

**-FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE-**

**6 FEBRUARY 2024:**

### **WRAP UP OF ROUND TABLE**

Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council (CGRC) hosted a Round Table meeting in Gundagai on Monday 29 January to discuss the Financial Sustainability of Merged Councils.

The meeting was very well supported with all 47 delegates from NSW State Government, surrounding merged councils, Hilltops, Snowy Valley, Snowy Monaro, and Federation attending.

Chaired by Mick Veitch from Counsel House, delegates were able to listen to presentations from Brett Whitworth Deputy Secretary NSW Office of Local Government, Darriea Turley AM, President Local Government NSW, Peter Tegart Always Thinking, Dr Amanda Cohn NSW Greens Spokesperson for Local Government, Jed Lawton United Services Union.

Delegates had the opportunity for a question-and-answer session, concluding with an open forum.

CGRC mayor Cr Charlie Sheahan said he was pleased with the attendance and the input delegates raised in relation to the financial sustainability of forcibly merged councils.

“The general consensus was that these forcibly merged councils are not working and there is a need to pursue a demerger process, we were able to take information away that will assist in the legal processes and implementation plans,” Cr Sheahan said.

“Whilst many think that the demerging process is as simple as just going back to the former shires, there are complex legal and financial implications that Councils need to consider, rate harmonisation, infrastructure and assets, staff allocations, performance ratios and the expectations our communities have on the delivery of services. These subjects are currently being addressed by CGRC in our implementation pathway, however other forcibly merged councils may find these hard to achieve,” he added.

Brett Whitworth, Deputy Secretary NSW Office of Local Government, and representative for the Minister of Local Government, addressed the meeting and stressed the point that demerging is a challenging process, and the legal procedure complicated.

Darriea Turley, AM, President, Local Government NSW spoke to the gathering about the financial sustainability in Local Government.

Dr Amanda Cohn, NSW Greens Spokesperson for Local Government spoke about her Bill, currently waiting to be put before the NSW Parliament. The Local Government Amendment (De-amalgamation Plebiscites) Bill. Dr Cohn’s Bill should it introduced would remove many of the roadblocks currently in place. The proposed Bill would address sections of the Act that make demerging difficult. Dr Cohn said her Bill if introduced to parliament tries to rectify the 218cc section of the Act.

Presentations were also delivered by Mr Peter Tegart, from Always Thinking Advisory, the company contracted by CGRC to assist with the demerger implementation pathway. Mr Tegart told delegates that Councils need to show good financial stewardship and choose how to deal with changes.

United Services Union representative, Jed Lawton spoke on the impact to staff in forcibly merged councils and the effect uncertainty is currently having on the mental health and wellbeing of staff.

The Hon. Rod Roberts, MLC, Independent and Deputy President of the New South Wales Legislative Council was very vocal in his call that all forcibly merged Councils should be encouraging their residents to make a noise.

All in attendance agreed to support in principle a motion to support Dr Cohn's Bill.

**Picture and caption**

CGRC mayor Councillor Charlie Sheahan wrapped up the meeting, thanking all for their attendance, input, and support of CGRC's demerger process.



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**Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council**  
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