

News releases - Geoff Brock

Draft Council Boundary Bill out for public consultation

August 4, 2016

The State Government today released a draft Bill for public consultation aimed at reforming the process for changing current local council boundaries in South Australia.

The draft Bill includes creating an independent Commission to undertake initial assessments of boundary change proposals and to make recommendations to the Minister.

The draft Bill also seeks to establish a simpler and broader process allowing boundary change proposals to be initiated by a single council or the Minister for Local Government.

Other measures will include introducing a provision for independent analysis of general proposals – significant boundary changes, amalgamations or significant structural reform – by one or more investigators with the relevant expertise.

There's also a provision for creating a simplified pathway for minor boundary change proposals.

Background

Legislative provisions governing council boundary changes have not changed since the *Local Government Act 1999* came into operation.

At this time, the Boundary Adjustment Facilitation Panel was established to refine council boundaries following the council amalgamations that occurred in South Australia in the late 1990s.

The Panel was abolished in 2015 following the State Government's reform of Boards and Committees.

The Panel's functions were transferred to the Minister for Local Government. The State Government made a commitment at that time to review the provisions in the Act relating to council boundary changes.

Following discussion at Ministerial meetings with the Local Government Association, and subsequently through the Premier's State/Local Government Forum, the State Government and the LGA have agreed on a proposed new framework allowing for a more effective way of proposing and considering submissions for council boundary changes.

Quotes attributable to Local Government Minister Geoff Brock

We now have an opportunity to put in place a better process - one that deals with minor boundary changes efficiently, and also enables freer debate and discussion on more significant structural reform opportunities.

The new approach provides an opportunity to remove the limitations and inefficiencies in the current boundary change processes.

Some of these include current restrictions on who can initiate reform proposals, burdensome procedural requirements and the necessity for two or more councils to agree with reform proposals from members of the public.

I believe these reforms will drive positive outcomes for communities across our State and I encourage all those interested to participate in the consultation process.

Following consideration of feedback, I expect to introduce a Bill in the Spring session of Parliament this year.

Quotes attributable to LGA President Mayor Dave Burgess

The LGA believes there is a place for evidence based discussion about boundary reform and structural change in local government.

These proposed changes depoliticise the discussion by bringing greater independence and transparency into the assessment and decision making process.

There is a growing body of research that shows forced council amalgamations do not deliver benefits for communities, and we are pleased that the State Government is working with councils and the LGA to investigate and deliver sensible local government reforms.