

JERILDERIE SHIRE COUNCIL

All communications to be
addressed to
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Home of Ned Kelly's Jerilderie Letter

Our Ref: 03.13.06

26 January 2016

The Hon Paul Toole MP
Minister for Local Government
GPO Box 5341
SYDNEY NSW 2001

office@toole.minister.nsw.gov.au

Dear Minister

Merger Proposal – Jerilderie Shire Council and Murrumbidgee Shire Council

Jerilderie Shire Council, at its Ordinary Meeting held on Tuesday 26 January 2016, resolved in accordance with Section 218(E) of the Local Government Act 1993, to present you with a proposal that the Councils of the Shires of Jerilderie and Murrumbidgee be merged.

Council further resolved that you be requested to pass this proposal to the Departmental Chief Executive as a matter of urgency. Council also requests that the proposal be dealt with concurrently by the Delegate appointed to carry out a public enquiry for the existing two proposals which affect Jerilderie Shire Council.

Council further request that supporting funds to carry out existing Jerilderie Shire Council merger proposals and those funds allocated from the Strengthening Community Fund be allocated to this proposal.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'R. McRae'.

Ruth McRae
MAYOR

**EXTRACT FROM MINUTES OF THE ORDINARY MEETING OF COUNCIL
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS, JERILDERIE ON TUESDAY,
26 JANUARY 2016, COMMENCING AT 9.00AM**

GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

FIT FOR THE FUTURE

03.13.06

05/01/16

Resolved on the motion of Councillors Bryce and Hudson that:

- a proposal be prepared to merge the Shire Councils of Jerilderie and Murrumbidgee.
- the support of Murrumbidgee and Berrigan Shire Councils be formally requested for the proposal.
- the support of the State Member for Albury, Greg Aplin and the State Member for Murray, Adrian Piccoli, be formally requested for the proposal.
- the merger proposal be presented to the Minister for Local Government under Section 218 (E) of the Local Government Act 1993 requesting that it be dealt with concurrently with the Minister's proposals for Jerilderie Shire Council.

JERILDERIE SHIRE COUNCIL



Alternative Merger Proposal

Jerilderie Shire Council (whole)

&

Murrumbidgee Shire Council

7 March 2016

Executive Summary

Jerilderie Shire Council has welcomed news from the NSW Government that it will formally consider the Council's ALTERNATIVE merger proposal that asks for the Shire to be merged wholly with Murrumbidgee Shire Council.

This ALTERNATIVE merger proposal is submitted to the Minister for Local Government under Section 218 (E) of the *Local Government Act, 1993*.

Letters from Hon. Sussan Ley, MP, Federal Member for Farrer; Mr Greg Aplin, MP, Member for Albury and Berrigan Shire Council have been received in support of the full merger of Jerilderie Shire Council with Murrumbidgee Shire Council.

Widespread support exists for a full merger with Murrumbidgee Shire Council, while there is total opposition to the NSW Government's proposals to split and merge Jerilderie (part) with Murrumbidgee and Berrigan Shire Councils. These two proposals not only took us by surprise but left us with a huge sense of betrayal and a distinct lack of faith in a process we had been proactively and positively engaged in for 4 years. The Government's proposals are ill considered, illogical and identify major areas of weakness that will not meet the scale and capacity criteria as set down. Their proposals will destroy Jerilderie.

This ALTERNATIVE full merger proposal will create a stronger, more viable and lasting future for Jerilderie, Darlington Point and Coleambally. We assert that merging wholly with Murrumbidgee Shire shows increased scale and capacity, an absence of staff disruption, increased savings, and support for each of the three communities that will make up the new merged Council.



Introduction

Over the past four years Jerilderie Shire Council has been actively engaged in the Fit for the Future process. The Government's position whereby they sought to create new, stronger Councils, improve Council performance and strengthen the system of Local Government in NSW was acknowledged.

Council has approached this process with an open mind, genuinely exploring the best options for our community into the future. With non negotiable positions of maintained levels of core service; no unreasonable loss of jobs; and maintained representation, we not only had the community's support to explore Jerilderie Shire Council becoming a Rural Council, but if the NSW Government was determined that a merger was the only option for Jerilderie, then this merger must be with a Council who shares the same needs, priorities and community of interest as Jerilderie Shire Council.

This ALTERNATIVE proposal by Jerilderie to merge fully with Murrumbidgee Shire meets this criteria, and widespread support exists from within the community for the proposal.

Jerilderie Shire Council and Murrumbidgee Shire Councils have demonstrated, over many years, an attitude of cooperation and resource sharing.

We believe that together Jerilderie and Murrumbidgee Shire Councils can form a continuing, efficient organisation. We will make the best use of the resources available, maintaining the assets under our control at the best possible level within affordability limits, while attaining the long-term financial sustainability of the proposed new Council.



A New Council



The analysis of both Council Community Strategic Plans and organisational structures shows that there are many commonalities. Both Jerilderie and Murrumbidgee Shire Councils are of a similar organization size, already share resources and work collaboratively.

Both Councils promote similar objectives, focusing on the important role of land and waterways in the local economies and support for local businesses and industries.

Additionally, the Councils seek to improve employment and local tourism opportunities, heritage conservation, support for an ageing population and retention of young people. The communities of Coleambally, Darlington Point and Jerilderie all share a similar population.

New Council Profile

	Jerilderie Shire Council	Murrumbidgee Shire Council	Merged Council
Population (2014)	1,519	2,528	4,047
Area	3,373 sq km	3,507 sq km	6,880 sq km
Operating Revenue (2014 - 2015)	\$7.1m	\$8.3m	\$15.4m
Net Asset Base 30.06.2015	\$176.568m	\$90.165m	\$266.7m
Infrastructure Backlog	1.29%	1.34%	1.31%
Road Lengths	1,067 km	654 km	1721 km



Key Benefits

NSW Government

The NSW Government has announced a funding package to support merging Councils that would result in \$15 million being made available should the proposed merger proceed:

- \$5 million to facilitate the merger and create the new entity
- \$10 million for a head start on investing in services and infrastructure within the communities that the savings from mergers will ultimately support

It is anticipated that full merger costs will be minimal, with the balance of the \$5 million able to be used for community services and infrastructure.

Shared Services and Cooperation

There exists a range of shared community services and cooperation between Jerilderie and Murrumbidgee Shire Councils, and these shared interests can only be enhanced by this proposal to merge. Examples of existing communities of interest include:

- Western Riverina Libraries
- Charles Sturt University (CSU)
- Riverina Regional Tourism Board
- Regional Development Australia, Riverina
- Kidman Way Promotional Committee
- Riverina and Murray Regional Organisation of Councils (RAMROC)
- Western Riverina Noxious Weeds Advisory Group
- Murrumbidgee Local Health District
- Centacare, Anglicare and Uniting Care
- Riverina and Murray Local Land Services
- Three irrigation entities – Coleambally Irrigation Co-Operative Limited, Murray Irrigation Limited and West Corugan Private Irrigation Scheme
- This proposal supports the Australian Electoral Commission boundary changes, which see both Shires placed in the Federal Electorate of Farrer



western riverina
LIBRARIES

riverina



Local Representation

The merger of these two Councils will enable a continued focus on, and representation of, local needs. With both Councils being of similar size, local representation will be protected, and it is possible that the Murrumbidgee Shire ward system could be extended to include Jerilderie. Murrumbidgee currently consists of two wards, and as a merged entity it is likely there would be three wards.

The Jerilderie community is genuinely concerned about the risk of reduced local representation, and this merger should safeguard representation for each of the three communities of Coleambally, Darlington Point and Jerilderie.

Shared Community Priorities

Both Jerilderie and Murrumbidgee Shire Councils see as a priority the need to support growth of the local economy and regional development. Our standard of living and lifestyle must not be compromised as a result of any merger.

This merger offers our communities the potential to meet current and future needs for services and infrastructure, as the larger geographic area and population will enhance scale and capacity.

The merged entity would continue with a commitment to support medical services, community health services and aged care within the communities of Coleambally, Darlington Point and Jerilderie.

In collaboration with the community, continue to provide and maintain infrastructure which will allow a diverse range of social and sporting activities to be maintained and developed across the newly merged entity.

Continued support and inclusion for already established Section 355 Committees of Council and other community organisations.

Maintain advocacy and collaboration with the Roads & Maritime Services to allow and enhance freight movement throughout the region.



Staffing

It is expected that the employment impacts on the communities from this full merger proposal would be limited, and will provide the employees of both Councils with greater long term job security, ensuring peace of mind for themselves and their families.

The flow on effect from a reduction in staff numbers would have a serious and detrimental consequences for the communities of Coleambally, Darlington Point and Jerilderie, both socially and on the local economy.

The merged Council can expand sharing of Council staff and expertise, initiate services that were previously outsourced, and increase the capacity to delivery services to both the Government and private sector.

These initiatives would assist in maintaining current staffing levels for both Jerilderie and Murrumbidgee Shire Councils employees, with the prospect of additional traineeships to keep youth in our town. Staff may also gain additional training and opportunities to become multi skilled.

Enhanced scale and capacity of the merged entity will provide increased ability to attract suitably qualified and skilled executive staff.

Rating

The NSW Government has announced that there will be a four year freeze on Council rating structures and Special Rate Variation Applications for merging Councils outside normal rate pegging adjustments.

Harmonisation of rates after the first four years will be an exercise for the new Council, as there are limited increases expected to be needed at that time. These increases are too difficult to predict four years out.

Opportunities

Jerilderie Shire Council:

- Places great emphasis on its engineering business and is a recognised leader in the engineering contracting field.
- Has extensive, modern plant and equipment for the delivery of private works services on a fee for service basis.
- Has a modern Works Depot capable of satisfying future expansion



These assets ensure there is an opportunity for the new Council to expand RMS contract works, both within its own boundaries, and to the wider region on a fee for service basis. Not only will this strengthen the Jerilderie township, there is opportunity to expand these activities in Darlington Point and Coleambally.

Expansion within the new entity of Jerilderie Shire's steel fabrication capability will provide opportunity for increased private and tendered works, inclusion of a training component and the capacity to employ additional staff.

Both Jerilderie and Murrumbidgee Shire Councils are developing subdivisions to meet the demand for residential growth. This provides an opportunity for the merged entity to attract suitably qualified staff to develop and promote these initiatives.

The potential to acquire other plant and equipment, enhance service delivery and/or substitute other previously outsourced services may result from removing duplication of under-utilised equipment.

The merged Council will be better able to effectively partner with the State and Federal Government agencies, including Regional Development Australia (Riverina).

Enhanced scale and capacity of the merged entity will provide increased ability to attract suitably qualified and skilled executive staff.

Challenges

While it is a given that the new merged Council will face numerous challenges in its transition phase, the challenges are not insurmountable.

- The integration of two organisational cultures will need to be carefully managed by strong leadership
- Staff of the merged entity must be supported throughout the transition period to ensure that the new entity retains the services of the best staff and promotes and encourages a positive mindset for a productive and harmonious workplace
- Whilst differences in service levels and/or quality may currently exist, the merged entity will need to equalise service levels throughout the communities to the highest achievable standard, based on three communities of similar size and shared aims.
- Given Jerilderie Shire Council's geographic vulnerability (open exposure to the north and west), it is imperative that the new entity adopt a whole of Shire focus on Rural Fire Service activities to safeguard the three townships and the wider agricultural community



Next Steps

It is important that all members of our community have a say in the public process of analysis and examination of our **ALTERNATIVE** proposal

Residents are encouraged to:

- a) Attend the Government's Public Inquiry meetings regarding Jerilderie Shire Council's ALTERNATIVE proposal. The public hearings will be held in the Jerilderie Civic Hall on Wednesday March 16, 7-10pm, and at the Darlington Point Club on Thursday March 17, 7-10pm.

Residents are required to register to attend both Public Inquiry meeting on the following links:

<https://www.councilboundaryreview.nsw.gov.au/proposals/jerilderie-shire-and-murrumbidgee-shire-councils-no-split/>

OR telephone 1300 813 020

OR Council's website: www.jerilderie.nsw.gov.au and follow the "Our Council Our Voice Our Choice" links

Registrations to attend a Public Inquiry will close at 9.00am on the day prior to the Public Inquiry, or earlier if the venue reaches its capacity.

- b) Register to speak at the Public Inquiry Meetings. Members of the public who would like to speak at the Inquiry are requested to indicate that they wish to do so when they register to attend. Members of the public may only speak once at the Public Inquiry, irrespective of the number of sessions being held.
- c) Make written submissions to the Inquiry, which will be received up until 5pm on Friday April 8, 2016:

By Mail:

Council Boundary Review
GPO Box 5341
SYDNEY 2001



Or Online:

<https://www.councilboundaryreview.nsw.gov.au/proposals/jerilderie-shire-and-murrumbidgee-shire-councils-no-split/>



The following table outlines the factors that a delegate must consider under Section 263 of the *Local Government Act (1993)* when examining a proposal.

Legislative Criteria
a)The Financial Advantages or Disadvantages (including the economies or diseconomies of scale) to the residents and ratepayers of the areas concerned
b)The community of interest and geographic cohesion in the existing areas and in any proposed new area
c)The existing historical and traditional values in the existing areas and the impact of change on them
d)The attitude of the residents and ratepayers of the areas concerned
e)The requirements of the area concerned in relation to elected representation for residents and ratepayers at the local level, the desirable and appropriate relationship between elected representatives and ratepayers and residents and such other matters as it considers relevant in relation to the past and future patterns of elected representation for that area
e1)The impact of any relevant proposal on the ability of the councils of the areas concerned to provide adequate, equitable and appropriate services and facilities
e2)The impact of any relevant proposal on the employment of the staff by the councils of the areas concerned
e3)The impact of any relevant proposal on rural communities in the areas concerned
e4)In the case of a proposal for the amalgamation of two or more areas, the need to ensure that the opinions of each of the diverse communities of the resulting area or areas are effectively represented
e5)In the case of a proposal for the amalgamation of two or more areas, the need to ensure that the opinions of each of the diverse communities of the resulting area or areas are effectively represented
f) such other factors as it considers relevant to the provisions of efficient and effective local government in the existing and proposed new areas

