

Opposition accuses minister of leaving merged councils hanging

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NSW Labor has criticised Minister for Local Government, Wendy Tuckerman MP, for refusing to provide any clear direction regarding possible demergers of councils throughout NSW.

Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council and Snowy Valleys have been the most vocal regarding their desire to demerge.

Two electoral proposals to demerge both councils were examined by the Local Government Boundaries Commission but were ultimately rejected by the former Minister for Local Government, Shelley Hancock.

Under questioning from Mark Buttigieg MLC in budget estimates yesterday, Minister Tuckerman said she would not "speculate" on any proposals to demerge until she saw a report regarding a proposal.



Mark Buttigieg MLC.

The Minister would also not commit to reversing the decisions regarding Cootamundra-Gundagai and Snowy Valleys demergers.

Shadow Minister Greg Warren MP, said he was hopeful the new Minister would not string communities along like her predecessors, however the signs were not encouraging.

"The Minister was asked several times whether she would allow communities to demerge if they wished to, but she failed to provide a clear answer," he said.

"Communities should be able to decide their own fate - it's not a difficult concept to understand or commit to.

"NSW Labor has vowed to listen to the desires of communities but the NSW Government continues to refuse to do likewise."

Mark Buttigieg, MLC, said the Minister's non-committal responses would only increase the frustration and angst of communities throughout the state.

"The Minister had the opportunity to provide some clear answers and direction to those many communities that had been impacted by the forced mergers," he said.

"Minister Tuckerman clearly did not make the most of that opportunity."

Statistics from the Office of Local Government show the operating performance ratio (OPR) show eight out of the 20 worst performing councils in terms of OPR were merged councils.

A negative OPR essentially means a council is spending more money than it is receiving.

Cootamundra-Gundagai has a OPR of -19.5.