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Endorsed by the LGNSW Board  
in April 2026

## Office of Local Government

By email: [councilengagement@olg.nsw.gov.au](mailto:councilengagement@olg.nsw.gov.au)

### LGNSW Draft Submission: Joint Organisations Framework Refresh

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback to the Office of Local Government's (OLG) refresh of the framework that governs Joint Organisations (JO) in NSW. This submission is made in draft form, pending approval by the Local Government NSW (LGNSW) Board. If there are any changes following Board endorsement these will be separately provided to the OLG.

LGNSW commends the commitment of the Minister for Local Government that "councils should be free to collaborate in a form they see fit" and that the Minister wants to ensure the State is not putting unnecessary restrictions or requirements on how councils may wish to come together.

LGNSW's brief feedback, as set out below, reflects the need for flexibility in the regional collaboration framework, to reflect the differing councils, priorities and local contexts across NSW.

#### 1. Flexibility of framework

LGNSW encourages the NSW Government to permit increased flexibility into the regional cooperation framework, to reflect the diversity of councils and local priorities across NSW. This flexibility should include:

- **Flexibility of membership** – So that councils have greater scope to enter into and withdraw from JOs in line with their own local priorities. This may include flexibility for councils to be members of multiple JOs concurrently.
- **Flexibility of purpose** – Consideration of geographically based JOs as well as JOs that may be issue or purpose based.
- **Flexibility of structure** – To choose whether a JO or ROC model is more suitable.
- **Voluntary participation** – Councils should not be compelled to be a member of any JO or ROC.



- **Autonomy in setting roles and responsibilities** - JOs and ROCs should define their own roles and responsibilities. There should not be legislated or otherwise prescribed functions.

## 2. Streamlined and proportionate reporting and governance arrangements

While some councils assert that the legislative framework underpinning JOs reinforces their legitimacy and can increase the likelihood of the JO benefitting from grant funding from the NSW or Australian Governments, other councils report that compliance with JO regulatory obligations, including audit fees and other governance expense can be costly. Further, it should be recognised that ROCs in metropolitan, rural and regional areas were frequently successful in receiving grant funding prior to the introduction of JOs, and metropolitan ROCs continued to receive grant funding from State and Federal Governments while excluded from forming JOs.

To provide clarity on the appropriateness of the JO model, the NSW Government should provide greater detail on anticipated costs and resourcing requirements of JOs, and consider opportunities to streamline regulatory burdens.

The future framework for JOs would also benefit from clarity on the Minister's intention for a four-year JO term, with periodic reviews of JO membership.

Consideration should also be given to funding support for JOs, including for the establishment of any new JOs – similar to the seed funding provided for the earlier establishment of JOs.

## 3. Primacy of councils

Finally, it is the clear view of LGNSW that JOs should not be seen as a mechanism to bypass engagement with democratically elected councils, nor as a way to usurp individual council decisions where a matter is more appropriately dealt with at a local level.

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Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback. For further information, please email [policy@lgnsw.org.au](mailto:policy@lgnsw.org.au).

Yours sincerely

Damian Thomas  
**Director Advocacy**