

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### Kimba Mayor warns of ‘catastrophic’ approach to local government reform

A failure to give South Australia’s small, rural councils a continued seat at the table on local government reform could have catastrophic consequences for them and the communities they are entrusted to represent, the Mayor of the District Council of Kimba has warned.

With an overhaul of the state’s local government sector identified as a top priority for both sides of Government, Council’s concerns with the proposed reform have been highlighted in a submission to the Local Government Association of South Australia that was tabled at the final ordinary meeting of 2018 on December 12.

Mayor Dean Johnson said that while Council had significant reservations about the impact the Local Government (Ratepayer Protection and Related Measures) Amendment Bill 2018 and preceding rate capping legislation would have on local governments like Kimba, it agreed that change was needed within the sector to increase transparency and restore community confidence in the role councils played in the lives of every South Australian.

“It’s difficult to argue against reform when there is now almost-daily coverage in the media about instances of councils letting their communities down through poor governance, a lack of accountability, or questionable conduct inside the chambers,” he said.

“Council supports the push for change, however, we’re worried that the stipulations made in the legislation currently before Parliament may inadvertently create an impost on the resources of local governments like ours, which have an extremely limited financial capacity to increase staffing levels to accommodate the additional reporting requirements of the Bill.

“Looking at the draft legislation, it’s hard to see how some of the provisions will do anything to increase ratepayer protections and the trust of communities when they simply represent an unnecessary statutory burden that small councils will likely need to employ more administrative staff to carry.”

Mayor Johnson said that further to its submission, Council had also written to Minister for Local Government Stephan Knoll and Shadow Minister for Local Government Tony Piccolo urging them to ensure the voices of rural and remote councils were heard during the reform process.

“It’s disappointing that Council is yet to receive a response from either the Minister or Shadow Minister to what are genuine concerns about their respective attempts to reform how the state’s 68 councils operate,” he said.

“Historically, any substantive amendments to local government legislation are long-standing, which means how we approach reform now is critical in determining how sustainable councils like Kimba are over coming decades.

“If we get this wrong, it has the potential to have a catastrophic long-term impact on the strategic and operational sustainability of many small, rural councils and, more importantly, the communities who rely on them as a vital part of their day-to-day lives.”

**ENDS**

For more information, contact the District Council of Kimba Manager Corporate Services Lyndon Keane on 0419 891 666 or [lyndon@kimba.sa.gov.au](mailto:lyndon@kimba.sa.gov.au).

**Photo captions**

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REFORM RESERVATIONS: District Council of Kimba Mayor Dean Johnson says small, rural councils must continue to play a leading role in South Australian local government reform so that changes do not have a “catastrophic” impact on them and the communities they represent.