

New South Wales Government Media Releases from the Premier

Stronger councils for Sydney and regional NSW

18th December 2015

Improved infrastructure and services and stabilised rates will make ratepayers the big winners under a proposal for 35 new councils in NSW, unveiled by NSW Premier Mike Baird and Minister for Local Government Paul Toole today.

Mr Baird and Mr Toole said the community would have the opportunity to have a say on the NSW Government's vision for local government in NSW.

"The community expects a stronger local government system that can deliver the infrastructure and services they deserve, while keeping rates stable," Mr Baird said.

In Greater Sydney, the NSW Government is proposing 15 new, stronger councils to help the city grow, which would bring the total number of metropolitan councils down from 43 to 25.

In regional NSW, 20 new councils are proposed, which would bring the total number of regional councils down from 109 to 87.

No Sydney council is forecast to be larger than Blacktown, or have fewer than 150,000 ratepayers.

"Importantly, fewer councils will mean a big reduction in red tape for the NSW community and the businesses that work with councils," Mr Baird said.

Independent analysis by KPMG of the NSW Government's proposed mergers shows significant financial benefits for NSW of up to \$2 billion that can be invested in new infrastructure, improved services or keeping rates stable.

"Through the Stronger Communities Fund, every new council that is established will be provided with up to \$15 million to invest in community infrastructure," Mr Baird said.

"Each new council will receive funding of up to \$10 million to ensure ratepayers do not bear the upfront costs of merging."

New councils will decide how to spend their Stronger Communities Fund allocation, which could include projects such as pool refurbishments, new sporting facilities, street beautification projects, car park expansions and library upgrades.

Mr Toole said under the proposal there will be no change to merged council's existing rate paths for four years.

“This package provides ratepayers with certainty,” Mr Toole said.

Mr Toole said each proposal was the result of careful consideration of all the evidence, including four years of consultation with every council in NSW, independent assessments, merger preferences submitted by councils, and feedback from communities and stakeholders.

“There is no ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach, and we have recognised that each community area in NSW is unique,” said Mr Toole.

The NSW Government is using the existing process set out in the Local Government Act to consider council mergers.

“Our process will provide an objective assessment of the merger benefits and impacts, and give the community a chance to have a say before a final decision is made,” Mr Toole said.

Detailed merger proposals are now being finalised and will be referred to the Chief Executive of the Office of Local Government (OLG) for examination and report under the existing process set out in the Local Government Act.

The Chief Executive will appoint qualified delegates, who will commence a public consultation process for all 35 proposals, including public hearings.

Following this stage, final proposals will be referred to the Boundaries Commission for comment.

Mr Toole commended councils for their leadership in submitting merger preferences to Government and for recognising the significant benefits mergers will bring to their communities.

The public consultation process will commence in January, once detailed proposals are made available at www.councilboundaryreview.nsw.gov.au

A factsheet is also available to [download](#).



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