

The Gore District Council welcomes today's release by the Local Government Commission on two possible structures for local government reorganisation in Southland.

However, it reminds residents the Commission's work is separate from the Council's consultation on whether to lodge a proposal under the Government's Head Start process.

The Commission has released brief explanations of the two options it has shortlisted for detailed modelling as part of its independent investigation into local government in Southland.

They are one Southland-wide unitary council, or two unitary councils – one based in Invercargill and one combining the Southland and Gore districts. Both options would be supported by networks of local boards.

The Commission has not chosen a preferred option. Both options will undergo independent financial modelling, and the Commission will engage with councils, Ngāi Tahu ki Murihiku and the wider Southland community as its work continues.

Gore District Mayor Ben Bell welcomed the release, acknowledging that the Commission's two options broadly mirror Options 2 and 3 in the Council's own consultation.

"The Commission has provided people with some useful detail, such as indicative council sizes, how local boards could work, and the benefits and challenges of each option.

"It gives people something solid to weigh up, including anyone still preparing feedback for us before 27 July."

Mayor Bell stressed that no decisions had been made and that it was important for people to still provide feedback to the Council.

"The Commission hasn't picked a preferred option, and neither have we"

Two processes, two ways to have a say

Mayor Bell said it was important that people did not confuse the two processes running side by side in the south.

The Commission's investigation is an independent, statutory review instigated by Southland District Council and has its own timeline. This second phase runs through until November.

The Government's Head Start pathway is different. It is a short, voluntary window for councils throughout New Zealand to put forward their own reform proposal, with a deadline of 9 August.

"Head Start puts southern councils in the driver's seat on the shape and timing of any proposal. The Commission's process is a longer road.

"Both paths still allow the Gore District to be represented the same as now, should the community choose that path."

Anyone who wants a say in the Head Start decision needs to give feedback through the Council's Let's Talk page by Monday 27 July.

The Commission will run its own community engagement later in its process, and people are welcome to take part in both, he said.

The Council's timeline hasn't moved

The Council's consultation closes on Monday 27 July, and it will decide at a meeting on Tuesday 4 August whether to lodge a Head Start outline proposal.

The Commission's announcement does not extend, replace or pre-empt either date.

Details of the Commission's two options and the Council's Head Start information and feedback form are available at www.lets.talk.goredc.govt.nz

ENDS

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Editor's Note

The processes in a nutshell:

Local Government Commission

- ✓ Independent process
- ✓ Detailed modelling and consultation
- ✓ Two options currently being investigated
- ✓ No preferred option selected yet

Head Start Pathway

- ✓ Government-led reform programme
- ✓ Councils develop their own proposals
- ✓ Shorter timeframe
- ✓ Assessed directly against Government criteria

The Local Government Commission is holding a series of community meetings around Southland later this month / early August.

There will be one in Gore on Tuesday 28 July 5:30pm-7:00pm

Ōtamatea/Otamita room - James Cumming Community Centre, Ardwick Street, Gore.