

Can small to medium sized Local Councils ever be sustainable?

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Aim:

The NSW Government in 2015 undertook a reform agenda for Local Government called “Fit For the Future” (FFF) which led to the reduction in the number of Local Councils from 152 to 112. With the reform process effectively behind NSW it is an appropriate time to ask, is bigger better? and how can a small to medium sized council ever be sustainable? The NSW FFF program in many respects highlighted the importance of infrastructure on the running of Local Councils. In particular, the reform process highlighted the difficulties that smaller to medium sized Councils had in demonstrating that they were sustainable. Morrison Low’s work both, during and after the Fit For the Future program, indicate that contrary to what many believe to be true, that small and medium sized councils can be sustainable.

Method:

For any organisation to be sustainable it is essential that they have a good understanding of their business and the environment that they operate in. As such Councils must fully understand the organisations income and expenditure requirements, the condition and the expenditure required to maintain operate and renew its infrastructure assets and finally what services the community wants, needs and are prepared to pay for. The paper will draw on work that has been carried out by Morrison Low for a range of small and medium sized Councils and how we helped these Councils on the path to long term financial sustainability.

Results:

The paper will highlight by use of practicable and innovative improvement initiatives and a good understanding of its infrastructures current and future needs that small and medium sized Councils can be financial sustainable and deliver quality services to their community.

Conclusion:

That with a good understanding of what is required to maintain and renew current and future infrastructure assets small and medium sized Councils can be financially sustainable.