



PRESS RELEASE

Mayors meet with Minister for Local Government,

The Hon Don Page

Mayors Wendy Tuckerman (Boorowa Council), Chris Manchester (Harden Council) and Stuart Freudenstein (Young Council) met with the Minister for Local Government, The Hon Don Page, in Sydney on Thursday, 18th July, 2013 to discuss the future of their Councils following the release of the Independent Local Government Review Panel's report issued in April, 2013.

In this report, the Panel recommended that Harden and Boorowa Councils become a Local Board and sit under a County Council structure based at Orange OR merge with Young Council to be part of a County Council structure based at Orange. This was totally rejected by all three Councils at a combined Councillors meeting held at St Clement's, Galong.

The Councillors acknowledged that there will be change in NSW Local Government as we know it, but strongly feel that we need to determine what this change will look like for themselves rather than having it forced upon us.

There are currently insufficient details on which to base an informed assessment by both the Councillors and broader community.

The Councillors felt that the current timeline presents an opportunity to show leadership through the exploration of a pilot structure that will enhance sustainable regional development and create a new region in the Hilltops.

The St Clement's meeting highlighted the strong consensus between these three areas and the concept of an emerging regional centre based on the Hilltops Region was passionately promoted. This concept was the focus of the meeting with the Minister.

Minister Page during this meeting stated that he was receptive of this Hilltops regional concept and acknowledged the leadership shown by the Mayors and all Councillors of the three Councils in this innovative approach.

The Minister further stated that he was pleased to see Councils such as Boorowa, Harden and Young taking a strategic and visionary approach to the Panel's report to identify all possible options for beneficial outcomes for their respective communities.

During the meeting with the Minister, all three Mayors strongly advocated the key principles of ensuring continued local community identity, local decision making by local communities and no forced amalgamations.

The Councils requested the Minister to provide financial assistance for the Councils to engage a Consultant to:

Explore the option for the creation of the New Hilltops Region which includes the possibility of the merger of the three Councils, including a strong emphasis on community engagement.

The Minister indicated his in principle support for this request but funding is tight. He will assess the request and respond back to the Councils in the next month or so.

Mayor Stuart Freudenstein on behalf of the delegation wished to record their collective appreciation to the Minister for his time in meeting with the Mayors and the constructive and positive manner that he heard the delegation.

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