



25 May 2015

Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal
On line submission at www.ipart.nsw.gov.au

Dear Sir or Madam,

Re: Methodology for Assessment of Council Fit for the Future Proposals

The Southern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils Inc. (SSROC) is a group of sixteen councils in the southern part of Sydney, which covers an area of almost 700 km² and a population of more than 1.6 million people. Our member councils are naturally concerned that the process of assessment should be completed in a way that will permit careful and accurate judgements to be made. Councils have many concerns about the process and the manner in which potential local government reform is being conducted. This submission concerns only the timetable for the part that IPART plays in the assessment of councils' Fit for the Future proposals.

We understand that the final version of the methodology is due to be released on 1 June 2015. This allows IPART only four days to review and respond to the many submissions that it will undoubtedly have received: this timeframe is clearly inadequate for due deliberation of the submissions and for revising the methodology in response.

Councils are then required to lodge their submissions by 30 June, having only received the final methodology on 1 June. This permits only 1 month to review the finalised methodology, to consider the implications, to revise their draft submissions in response, and to have them agreed. Again, the timeframe is clearly insufficient.

SSROC is strongly of the view that these deadlines are inappropriate to a matter of such weight for NSW councils, and the people of NSW who elect them. Many council residents have expressed concern to their councillors about proposed reform, and would prefer to keep their local council responsive at the local level: residents are effectively excluded from this process as a result of the timetable.

We therefore urge IPART to give itself time to conduct a diligent and considered review of submissions, and to improve the methodology in response. Further, we ask IPART to highlight to the government the inadequacy of the timeframe within which councils are required to make their submissions.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Dougall'.

Namoi Dougall
General Manager
Southern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils