Fit for the Future Facilitation Report for Mid-Murray Councils

Report date: 25th February, 2015

Participating Councils:

Murray Shire Council	**Deniliquin Council**
Conargo Shire Council	**Jerilderie Shire Council**
Berrigan Shire Council	**Wakool Shire Council**

1. Executive Summary

The agreed Brief for the Mid-Murray facilitation was successfully completed with:

a) Research via the internet and Pre-workshop telephone interviews with the nominated participants

b) A Workshop held at Mathoura on 3rd & 4th February, 2015 with all six (6) Councils represented by elected representatives and Senior Staff,

c) The Draft report being submitted to Councils on 13th February, 2015 for review and comment, and

d) Final report to be submitted to Office of Local Government by 27th February, 2015.

The Workshop outcomes are detailed in Section 3.2.5 of this report with Council General Managers to prepare individual Reports for their Council's consideration with:

- Berrigan and Jerilderie Councils planning to withdraw from the Mid-Murray Group and engage with other neighbouring Councils, and

- Murray, Deniliquin, Conargo and Wakool Councils to continue their conversation and discuss with the Office of Local Government. This is to undertake 'Business Case' development including further assessment of a Mid-Murray Joint Organisation and the Rural Council model option.

2. Consultant Brief

In terms of the brief from the Office of Local Government (OLG), as Fit for the Future Facilitators we were to develop tailored facilitation plans to suit the needs and local circumstances of each group of Councils.

This was to include the following:

- One-to-one session(s) with each Council in a group to develop an understanding of each council's current state and views, and
- Group workshop(s) with all Councils in the group to explore and discuss opportunities, and identify and resolve obstacles to merging.

3. Project Output

3.1 Research

Given the geographic spread of the Councils and their respective administrative offices the initial research was undertaken via internet and telephone.

This included but was not necessarily limited to, residents' surveys, the Independent Panel Report, local media, Community Strategic Plans, Council reports, regional plans and relationships with other tiers of Government.

A Pre-Workshop Questionnaire was designed (see Appendix 1) and telephone interviews conducted with the nominated representatives from all of the participating Councils during the two weeks leading up to the workshop. This enabled us to understand the views of individuals and the appetite and openness with which the Councils were undertaking the facilitation.

3.2 Workshop

3.2.1 Approach

The initial workshop program was designed on the premise that six (6) Councils were interested in considering a merged entity. This premise was challenged:

- just prior to the Workshop in a conversation by a participant to the OLG Relationship Manager and discussed with the facilitators,
- in Workshop Session 2 'Expectations' (of participant Councils), and
- group discussions on Day 1 of the workshop,

necessitating a change in the Day 2 Program to accommodate the participants' desire to explore issues relating to the creation of a possible Joint Organisation (JO). This resulted in adding sessions for discussion of

the 'Purpose' and 'Principles' in forming a regional Mid-Murray JO. It is noted that the Government response to the Independent Panel Report supported rural / merged / stand-alone Councils <u>and</u> a Mid-Murray Joint Organisation.

3.2.2 Delivery

Appendix 2 provides a copy of the original Workshop Agenda. The workshop was conducted in the Mathoura Business Centre over 1.5 days on 3rd and 4th February, 2015 and was facilitated by two consultants from Advanced Dynamics, Mark Potter and Peter Gesling. There were 18 participants from the Councils including a combination of Mayors, Deputy Mayors, General Managers, Deputy General Managers and Senior staff.

3.2.3 Modification

There was intense discussion among participants on the exclusion of a JO consideration and scope as they viewed benefits in developing a JO and future configuration of Councils in parallel, not in series. As a result of these conversations it was clear that the topic needed to be aired. This led to modification of the agenda.

Whilst not part of the initial brief, this certainly added value for the participants (refer to Appendix 4.6).

Appendix 3 provides a copy of the modified Agenda.

3.2.4 Outputs

During the Workshop various sessions required participants to work in their respective Council groups or in mixed syndicate groups to identify or solve issues. The output or 'artefacts' from these group sessions conducted during the Workshop are included in Appendix 4 (4.1 – 4.8 inclusive).

3.2.5 Results / Outcomes

The results / outcomes achieved during the Workshop are summarised as follows:

1. Workshop participants were provided with a methodology to reframe 'roadblocks' to 'Critical Issues'. This process took the form of turning what were perceived as obstacles into questions that then lead to the identification of potential solutions. Participants were able to practise this method on the Top 5 'roadblocks' they had identified in the Workshop. Participants commented on the usefulness of this methodology (refer Appendix 4.5 – Potential Solutions to Top 5 Critical Issues).

2.	Participants developed a 'Purpose' statement for a Mid-Murray JO and identified 'principles' for its design and operation within local constraints (see Appendix 4.7 - Mid-Murray Joint Organisation Purpose and Design Principles).

3.	Berrigan and Jerilderie participants decided to notify their intention to withdraw from the Mid-Murray conversation to pursue similar options with other neighbouring Councils.

4.	The remaining four Council groups, Murray, Deniliquin, Conargo and Wakool, agreed on preferred and alternate futures which included stand-alone, Rural Council model and a range of merged Council options. It is understood that participants will be developing a matrix of options for discussion with their respective Councils.

5.	All Council groups will prepare reports for their Councils' consideration recommending progressing to development of business cases for their chosen options. Councils will discuss this step with OLG.

6.	All participants expressed their satisfaction with the process. Whilst being concerned that they did not have 'enough' information from OLG and State Government (see Appendix 4.8 – Questions for OLG) they felt more capable of taking 'next steps'.

	Participants specifically raised the issue of S.218CA in the NSW Local Government Act and its potential impact on merged Councils. The Councils will be seeking clarification on the intent and meaning as an agreed/common understanding is important to completing FFF templates.

7.	All participants saw the need to be exploring the development of a Mid-Murray JO in parallel with any merger discussions in line with the State Government's response to the Independent Panel Report.

3.3 Reporting

3.3.1 Status Reports to OLG

Progress reports have been provided to the OLG Relationship Manager via telephone and email during the research and design phase and also following the Workshop.

3.3.2 Final Report

The following reporting schedule was agreed with the participating Councils at the conclusion of the Workshop:

- Draft report of Workshop outcomes to participating Councils for comment / feedback by C.O.B. Friday 13th February, 2015

- Councils to provide feedback/comments to Advanced Dynamics by C.O.B. Friday 20th February, 2015

- Final report to be submitted to OLG by C.O.B Friday 27th February, 2015

Appendices

Appendix 1. Pre-workshop Questionnaire

Questions for Council Executives

- What was the driver(s) or impetus to commence the current Mid-Murray conversation?

- What do you see as the best outcome for your Council/ community?

- Is this a majority view in your Council?

- What is your understanding of the views among participating Councils'? Ref: Wakool

- Is there any issue you would like the facilitators to raise during the workshop (without referring to you)?

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Fit for the Future Workshop – Mid-Murray Councils
Mathoura Business Centre
3 – 4 February 2015

Agenda

Day 1 – Tuesday 3 Feb

	SESSION	**CORE CONTENT**	**PROCESS**
9.00am	Welcome & Introductions	Overview of workshop Introductions and getting to know facilitators and participants	Mark and Peter to facilitate
	Expectations	Understanding expectations of participating Councils	Working in Council groups and feeding back to workshop
10:30am	**Break**		
11.00am	Identifying Issues	Summary of feedback from pre-workshop discussions Identifying the issues/roadblocks to amalgamation of the six participating councils	Mark and Peter to provide initial summary. Then working in rotating groups followed by report backs
1.00pm	**Lunch**		
1.45pm	Top 3 or 4 issues	Distillation of the issues/roadblocks into the top 3 or 4	Process led by Mark and Peter
	Critical issues	Discussion on a process of how to deal with roadblocks	Mark and Peter to lead discussion
	Solving Critical Issues	Participants to work on options to solve/deal with the top 3 or 4 issues/roadblocks	Working in Council Groups with support by Mark and Peter
3.15pm	**Break**		
3.30pm	Solving Critical Issues cont'd	Participants to work on options to solve/deal with the top 3 or 4 issues/roadblocks cont'd	Working in Council Groups with support by Mark and Peter
	Reports on Potential Solutions	Report back on the potential solutions identified to deal with the issues/roadblocks	Council Groups to report back
5.00pm	**Close**	**Wrap up and close of Day 1**	

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Fit for the Future Workshop – Mid-Murray Councils
Mathoura Business Centre
3 – 4 February 2015

Agenda cont'd

Day 2 – Wednesday 4 Feb

	SESSION	CORE CONTENT	PROCESS
9.00am	Reflections from Day 1	Review of Day 1. Opportunity for participants to reflect and share thoughts from discussions to date	Mark & Peter to facilitate
	Issues for OLG	What issues do you want or need/need answered by OLG? These items can be for inclusion in the report to OLG on the Workshop outcomes.	Working in Council groups and feeding back to workshop
	Considering hypothetical alternatives	Paint the hypothetical scenario – "What if OLG rejects all offers from this group for individual councils to remain or smaller group mergers and mandates a Mid-Murray Council comprising all six participating Councils?"	Mark and Peter to lead discussion
10:15am	**Break**		
10.30am	Defining a common purpose	In the event of the hypothetical scenario above – what would be the Common Purpose of a combined Mid-Murray Council?	Working in 2 groups with support from Mark and Peter then report back
	Model for amalgamated Council	Ideas on what would be a workable model for such an amalgamated Council? What would it look like and how would it operate?	Working in small groups of 3 or 4 people
	Feedback on Model(s)	Report back on ideas for workable model(s) for amalgamated Mid-Murray Council. What to do with these ideas?	Groups to report back Discussion led by Mark and Peter
	Review and wrap up	Review of workshop process and outcomes. Discussion on reporting process and next steps.	Mark and Peter to facilitate
12.30pm	**Workshop close**		

Note: Mark Potter and Peter Gesling will be available during the afternoon of Wednesday 4 February in Mathoura for further discussions or follow-up with individuals if required.

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Fit for the Future Workshop – Mid-Murray Councils
Mathoura Business Centre
3 – 4 February 2015

Modified Agenda

Day 1 – Tuesday 3 Feb

	SESSION	CORE CONTENT	PROCESS
9.00am	Welcome & Introductions	Overview of workshop Introductions and getting to know facilitators and participants	Mark and Peter to facilitate
	Expectations	Understanding expectations of participating Councils	Working in Council groups and feeding back to workshop
10:30am	**Break**		
11.00am	Identifying Issues	Summary of feedback from pre-workshop discussions Identifying the issues/roadblocks to amalgamation of the six participating councils	Mark and Peter to provide initial summary. Then working in rotating groups followed by report backs
1.00pm	**Lunch**		
1.45pm	Top 4 or 5 issues	Distillation of the issues/roadblocks into the top 4 or 5	Mark and Peter to facilitate
	Benefits	Identifying the potential benefits of merger / amalgamation	Working in Council groups and feeding back to workshop
	Critical issues	Discussion on a process of how to deal with roadblocks	Mark and Peter to lead discussion
	Solving Critical Issues	Participants to work on options to solve/deal with the top 3 or 4 issues/roadblocks	Working in Council Groups with support by Mark and Peter
3.15pm	**Break**		
3.30pm	Solving Critical Issues cont'd	Participants to work on options to solve/deal with the top 3 or 4 issues/roadblocks cont'd	Working in Council Groups with support by Mark and Peter
	Reports on Potential Solutions	Report back on the potential solutions identified to deal with the issues/roadblocks	Council Groups to report back
	Re-visit Expectations	Review day against expectations and re-frame Day 2 to ensure expectations are met	Mark and Peter to lead
5.00pm	Close	**Wrap up and close of Day 1**	

Appendix 3. Modified Workshop Program

Fit for the Future Workshop – Mid-Murray Councils
Mathoura Business Centre
3 – 4 February 2015

Modified Agenda cont'd

Day 2 – Wednesday 4 Feb

	SESSION	CORE CONTENT	PROCESS
9.00am	Reflections from Day 1	Review of Day 1. Opportunity for participants to reflect and share thoughts from discussions to date	Mark & Peter to facilitate
	Defining a common purpose of a J.O.	What would be the Common Purpose of a Mid-Murray Joint Organisation?	Plenary session led by Mark
	Model for a Mid Murray J.O.	Ideas on what would be a workable model / design principles for a Mid Murray J.O. What would it look like and how would it operate?	Working in 2 groups and feeding back to workshop
10:30am	Break		
10.45am	What will Local Government in the Mid Murray look like?	Context – No change is not an option. Councils to formulate options regarding their position for future Mid Murray Local Government.	Working in Council groups and meeting with / discussing with other Councils as required
	Feedback on Model(s) for Local Government	Report back on ideas for workable model(s) / options for Mid-Murray Local Government. Councils to articulate their preferred options.	Mark and Peter to facilitate
	Issues for OLG	What issues do you want or need/need answered by OLG? These items can be for inclusion in the report to OLG on the Workshop outcomes.	Working in Council groups and capturing on Post-It notes for collection
	Review and wrap up	Review of workshop process and outcomes. Discussion on reporting process and next steps.	Mark and Peter to facilitate
12.30pm	Workshop close		

Note: Mark Potter and Peter Gesling will be available during the afternoon of Wednesday 4 February in Mathoura for further discussions or follow-up with individuals if required.

Appendix 4.1   Workshop Outputs (Artefacts)

-   **Expectations of Participant Councils**

Berrigan
- Not looking for merger – sustainable now
- Want to hear the "for" case
- Want to be part of the discussion
- Want to promote expanded JO
- Get a picture of how different types of Councils and a JO will work
- No nett disadvantage for Berrigan Shire Council residents

Wakool
- J.O. – Agreement to participate
- Progress to establish a Rural Council which is a key factor to a functional JO
- Agreement to explore options

Jerilderie
- Understand the benefits and disadvantages of mergers
- Learn more about the process
- Understand how we might fit into the Mid-Murray group
- Three non-negotiables
    - Maintain level of service
    - Maintain level of employment
    - Establish good representation if a new entity evolves

Conargo
- Investigate benefits/disadvantages for Conargo Shire
- How will our Community Strategic Plan be implemented in the future?
- What will happen to the future levels of service our Community currently enjoy?
- Future representation for our Community (Councillors)
- What will happen (already happening) to staff morale and expectations?
- Financial sustainability? Downhill?
- Locality of Service/Employees?

Deniliquin
- Firm decisions on where to from here in regard to mergers/Rural Councils
- Resolution on any unforseen roadblocks to mergers
- Understanding of issues relevant to other Councils and assist in their resolution
- Acceptance of NSW Government clear directive that doing nothing is not an option
- An outline of next steps in Fit for the Future template completion; consultation; business case completion; etc
- That we maximise financial incentives from NSW Government on a regional basis

Murray
- General information about unanswered questions re the process (JOs, Rural Councils, etc)
- Understanding of where local Shires are at in their thinking
- The process form Feb-June to arrive at final position without presenting conflicting positions
- Reaching a consensus position on a JO structure
- What is the process to pursue merger activity – governance, structure etc

Appendix 4.2   Workshop Outputs (Artefacts)

Roadblocks to Merger(s)

- Representation
    - □ Representation on Council – Wards and removal of 10% rule
    - □ Representation domination
    - □ Local representation
    - □ Population distribution
- Staffing
    - □ Staff retention
    - □ Risk of loss of best staff / Retention of 'dead wood'
    - □ Strategic capacity
    - □ Loss of corporate intelligence
- Levels of service delivery
    - □ Types and timing of service delivery
    - □ Common service delivery
    - □ Difference in current service levels / expectations
- Distances
    - □ Distance between centres, geographic
    - □ Identity
    - □ Representation
    - □ Tyranny of distance
- Accessibility
    - □ State boundary
- Social/Economic impacts associated with loss of expertise
- Standardisation of rates / Rating systems and levels
    - □ Rapid harmonisation
    - □ Retention of differential
- Connectivity – many centres
- Implementation timetable
- Section 218CA Local Government Act – Rural centres < 5000
    - □ Staff arrangements for rural councils per Act
- Socio economic identity
- Reserves quarantine
- Maintaining 'Local' in local government
- Boundary changes / Boundary adjustments off the table
- North/south movements
- No natural regional centre shared between all six
    - □ Various centres in Victoria (Swan Hill, Bendigo, Echuca, Shepparton, Cobram, Albury)
    - □ State boundary – Regional centre (Vic)
    - □ Ignores strategic links with Victoria
    - □ Cross border issues differ across existing LGAs – different partner in Vic
    - □ 'Split' services from other agencies (Albury, Wagga, Shepparton) – Health
    - □ No natural regional centre in NSW at all
- Community reaction
    - □ Better acceptance of like for like
    - □ Perception of takeover
- Structure of organisation
- Location of H.Q. – adequate accommodation

Appendix 4.2   Workshop Outputs (Artefacts)

- **Roadblocks to Merger(s)**

- Sustainability of smaller communities
  - Lack of support
  - Effect on local employment
  - Social effect on community
- L.E.P. variations
- Systems variations
  - Different salary systems and conditions of employment
  - Existing contracts
  - I.T.
  - Telephones
  - Records management
  - H.R.
  - Data systems
  - Customer requests
  - Risk management
  - Work system & practices
  - Finance
- Joint Organisation arrangements
  - One council JO?
  - JO / merger discussion – parallel or separate?
- Local Government Act changes
- Other legislation
- Cost of change generally
- Communities of interest
- Winners and losers
- Start-up jeopardised
- Risk management / control of existing funds
- Lack of vision / understanding of how new model will work
- Threat to water / sewer
- Identifying advantages for local area
- Differences in strategic direction / future plans
  - Implementation of existing management plans
  - IP&R. Plans
  - Reserve funds

Appendix 4.3   Workshop Outputs (Artefacts)

Top 5 Roadblocks ⇒ Critical Issues to be solved

These were the top 5 roadblocks identified by participants:

1. Levels of service / Service delivery
2. Representation
3. Section 218CA Local Government Act
4. Sustainability of smaller communities
5. Rating systems

They were then re-phrased as Critical Issues (problems to be solved):

1. How to ensure agreed levels of service are achieved?
2. How to ensure all sections of community have an equitable voice?
3. How to achieve efficiency gains within fixed / existing parameters?
4. How to ensure the sustainability of smaller communities?
5. How to create equitable rating systems?

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Appendix 4.4   Workshop Outputs (Artefacts)

- **Benefits of Merger(s)**

- Economies of scale
  - Efficiencies
  - Reduced admin costs
- Make the most of incentives
  - Cash grant from State Government
- Control destiny
- Stronger voice for community
- Centres of excellence
- Political certainty
- Plant rationalisation
- Office accommodation savings
- More of a Regional consistency
  - Promote Region
- Create employment progression pathways
- Opportunity for improved or more services
  - Service distribution
- Eliminate some areas of duplication
- Ability to attract more qualified staff / specialists / professionals
- Reduce number of Local Government areas
- Reduced cost of Councillors / GMs / Directors
- Enhanced 'Scale' and 'Capacity'
- Greater financial capacity – i.e. larger projects
- Short term sustainability improvement
- Ability to 'cross subsidise' struggling areas
- Limits financial impact on State Government
- Makes State Government job easier as dealing with fewer Councils
- Allows for future corporatisation / sale of water & sewer
- Strength in numbers
  - Political
  - Government Departments
- Attracting industry / population
- Even rate distribution
- Councillors' diversity
- Infrastructure improvement

Appendix 4.5   Workshop Outputs (Artefacts)

- **Potential Solutions to Top 5 Critical Issues**

1. **How to ensure agreed levels of service are achieved?**

- Establish actual service levels being delivered now
- Evaluate costs of each and variations
- Seek Council / Community input on new levels if variations sought
  - Cost of increasing service level
  - Savings from reduced level if over-serviced
- Document final levels agreed
- Review on regular basis

  ○ IP & R
  ○ Consultation
  ○ Agree on one or more 'levels' of serviced community with associated cost
  ○ Assess capacity against needs, wants
  ○ Relates to Critical Issue #5

  ♦ Maintain existing IP & R long term financial plans
  ♦ Integrate after 4 years
  ♦ Develop strategy for rate harmonisation
  ♦ Audit fees and charges to develop model for equitable value
  ♦ Amalgamation of 'like' Councils

  ◊ Define services
    - Use
    - Availability
    - Type
    - Needs
    - Expectations
  ◊ Understand the differences in service levels
  ◊ Develop a mechanism to preserve levels

  ▪ Set benchmarks – perhaps include in proclamation
  ▪ Maintain level of funding
  ▪ Monitor actual to benchmark
  ▪ Report on results to Community
  ▪ Probationary period for newly merged areas!

2. **How to ensure all sections of community have an equitable voice?**

- Identify sections of communities and possible equitable structure
- Establish wards with Electoral Act guide
- Establish community committees to support Councillors in smaller areas
- Establish procedures for committees
- Review effectiveness of 2 way communication and change as required

  ○ Lobby for change to LGA regarding wards in un-subdivided areas
  ○ Explore alternative options for representation
  ○ Expand number of Councillors
  ○ Foster a culture of community in new LGA

‒   **Potential Solutions to Top 5 Critical Issues**

♦   Un-subdivided Local Government Area with 7 elected Councillors

◊   Transitional provisions for representation
- Equal numbers from constituent Councils
- Pro-rata numbers
  * for 1st term

- Retain a certain number of Councillors elected from the original Council areas
- Increase powers of Sec 355 Committees to represent local areas
- Set up Advisory Board based on Communities of Interest

3. **How to achieve efficiency gains within fixed / existing parameters?**

- Seek legal interpretation of parameters to ensure these are understood
- Review / design actions to work within those limits
- Lobby Government for legislation / regulation change

°   Move staff from larger towns to smaller centres to avoid S.218CA protection
°   Lobby for change to Act
°   Establish 'Centres of Excellence' across new LGA

♦   Locate new main office in smaller centre

◊   'Centres of Excellence' encouraged
◊   Attractive grants focus
◊   Rationalise infrastructure
◊   Succession implementation

- Lobby to have the Act / Regulations amended
- Reduce Admin / Depot centres
- Conargo Shire disadvantaged with current legislation of maintaining staff numbers

4. **How to ensure the sustainability of smaller communities?**

- Design Business Community Development Retention and Attraction strategies
- Establish action plan for each Community
- Review progress with change as necessary

°   Equitable representation
°   Use protections in Act effectively
°   Use greater scale and size to support smaller Communities – financially and through lobbying
°   Decentralise from larger centres to smaller towns / villages
°   Use planning schemes to discourage centralisation to larger towns in LGA
°   Don't sustain them. Make pragmatic decision to 'wind down' villages / small towns
°   Subdivide / special land sale offers '$1 block' offers

♦   Refer to solutions for items 1 and 3

- **Potential Solutions to Top 5 Critical Issues**

◊ Encourage Centres of Excellence
◊ Service provision for NSW Government as preferred contractor

■ Refer item 2 – Increase powers of Section 355 Committees to represent local areas
■ In conflict with item 3 above – Lobbying to have the Act / Regulations amended
■ Support / funding maintained and indexed for smaller communities

5. **How to create equitable rating systems?**

● Review structure and details of each rating system
● Identify gaps / variations and possible variation scenarios
● Agree on scenario / structure after consultation with Community
● Finalise design; implement; review

° Reliant / dependent in some way on resolution of Critical Issue #1
° Simple / equitable
    – easy to understand
    – easy to sell
° Make hard decisions early and stick with it

♦ Harmonise rating system following an analysis of existing rates and service delivery

◊ Transition over 5-10 years

■ Staged implementation
■ Adjust ad-valorem on L.O.S. for each Community
■ Visualisation of differential rates

Appendix 4.6 Workshop Outputs (Artefacts)

- **Reflections on Day 1**

- Include review period in the new Act
- Commitment to Joint Organisation
- Lobby for resolution of staff movement in new Act
- Get some answers from OLG / Minister on Joint Organisations/ Rural Councils etc
- Start discussions concerning 'Business Cases' to be able to rule mergers in/out
- We have common issues
- Staff issues
- Joint Organisations
- No real progress yet
- Two geographical groups
- Group unable to change legislation and have to make decisions now
- Time period very tight
- Joint Organisation - require model for our area
- Increasing preparedness to put cards on the table - identify scenarios
- Reinforced Jerilderie's position without providing all the answers
- Identified 'roadblocks' - they are not insoluble
- Willingness to support Mid-Murray Joint Organisation
- Willingness to proceed to Business Studies (Cases)

Appendix 4.7   Workshop Outputs (Artefacts)

Mid-Murray Joint Organisation Purpose and Design Principles

Draft Purpose Statement developed for a proposed Mid-Murray Joint Organisation:

"To support a Local Government System in the Mid-Murray that contributes to the sustainability of our Communities through the provision of a strategic interface and services that build on our strengths"

What a Mid-Murray Joint Organisation could look like – Design Principles:

- Governance
    - Mayor / Deputy Mayor vote each
- Org structure
    - State goals
    - Council goals
- Embedded / standalone
- Flexible Operation for Service Delivery etc. (Key point)
- No worse off in terms of cost
- Opt in / opt out / governance issues
- Minimalist / effective
- Use Council existing resources and skills
- Section 218CA contradiction?

- ° Board
    - Mayors +/- Deputy Mayors
- ° Executive
    - GMs
    - One of the GMs is Exec Officer of JO
    - Employ a Director / Senior Manager to run the office
- ° All 6 Shires within Mid-Murray (or their future manifestations) be full members or associate members
- ° JO can provide services to non-JO Councils e.g. Hay etc.
- ° Buy-in functionality from member Councils
- ° Budget?

- Legal advice re: staffing issues

- What does "reasonable & practical" exclusion in S.218CA mean in practice? Councils need advice so they can proceed with discussions

- What does S.218CA of the LG Act mean? Can OLG provide some advice as to what affect this will have on a merged Councils?

- Staffing provision - does the Rural Council fall under S.218CA or 3 years environment?

- What are the core requirements and functions of a Joint Organisation? What are the non-negotiables in a JO operation?

- What options are available to vary timeframes if they prove unrealistic?

- Is there any option to extend the timeframes for completion of information on proposed mergers?

- Will OLG fund multiple Business Cases?

- If Council submits a:

  o   Stay 'as is', or

  o   Rural Council and this is not agreed to by panel/Minister

  Will merger funds still be available?

- If no voluntary mergers as per report, will the Minister force amalgamations?