

**Submission
No 168**

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

Name: Cr Elizabeth Barlow

Date received: 6/07/2015

The Director

General Purpose Standing Committee No. 6

Parliament House

Submission Re: Local Government Reform in New South Wales

From : Councillor Liz Barlow

Dear Sir,

I was elected to Rockdale City Council in September 1995 as an Independent Councillor. At the time I was elected, I replaced an Independent Councillor who had served on Rockdale for 30 years. I was also lucky to serve one term with the late Ron Rathbone OAM who completed 40 years service on Rockdale City Council. I am passionate about my Council this is evident in the fact that in twenty years I have only missed one Council meeting

Over the past 20 years I have seen many changes in this Council and I have never been more confident that this council is well on the way to being "Fit for the Future".

Council has built significant project capability , demonstrated through two major infrastructure projects: Rockdale City Library and Rockdale City Aquatic Centre.

The Council submission was stand alone with an Improvement Program. This was the decision after extensive Community consultation and a review of the Council processes and financial modelling that shows that they will more than exceed the required performance on 6 of the 7 benchmarks within 12 months. The only benchmark that the Council will be unable to meet is capacity.

Council's long term financial management improvement initiatives target both operating revenue and asset management practices. As a community service provider, many of these initiatives are aimed at meeting customer expectations while improving the efficiency of delivery of these services.

Rockdale has been proactive in the Southern Sydney Regional of Councils and there are many joint initiatives that have been cost effective for all Councils involved.

As an Independent my concern is that the increase in the size of a Council area will only be beneficial to political parties. This would be detrimental to having local Independent representation that are the real voice of the people. They are not motivated by a possible political agenda on an issue as their decision is for the benefit of their local community.

Local residents do not want to lose their ability to be able to have direct input into their community, they wish to be able to continue with being able to have a voice into the future of their neighbourhood.

Another concern is the unknown cost to the community. We know for a fact that Rockdale has the lowest average residential rate of the researched Councils.

Having researched Council population numbers in Victoria and Queensland and South Australia I was very surprised that there were not many Councils with a larger population than what Rockdale is at the moment, which is approximately 106,712 (2013 estimate) and growing.

The question again why the figure of 250,000. Bigger is quite often not better.

Keep the Local in Local Government.

Yours Sincerely,

Councillor Liz Barlow,

Deputy Mayor