

**Submission  
No 121**

## **INQUIRY INTO LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN NEW SOUTH WALES**

**Organisation:** Bungendore Residents Group Inc

**Date received:** 7/07/2015

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The Director  
General Purpose Standing Committee No. 6  
Parliament House  
Macquarie St  
Sydney NSW 2000  
Fax: (02) 9230 2981

7 July 2015

Dear Sir/Madam

**FIT FOR THE FUTURE INITIATIVE  
PALERANG COUNCIL**

The Bungendore Residents Group Inc wish to express our concern over the process adopted by Palerang Council with respect to the Fit for the Future (FFTF) initiative.

We understand the FFTF process was commenced in 2011 and Councils were instructed on the processes they needed to follow around October/November 2014.

Despite this, Palerang Council only notified the Bungendore community of the FFTF initiative on or about the 26 May 2015.

This consultation included an 'Information Sheet' and a notification of a public meeting, together with a survey form. In most cases, Council's documents did not arrive in letterboxes until the day of, or after, the date's set for the public meetings which were held on the 26 May 2015 (Braidwood Council Chambers) & 27 May 2015 (Bungendore Council Chambers).

The information sheet provided by Palerang Council mirrored the information at the public meetings and concluded that Palerang was Fit for the Future as a stand-alone Council, with very little information to support this conclusion and little to no information on alternatives. The alternatives mentioned were to merge with Queanbeyan Council or 'Palering be split up among adjoining councils such as Goulburn, Yass, Shoalhaven and Cooma-Monaro Councils'. No information about the option to split the Council, other than this one sentence posed in the survey, was provided.



On the 25 June 2015 Palarang Council held an Extraordinary Council meeting to discuss the content of the FFTF submission.

While the meeting invited public comment and participation, members of the public were not allowed to view a copy of the draft submission and Councillors themselves only received the draft submission a few hours before the meeting on the 25 June 2015.

Even though Council concluded they were FFTF as a stand-alone Council, their own survey showed that 45% of the community wanted alternatives considered. Our own online survey results show that:

- 79% did not believe they were provided sufficient information
- 77% do not believe they were given sufficient time to make an informed decision
- 79% said that other options beside Palarang as a stand-alone council should be explored, and
- 71% believe Palarang Council should not remain as is.

Palarang Council prepared and forwarded its final submission to the Independent Local Government Review Panel on the 29 June however the submission was not made public prior to it being sent.

We have subsequently learnt that Palarang Council's submission justified its conclusion that they were financially viable for FFTF on the basis of two subdivisions (600-700 and 300 lots) which would more than double the current population of Bungendore. Bungendore village has already undergone a doubling of its size in the last 10 years so Council's proposal has the potential to quadruple the population in a relatively short space of time.

- These proposed subdivisions are 'proposed' only and on land which is currently zoned rural.
- There is no current development application before Palarang Council to re-zone this land to enable these subdivisions.
- There is no DA before Council for any aspect of these proposed developments.



Despite this, Council has hastily assumed these developments will occur, that the land will be rezoned and the development applications approved.

This has occurred with no consultation with the community.

In addition, Palerang Council has also included in their submission, a 7% accumulative general rate increase above the capped rate over 5 years. Palerang residents have not been adequately informed of this proposal, and have not been given the opportunity to evaluate it or the implications of it.

We consider this whole process did not allow the Palerang community time or information to properly examine and understand the implications of what Palerang Council was committing itself and public monies to, in order to support their conclusion that they are FFTF as a stand-alone Council. We further believe that the 'survey' process may have been flawed as there were no means of identifying the origin of the completed survey.

We do not believe that appropriate due process has been observed nor has the community been fully informed of the ramifications of the proposals as submitted by Palerang Council including approx. 900-1,000 lot housing developments and a substantial general rate hike (above the capped rate) over five years.

We would request that consideration be given to an independent review of the process employed by Palerang Council and that Palerang Council's options be independently assessed.

Yours sincerely

John Taylor  
President  
Bungendore Residents Group