

Local Government Reform proposals are a good balanced approach

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Reducing Sydney's 43 councils to 25 will drive reform that will improve performance while still keeping a local identity for councils, says the Urban Taskforce, but planning districts will need to change.

"The NSW Government's proposals for council amalgamations are a good balance between improving performance while maintaining local identity," says Urban Taskforce CEO, Chris Johnson. "However, the proposed groupings do not align with some of the Planning District boundaries as defined in the Metropolitan Strategy, *A Plan for Growing Sydney*. Botany Bay and Rockdale, Canterbury and Bankstown, The Hills and Hawkesbury are all now in different districts yet are proposed as amalgamated councils. Clearly the Greater Sydney Commission Districts and their proposed Commissioners will need to be rethought.

"The Urban Taskforce has championed reform that reinforces the planning district structure with potential amalgamations of the current 41 councils to 23, so we are supportive of the Government's approach which has also proposed amalgamating the two central coast councils."

"We congratulate the NSW Government and particularly the Local Government Minister, The Hon. Paul Toole, for taking a strong position on the size of councils particularly in the Sydney Metropolitan Area."

"There will still need to be a district structure for strategic planning and we believe that larger district planning offices that come either from bigger councils or from shared service centres between councils are essential to plan Sydney's future."

"On the specific proposals for amalgamation the Urban Taskforce supports the enlarged boundaries of Parramatta and keeping it as a stand-alone council. The City of Sydney is also proposed as a stand-alone council which is appropriate with its economic importance to the state. The amalgamation of councils along the Parramatta Road corridor should help with a more integrated approach to planning."

"The Urban Taskforce is keen to work with the Government and councils during the transition phase to ensure that business as usual still occurs for planning. The Greater Sydney Commission may need to take a stronger planning and assessment role during the transition phase."

*The **Urban Taskforce** is a property development industry group, representing Australia's most prominent property developers and equity financiers.*

Media Enquires: Chris Johnson, Chief Executive Officer: 0412 258 283.

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