

SUBMISSION

Document tendered by	Armidale <i>C. Laurie Bishop</i>
Received by	Dumaresq <i>J. Miller</i>
Date:	18 / 8 / 2015
Resolved to publish	Yes / No

- 2000: Armidale & Dumaresq amalgamation – controversial but successful. Dumaresq Councillors basically voted themselves out of existence, but looked at the greater good for the area rather than their own survival.
- 2004: Amalgamation rounds in several areas including Tamworth, certainly successful there, but not carried out here despite strong recommendation of Vardon Report. An opportunity lost.
- 2004-2009: New England Strategic Alliance set up to avoid amalgamation. Some attempt at shared services, but failed because of self-interest of the Councils, who then quit when it suited their purpose. Governance model flawed and cumbersome, with biggest Council ADC under-represented, despite arguably bearing the major cost of the administration of shared services. Remnant survival with some shared services with Guyra, and again ADC bearing major cost and responsibility.
- 2010: Kibble Report recommends amalgamation of ADC, Uralla and Guyra, but this was not accepted by Boundaries Commission, although they argued that “structural reform was needed”, without however specifying anything concrete.
- 2013: Independent Review Panel recommends ADC amalgamate with Guyra (maybe because of the existing shared services), but puzzlingly not with Uralla, although the community of interest much stronger here, with Uralla township, Invergowrie and Arding virtually dormitory suburbs of Armidale.
- 2014: IPART recommends amalgamation of all 4 Councils: “... the evidence from neighbouring Tamworth is that it would bring considerable benefits” (Table 6, p. 56, IPART Final Report).
- February and April 2015: resolutions from ADC. Submission to IPART to stand alone (Template B, as other submissions were not allowed); however, resolutions and attachments canvassed the possibility of mergers with some or all of the Councils.
- ADC believes it can stand alone if necessary, but sees the long-term advantages of a larger New England Regional Council, which would be in the interests of all of the entire area.
- With the disastrous experience of NESAC, ADC is skeptical of the suitability of Joint Organisations (JOs) or similar, to achieve the benefits of amalgamation

in this area. Also skeptical of "Rural Council" model, because both are likely to see ADC subsidizing, directly or indirectly, the smaller Councils, while having little or no influence of the strategic directions, or the way in which monies are spent.

- The governance structures of Jos or similar are likely to be flawed, and on some models, will provide an over-representation (as in NESAC) of the smaller Councils to the detriment of the representational principle of "one person, one vote".
- Currently an umbrella organization to be called "New England Group of Councils" (NEGOC) is being set up, with the draft constitution (yet to be ratified) providing for one vote for each constituent Council regardless of its population, including the Weeds Council, which of course is a one-purpose small-scale county council, having no similarities to the varied responsibilities of ordinary councils. While this might not be that critical in a loose voluntary organization, it would be disastrous - and anathema to any democratic principles - if a legally binding and indissoluble JO were to be formed on similar principles, with such an over-arching organization having exclusive control of and responsibility for shared services in such areas as water, sewerage, waste management etc.
- A full merger is the only sustainable solution. Cooperation in Jos and similar could then occur with other larger councils such as Inverell or perhaps even Tamworth.

Thank you,

Cr Herman Beyersdorf

Armidale Dumaresq Council

18 August 2015