Councils welcome Local Government Minister’s 'sensible solutions'  

Tuesday 4 June 2019

Amalgamated councils will be allowed more time to undertake the complicated process of harmonising rates across old boundaries in a fair way, thanks to legislation introduced by Local Government Minister Shelley Hancock today.

Local Government NSW (LGNSW) President Linda Scott strongly welcomed the move, commending the Minister on her sensible intervention to resolve this outstanding issue from former Premier Mike Baird’s 2015 council mergers.

“Harmonising rates across old council boundaries – a requirement for amalgamated council areas - is a complicated process, which will inevitably result in rate changes for some property owners,” Cr Scott said.

“Councils are committed to making this process as fair as possible, and while some are on track to meet the old June 2020 deadline, others need to work with a significantly greater number of affected landowners.

“A 12-month extension to the deadline will deliver the best possible outcomes and LGNSW thanks Minister Hancock for her swift action in response to our advocacy on this issue.”

The legislative amendments introduced by the Minister also include moves to:

- reduce red tape around council tendering arrangements by raising the threshold value to $250,000
- make it easier to spread the regulatory burden by allowing some functions to be shared or delegated by agreement to fellow councils, who may be better resourced or have particular expertise
- extend the cut-off dates by which councils need to decide whether to outsource administration of the 2020 local government elections to the Electoral Commission.

“The extension to cut-off dates around elections is also smart, as it means councils will be able to digest the results of the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal’s review into the costs of local government elections, currently under way,” Cr Scott said.

“The IPART report will help councils make evidence-based decisions when they choose an election provider for the 2020 elections.

“Ultimately, this extension will help ensure councils and their communities are not paying over the odds for the logistical conduct of local government elections in their area.”
Cr Scott said she was enormously encouraged by how swiftly the new Minister for Local Government had acted to resolve these longstanding issues.

"Minister Hancock has not only listened but delivered, achieving cut-through and bringing about simple resolutions to issues that impact on councils and their communities," she said.

“That augurs well for not only the local government sector, but also for the communities our councils represent.”

FOR ALL MEDIA ENQUIRIES
CONTACT TONI ALLAN ON 0412 774 441