

Media Release

Snowy Valleys Council given support to hold referendum on de-amalgamation

Thursday, 21 August 2025

Residents in Snowy Valleys will have a say about the future of their local government area, with the Minister for Local Government today giving his support for the Council to start preparing for a referendum to vote on a potential de-amalgamation.

On Tuesday 19 August the Minister received a report from the NSW Local Government Boundaries Commission which examined the Council's de-amalgamation proposal, including the Council's implementation plan and financial sustainability plan.

The Boundaries Commission has recommended the Council's proposal be supported. The Minister has accepted this recommendation and will now consult with the NSW Electoral Commissioner to allow Council to hold a constitutional referendum and let residents vote on whether they want to demerge.

The Minister met with Snowy Valleys Council Mayor Cr Julia Ham, the Member for Wagga Wagga Dr Joe McGirr MP and the Member for Albury Justin Clancy MP, to release the report and discuss the next step in the demerger process.

Snowy Valleys Council has been following the demerger pathway made possible by legislation introduced and passed by the Minns Labor Government last year.

The Council was required to develop a business case for de-amalgamation which was referred to the Boundaries Commission.

The Commission asked Council for more detail on the implementation of the proposal to outline financial impacts (including increases to rates), long term strategic plans, and the capacity of the new councils to deliver services.

Council's implementation plan was presented to the Commission, which also held public hearings before finalising its recommendations in a report to the Minister.

With the green light to proceed to the next step in the process, Snowy Valleys Council can now go ahead and commence planning for a referendum. This includes public exhibition of the business case and implementation plan.

The Minister made it clear during the meeting today with the Council that as part of this referendum residents must be made aware they will be facing rate increases and other costs to support the demerged councils, so they can make an informed decision.

The Boundaries Commission report details rates in a restored Tumut Shire would increase by almost 15% over seven years and between 45-65% in Tumbarumba over the same period. In addition, there would be a range of increases to various fees and charges including water and sewer, leases and licenses, commercial fees and drainage.

The majority of the whole council area must support this vote for the demerger to proceed.

Under the *Local Government Act 1993* the Boundaries Commission report was required to be released publicly within 48 hours of the Minister receiving it.

Minister for Local Government Ron Hoenig said:

“The communities of Snowy Valleys weren’t given a choice when the Liberal-National Government forced the amalgamation of Tumut and Tumbarumba councils.

“It has proven to be another local government disaster inflicted upon regional NSW communities.

“The impact the amalgamation continues to have on the Council, councillors and staff was made clear by the Boundaries Commission.

“Prior to coming to government, Labor made a commitment to the people of Snowy Valleys that we would support the Council in holding a referendum to vote on a possible demerger.

“I know it’s been a long road to get here, but the work the Council has done putting together a business case has been necessary to ensure demerging would be a viable option.

“If there is majority support in the referendum and residents are prepared to accept the financial costs, then the Council can progress with the transition work required to demerge.

“If the referendum is rejected, the community and the Council must respect that outcome and get on with it.

“The important thing is the communities of Snowy Valleys are given the choice to make this decision for themselves – not have it made for them by the state government which has no mandate to interfere with local democracy.”

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The Boundaries Commission report is available on the Office of Local Government website:

<https://www.olg.nsw.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/Snowy-Valleys-Regional-Council-Boundaries-Commission-Report-August-2025.pdf>