involvement, an expert panel formed by the NSW Government will make a recommendation about our future – our destiny.

The bottom line is we need to prove we are “Fit for the Future” by taking into account all of the facts and obtaining input from the community so we decide for ourselves our preferred destiny.

So what is required?

Council staff are undertaking a comprehensive internal analysis of our structures, services and financial projections to allow council to go to the community and seek their feedback on our options in becoming “Fit for the Future”.

Feedback from the community will assist in determining an appropriate response to "Fit for the Future". A draft submission will be prepared and placed on public exhibition for community comment for 28 days, prior to lodgement of the final submission.

What information will be used to determine whether Narrabri Shire Council is Fit for the Future?

NSC will be reviewing a wide range of sources to prove it is “Fit for the Future”. Most importantly this will include:-

- the views and feedback of our community,
- Services reviews and feedback from councillors and council staff,
- Assessment of financial plans and strategies for asset management, and
- benchmarking against industry best practice.

Council is committed to considering all relevant facts to ensure that the decision making process is as thorough and community focused as possible.

What does the Fit For the Future submission have to demonstrate?

The submission must address four significant criteria:

1. Financial sustainability.
2. Effective infrastructure and services management.
3. Efficient service and infrastructure delivery, achieving value for money for current and future ratepayers,
4. Scale and capacity to engage effectively across community, industry and government.

When is the submission deadline?

All submissions must be made to the NSW State Government by the 30th of June 2015.

Who will be making the decision?

The NSW Government’s independent expert panel will review all submissions prepared by Councils across NSW. The panel will make final recommendations to the NSW Government who will then make the final decision.

How does the State Government decide?

The expert panel will assess Council's "Fit for the Future" proposal against the criteria of scale and capacity, efficiency, sustainability, effective infrastructure and service management. The outcomes of this assessment are expected to be known by October 2015.

How can I get involved and have a say?

We will provide you with frequent updates on the progress of the community engagement process and the different community activities that will be held throughout the council area. Updates will be provided on our website and in the local media.

In addition to this we will be using the opinions and information collected over recent months at our community meetings. A range of other methods will be used to obtain your input and feedback. This will take place following the completion of the comprehensive internal analysis of our structures, services and financial projections.

Useful Links:

Fit for the Future: <http://www.fitforthefuture.nsw.gov.au/>

Local Government Review Panel: <http://localgovernmentreview.nsw.gov.au>

Website: www.narrabri.nsw.gov.au

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/heartofthenorthwest>