

Reform of Sydney councils could blend amalgamations and joint organisations

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The Upper House report on the reform of local government in NSW contains some useful ideas, says the Urban Taskforce.

"The Upper House inquiry into Local Government Reform has suggested that Joint Organisations (JOs) should be the first step," says Urban Taskforce CEO, Chris Johnson. "The IPART report on the reform of councils only focuses on amalgamations while the Upper House report has raised Joint Organisations as another way to be fit for the future."

"The Urban Taskforce believes that the current 41 councils are not an effective way to manage the growth of Sydney and we have therefore strongly supported the establishment of the Greater Sydney Commission. The commission will have 6 District Commissioners relating to the 6 Districts established in the Metropolitan Plan for Sydney."

"To reinforce the commission's role there should be 6 Joint Organisations of councils that relate to the 6 districts. The Joint Organisations could be modelled on the Joint Regional Authority proposal to IPART from Ryde, Hunters Hill and Lane Cove councils. Amalgamations should be encouraged within the 6 JOs so that over time Sydney's councils were reduced from 41 to 24 with 4 councils in each district.

"The JOs should establish a shared Centre of Excellence for District Planning and for other services but leave local activities at the council level."

"The NSW Government is already trialling Joint Organisations for the urban areas of the Illawarra and the Hunter. The Illawarra pilot is based around Wollongong City Council with 3 adjoining councils and the Hunter pilot is based around Newcastle with 9 surrounding councils. Interim reports on these potential JOs have been very positive."

Below is a chart of how Sydney's councils could ultimately shrink from 41 to 23 and sit within the Greater Sydney Commission structure of 6 Districts:

DISTRICT JOINT ORGANISATIONS	POTENTIAL AMALGAMATIONS
<p style="text-align: center;">Central District</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sydney City Council - Burwood, Canada Bay, Ashfield, Strathfield - Leichhardt, Marrickville - Randwick, Waverly, Woollahra, Botany Bay
<p style="text-align: center;">Western Central District</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bankstown - The Hills - Auburn, Holroyd, Parramatta - Blacktown
<p style="text-align: center;">West District</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Blue Mountains - Hawkesbury - Penrith
<p style="text-align: center;">North District</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Willoughby, North Sydney, Mosman - Hunters Hill, Ryde, Lane Cove - Hornsby, Ku-ring-gai - Manly, Pittwater, Warringah
<p style="text-align: center;">South West District</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Camden - Campbelltown - Fairfield, Liverpool - Wollondilly
<p style="text-align: center;">South District</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sutherland - Hurstville, Kogarah - Canterbury - Rockdale

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

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