



Local Government Commission

Mana Kāwanatanga ā Rohe

Southland reorganisation investigation Frequently Asked Questions

What is a reorganisation investigation?

A reorganisation investigation considers whether there should be a change in how local government is organised in a particular district or region, in order to promote good local government by enabling and facilitating improvements to local governance (Local Government Act 2002, [section 24AA](#)).

Who carries out a reorganisation investigation?

The Local Government Commission carries out reorganisation investigations (Local Government Act 2002, [Schedule 3](#)).

Why is the Local Government Commission investigating local government reorganisation in Southland?

Southland District Council submitted a reorganisation initiative to the Local Government Commission.

The Local Government Commission followed clauses 4-6, Schedule 3 of the Local Government Act 2002 after it received the reorganisation initiative from Southland District Council. The Local Government Commission:

- Confirmed the reorganisation initiative was valid, in accordance with [clause 4](#);
- Consulted with Gore District Council, Invercargill City Council, Southland District Council and Environment Southland, in accordance with [clause 5](#)
- Engaged with Te Ao Mārama Incorporated, on behalf of Ngāi Tahu ki Murihiku
- Considered all information received against the factors set out in [clause 6](#)

The Local Government Commission's decision was to investigate the reorganisation initiative.

What outcome does Southland District Council's reorganisation initiative seek?

Southland District Council's reorganisation initiative is for the four Southland councils to be replaced with two unitary authorities, one focused on the Invercargill city area and the other focussed on the rest of the Southland and Gore Districts.

The outcome sought by Southland District Council would mean:

- Disestablishment of the Southland Regional Council (Environment Southland)
- The union of Southland District and Gore District, as a unitary authority
- Invercargill City Council becoming a unitary authority

What is a unitary authority?

Unitary authorities are territorial authorities that are responsible for both regional council and district/city council functions. Unitary authorities are the only council in the area; there is no separate regional council.

Existing unitary authorities in New Zealand include:

- Auckland Council
- Gisborne District Council
- Marlborough District Council
- Nelson City Council
- Tasman District Council

What happens in an investigation?

The first step is for the Local Government Commission to develop an investigation process. This will be done in consultation with all four Southland council and Ngāi Tahu ki Murihiku. Once the investigation process is confirmed, it will be published in an investigation process document on the Commission's website.

The investigation process document will set out how the investigation will run. It will include things like:

- The matters to be investigated
- The affected area and the affected local authorities
- The investigation procedure and timetable
- Key interested parties and how they will be engaged in the investigation
- How and when members of the public will be able to engage in the process.

How can the Southland community provide input into the investigation?

Public consultation is an important part of the investigation. The investigation process document will include how and when members of the Southland community can engage in the investigation process.

When will the investigation process document be ready?

The Local Government Commission will now work with the four Southland councils and Ngāi Tahu ki Murihiku to develop the investigation process. It is expected that the investigation process document will be confirmed by October 2025.

How long will an investigation take?

The investigation process document will include a timetable of the proposed investigation. It is expected that an investigation will take at least 12 months.

Can the Local Government Commission consider other possible outcomes in its investigation?

Southland District Council's reorganisation initiative is the starting point for the Local Government Commission's reorganisation investigation. However, the Local Government Commission can undertake any enquires or consultation it considers appropriate during the investigation, including considering other potential structures of local government.

The Local Government Commission's role is to investigate what structure of local government will best achieve a range of matters, including (Local Government Act 2002, schedule 3, [clause 10](#)):

- Better fulfilment of the purpose of local government, as set out in section 10 of the Local Government Act 2002
- Effective responses to the opportunities, needs and circumstances of the affected area
- Enhanced effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of local government services
- Enhanced ability of local government to meet the changing needs of communities for governance and services into the future

It is also possible that the investigation might identify that these matters are best achieved through the current local government arrangements for Southland.

When happens at the end of the investigation?

At any point during or at the end of an investigation, the Local Government Commission may decide to adopt changes to the current local government structure by way of a reorganisation plan. There are specific factors the Commission must have regard to in deciding to adopt a reorganisation plan. These include (Local Government Act 2002, schedule 3, [clause 12](#)):

- The scale of potential benefits
- The financial, disruption and opportunity costs of implementation
- The risks and consequences of non-implementation
- The effect on existing communities of interest
- The degree and distribution of public support
- The degree and distribution of public opposition

If the Commission issues a reorganisation plan involving the disestablishment or amalgamation of councils, then a poll will be held. The reorganisation plan would only be implemented if it received the support of more than 50% of those voting in a poll.

Commission led local government reorganisations

Proposed reorganisation initiative submitted, or investigation requested by one or more, but not all the affected councils, a group of at least 10% electors in the area and/or Minister of Local Government

LGC team seek views of relevant local authorities (and other stakeholders if required.)

LGC decision - whether to undertake investigation

No *

Notify stakeholders

Yes

Notify stakeholders

Commission seek views of relevant stakeholders on process

Commission determine and adopt a process for investigation

Commission undertake investigation

Commission decision – should a reorganisation plan be undertaken

No *

Yes

Develop & adopt one or more reorganisation plans for the affected area

Poll of electors

Poll not in favour *

Poll in favour
Order in council

*** Process complete, no reorganisation undertaken**

Establishment of a transition body & reorganisation implementation scheme