

Meeting Date: Tuesday 25 June 2013
Location: Council Chambers, Level 6, Civic Centre, 1 Devlin Street, Ryde
Time: 7.30pm

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Report on Local Government Amalgamation Workshop

Prepared for the City of Ryde

June 2013



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1 Introduction

Urbis was engaged by the City of Ryde (Council) to assist in community consultation regarding the proposed changes to the model of local government outlined in the *Future Directions NSW Local Government – Twenty Essential Steps Report April 2013* (Future Directions Paper).

The Future Directions Paper, on public exhibition until 28 June 2013, outlines a number of proposed changes to the structure and operation of local government in NSW, including proposals to amalgamate Councils. At the time of writing, Council was preparing a submission to the Independent Local Government Review Panel regarding these proposed changes. Council resolved on 30 April 2013 to:

... hold a consultation program with the community to receive their feedback on the proposal for amalgamation.

As part of this consultation program, Urbis assisted in the design and facilitated a community workshop on Monday 3 June 2013. A number of other consultation activities were also being undertaken by Council including an online survey and telephone survey of 600 respondents.

This report documents the workshop process and the feedback received from participants.

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2 Workshop process

2.1 PREPARATORY ACTIVITIES

Key activities undertaken by Urbis in advance of the workshop included:

- A review of relevant documents including:
 - *Future Directions NSW Local Government – Twenty Essential Steps Report April 2013*
 - Council's draft submission
 - Council's telephone survey questions.
- Development of a format and agenda for the workshop
- Preparation of materials in collaboration with Council's Community Engagement Team, including a presentation, fact sheet and templates for recording feedback
- Preparation of discussion questions and questions for 'live' (real-time) polling.

Council coordinated the event and were responsible for administrative requirements and resourcing, including staffing, invitations and registrations, and venue arrangements.

The workshop was advertised to residents across the LGA in rates notices on Wednesday 29 and Thursday 30 May 2013.

2.2 WORKSHOP DETAILS

The workshop was held on 3 June 2013, from 7:30pm – 9:30pm at Council's Civic Centre on Devlin Street, Ryde. A total of 138 people attended the workshop. Participants were seated in small discussion groups and each table was assigned a facilitator from Council or Urbis.

The workshop was run according to an agreed agenda (contained at Appendix A). Key components of the workshop included:

- Two presentations by the Acting General Manager, to inform participants of the proposed reforms and Council's submission process. Participants were also provided with a two-page fact sheet (contained at Appendix B).
- Two small group discussion sessions, during which time participants were asked to comment on:
 - The strengths of the current model of local government
 - The potential opportunities, challenges and/or issues associated with the proposed reforms to local government.
- A live polling session which provided real-time insights into participants' attitudes to the proposed amalgamations. Participants were asked to respond to a series of multiple-choice questions, indicating their answers using an individual 'keepad' device. The keepad technology provides immediate data collection and analysis, and enabled results to be presented at the event. Data is contained at Appendix C.

The discussions and live polling session were structured around questions agreed with Council ahead of the workshop. The questions related to the areas of the reforms on which Council sought community feedback to inform its submission (these areas are outlined in Table 1, overleaf).

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Table 1 – Reforms presented for feedback at workshop

AREA	SPECIFIC REFORMS ON WHICH FEEDBACK WAS SOUGHT
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ongoing professional development for Councillors ▪ Strengthen the authority and responsibilities of Mayors ▪ Require popular election of mayors in all Councils with a population of 20,000 or more ▪ Provide additional governance options for larger Councils, to improve local representation ▪ Take steps to improve Council-Mayor-General Manager relations.
Sustainability and finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop a standard set of sustainability benchmarks ▪ Require all Councils to appoint a qualified Chief Financial Officer ▪ Strengthen the guidelines for Councils' 4-year Delivery Programs ▪ Place local government audits under the oversight of the Auditor General ▪ Improve the rating system and streamline rate-pegging to enable Councils to generate essential additional revenue ▪ Establish a State-wide Local Government Finance Agency to bring down interest costs and assist Councils make better use of borrowings.
Structural reform (including Council amalgamations)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Seek to reduce the number of Councils in the Sydney basin to around 15, and create major new cities of Sydney, Parramatta and Liverpool, each with populations of 600-800,000 people ▪ Introduce a package of incentives for voluntary mergers that offers a higher level of support to 'early movers' ▪ For Auburn, Holroyd, Parramatta and Ryde: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Amalgamate (eastern third of Ryde might be included with North Shore group), or <input type="checkbox"/> Combine as strong County Council, and <input type="checkbox"/> Move northern boundary of Parramatta and western Ryde to M2.

The following sections document the feedback received during the workshop in relation to each of the above areas of reform. While feedback was sought on all of the above reforms, participants' discussion focused heavily on structural reform proposals and, specifically, the proposal to amalgamate Ryde Local Government Area (LGA) with Parramatta, Auburn and Holroyd LGAs. Many of the opportunities, issues and challenges raised in the context of governance, sustainability and finance proposals applied to the structural reform proposals. Proposed amalgamations are evidently the area of greatest interest, concern and contention amongst the community members who attended and this is reflected in the relative volume of feedback documented in relation to each of the reform areas.

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3 Perceived strengths of the current model of local government

Participants were asked to reflect on the strengths on the current model of local government.

'Local representation' was the primary strength identified. Perceived benefits associated with local representation included:

- **Local knowledge:** The current model of local government was perceived to allow elected officials and Council staff to have a sound understanding of the context, needs and priorities of their local community. This was seen to be enhanced by elected representatives living or operating businesses in the local area. Participants indicated that having sound local knowledge means facilities and services are provided with community needs and values in mind. Reflecting this, during the live polling, 95.8% of participants either agreed or strongly agreed that *it is important that my local representatives are familiar with my area and its specific needs*.
- **Accessibility of Council:** Participants also perceived Councillors and Council staff to be more visible, accessible and receptive under the current model, both physically through local offices and through communication channels, such as Council newsletters. Participants felt this makes Council accountable to the community and encourages engagement with the community in decision making. Council were also perceived to be better able to efficiently respond to issues because they are 'part of the community' and 'on the ground'.

Participants identified a number of strengths specific to the City of Ryde and the Ryde LGA. These included:

- **The existing LGA boundaries align with 'communities of interest' and local residents' identity:** Ryde is a diverse and "close-knit" community, and a number of participants identified a strong sense of belonging and local pride. Participants indicated that valued features of the Ryde area include its history (including alignment with northern Councils and sound management of heritage items), local environmental features, low level of development, business opportunities in Ryde (particularly Macquarie Park) and high quality public domain and services (e.g. parks, clean streets, libraries, transport).
- **Finances and assets** are well-managed at present.
- **Decisions are made transparently**, through Council meetings, publicly available reports, strong links to the local media and contact with local community groups. Some participants perceived that the views of Council and the community are currently well-aligned on a range of issues, including the provision of services, local economic development and the development of key properties and sites in the LGA.

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4 Feedback on proposed structural reform

Participants were asked to identify potential opportunities, challenges and issues associated with the structural reform aspects of the Independent Local Government Review Panel's proposal. As previously mentioned, amalgamation and structural reform was an area of considerable contention and interest. The following summarises feedback received in relation to the proposed structural reforms, outlining opportunities, challenges and issues associated with the proposal.

Participants expressed mixed views regarding amalgamation, ranging from support to opposition. The majority of participants expressed negative views towards amalgamation, and generally more challenges and issues were identified than opportunities. Negative views in regard to amalgamation, were generally in the context of the specific proposal to amalgamate Ryde with Parramatta, Holroyd and Auburn LGAs. There was limited support for amalgamating with these Councils to the west of Ryde, primarily on the grounds that Ryde residents are more closely demographically and economically aligned to Councils to the north and east, including a historic alignment with northern and eastern Councils under the Northern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (NSROC).

Results from live voting reflect these sentiments:

- Just over one quarter of participants (26.9%) expressed outright opposition to amalgamation
- Nearly half of all participants (47.1%) supported amalgamating with Willoughby, Lane Cove and Hunters Hill Councils
- Less than 1% expressed support for amalgamating with Parramatta, Auburn and Holroyd Councils.

There was a common view expressed that greater efficiency and economies of scale can be achieved without amalgamating LGAs. Suggestions included strengthening Regions of Councils (e.g. NSROC) and entering into service agreements to meet shared needs. Participants referred on a number of occasions to the model of service provision and collaboration seen in the NSROC, noting that its operations could be used as a model.

4.1 OPPORTUNITIES

Opportunities identified in relation to structural reform and amalgamation included:

- **Greater efficiency and less duplication of services in the region:** Amalgamation of Council's was seen as an opportunity to achieve greater efficiency through the rationalisation of resources, reduced duplication of services, and opportunity for shared services and resources.
- **Regional perspectives:** A number of participants thought that amalgamating LGAs would encourage Councils to take a regional perspective, resulting in improved strategic planning, infrastructure provision and management of population growth.
- **Stronger voice for Councils:** Some participants perceived that larger Council organisations would be in a stronger position to interact and negotiate with State and Federal governments.
- **Greater consistency and uniformity across regions** in relation to strategic direction, planning controls and quality and connectivity of services.

4.2 CHALLENGES AND ISSUES

There was limited support for amalgamation, and a range of challenges and issues were identified by participants. Perceived challenges and issues included:

- **Ryde residents identify more strongly with areas to the north and east of the LGA:** Participants suggested the proposed amalgamation does not reflect communities of interest or natural catchments, and that Ryde is demographically different from the suburbs proposed for amalgamation. Many participants noted that Ryde has historically aligned with northern Council's through the

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Northern Sydney Region of Councils (NSROC). Participants subsequently indicated greater support for amalgamating with Councils to the north or east of Ryde LGA.

- **Administrative challenges and economic impacts** associated with overhauling structures and processes, including the costs of restructuring and loss of local employment.
- **Impacts on the responsiveness and quality of services provided by Council**, resulting from reduced capacity, increased pressure on services generated by a larger population and competition between suburbs for limited funds. Reflecting this, 86.8% of participants indicated during live voting that they agreed or strongly agreed that *I am concerned about the potential impact of amalgamations on services in my local area*. Some suggested that the efficient provision of shared services relies on there being shared community needs and demographic characteristics. A large number of participants felt that these characteristics are not shared strongly between Ryde, Parramatta, Holroyd and Auburn.
- **Economic impacts on City of Ryde residents**, including views that rates will increase in order to subsidise other Council's and that property values may decrease.
- **A loss of local identity and sense of place** amongst community members, with a number of participants suggesting it is difficult to develop and retain a strong sense of community and local character at a larger geographical scale. Concern regarding the loss of local identity is also reflected in the results of live polling, where 92.1% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that *it is important to me to retain a sense of local identity within the City of Ryde*.
- **The loss of local representation** and knowledge of community needs, as a result of having fewer Councillor's and Council staff, and distant Council offices.
- **Reduced community rights and loss of voice**, with Council being less accessible and with a diminished ability to thoroughly consult the community. The reduced ratio of Council staff to population was of key concern.
- **Loss or 'swallowing up' of local assets**, in particular Macquarie Park and Macquarie University, relative to Parramatta, as Sydney's second Central Business District (CBD). There was a view from some participants that amalgamating Councils would benefit from these significant and valuable local resources, providing little in return.
- **Research supporting amalgamation:** There was some discussion regarding the rationale for amalgamating Council's and scepticism about the research underpinning the decision. A particular query related to the range of 600,000 – 800,000 people as the 'optimal size'. Participants were keen to see the research and many indicated they would like more information in order to formulate an informed view. The results of live polling reflect this sentiment, with 20.7% of participants indicating they would like more information before determining their support for amalgamation.
- **Longevity of the reforms and comparisons to Queensland:** Participants drew a number of comparisons between the proposed reforms and the experience of Queensland, noting that a number of Queensland Councils are reverting back to smaller models of government – or 'de-amalgamating'. A number of participants thought it likely that if the proposed reforms in NSW proceed, that we too will in time revert back to the current model, at significant cost and time.

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5 Feedback on governance reforms

The following section summarises feedback received in relation to reforms to governance at the local government level. Participants were generally supportive of high quality governance and improved processes, but also identified a number of challenges associated with implementing these reforms and minimising potential negative impacts on the current strengths of smaller local government organisations. Many participants felt that governance improvements could be achieved without amalgamating Councils.

5.1 OPPORTUNITIES

The most commonly identified opportunities include:

- **Improved quality of staff and Councillors**, as a result of opportunities for additional training. Participants suggested training should occur throughout staff and Councillor's career. This included prior to their entering local government, as well as routinely throughout the term of their employment. In the case of Councillors, one participant suggested this training could be similar to training that is run for Company Directors.
- **Attraction of highly skilled Councillors** as a result of improved ability of Council's to pay staff and there being 'a bigger pool to draw from'. The ability to pay Councillor's was thought to be particularly positive, as it would enable Councillor's to operate full time and avoid the conflicting priorities and interests that can result from their performing multiple roles. There was also a view from some participants that there would be reduced likelihood of corruption amongst larger, amalgamated Councils.
- **The proposed popular election of the Mayor** drew a range of views, though was generally considered a positive change. Those who supported the proposal felt it gave them line of sight between the community and head decision maker. Interestingly, some participants were not aware that Mayors in Ryde aren't currently popularly elected.
- **Stronger weight and voice to Councils:** It was again noted that amalgamated, larger Councils will be stronger and better able to negotiate and advocate with State and Federal Governments.

A smaller number of participants identified the following opportunities:

- **Consistency and uniformity in regulation**, particularly in the application of planning controls, ensuring fairness, providing certainty and contributing to consistent local character.
- **Reduced politicisation:** By requiring elected officials to govern in the regional interest, a number of participants felt that larger Council organisations would positively reduce political grandstanding and opportunities for minority interests to capture political attention.
- **Local Boards providing local representation:** A small number of participants felt that the proposed Local Boards provide a sound platform for local issues to be raised.

5.2 CHALLENGES AND ISSUES

Key challenges and issues identified in relation to the proposed governance reforms include:

- **The loss of local representation:** This was again a central issue, with participants noting that the proposed changes to the structure of Council's may reduce the number of Councillors representing Ryde and see the community represented by Councillor's from beyond the local area. There were concerns about the limited local knowledge of out-of-area Councillors and the impact this would have on the ability of Council to meet community needs.
- **Limitations associated with the proposed training:** included administrative costs and time requirements. Some participants also perceived that training is not an adequate solution to Councillors potentially not having a good knowledge of the Ryde LGA under a larger, regional government area.

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- **Concerns regarding the effectiveness of the Local Boards** in giving each suburb or former Council area a voice. Some felt that the views of the largest suburbs will prevail and that the Boards would face difficulties in balancing the competing interests of different suburbs.
- **Another level of bureaucracy:** It was suggested that the Local Boards will introduce an unnecessary, additional layer of government, bureaucracy and 'red-tape'.
- **Electoral processes:** Some participants noted that it may be necessary to amend the process for electing Councillors and the Mayor, should the proposed governance reforms proceed.
- **Improved governance can be achieved without amalgamation:** There was general support amongst participants for improving governance structures, and the recommendations in the Panel's report however, many participants felt that improvements to governance did not need to be accompanied by structural reform to Councils. The current model of subcommittees under the Northern Region of Councils was noted as a good model, which brings together the views of many Councils on different issues.

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6 Feedback on sustainability and finance reforms

Participants were asked to comment on the range of sustainability and finance reforms proposed, and a range of opportunities, challenges and issues identified. These are summarised in the following section.

6.1 OPPORTUNITIES

Opportunities identified include:

- **General support for improved financial standing:** Steps to improve the financial management of Councils were considered positive by many participants. There was particular support for the appointment of a Chief Financial Officer and compliance with financial standards.
- **Value in sharing resources:** Some participants acknowledged the contribution that pooling resources, sharing services and reducing duplication would make to the financial sustainability of local government.
- **Reduce rates:** Some participants saw an opportunity through the reforms to reduce rates due to cuts in administration costs, while others encourage the review rate structures. Suggestions included managing rates more equitably and applying special rate variations to achieve agreed, specific outcomes.
- **State contributions could be higher:** There was a view expressed by some participants that the State government should make greater contributions to local government, to improve fiscal sustainability.

6.2 CHALLENGES AND ISSUES

Challenges and issues include:

- **Scepticism regarding financial rationale for amalgamation:** Participants expressed interest in the research supporting amalgamations and local government reform. There was some scepticism as to the accuracy of financial arguments, and some expressed a desire to see the evidence that the proposed reforms are the best solution.
- **Financial impacts:** Some participants thought that the City of Ryde's finances would be negatively impacted by amalgamating with Parramatta, Holroyd and Auburn, given these Councils' poor financial performance. There was a perception that Ryde would be 'carrying the burden' of these Councils'.
- **Financial sustainability can be achieved without amalgamation:** Many participants felt that this could be achieved without amalgamating Councils however, with several noting it is already occurring through Regional Organisations of Councils (ROCS).

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7 Conclusion

This report has documented the findings of a community workshop regarding proposed reforms to local government in NSW, outlined in the Independent Local Government Review Panel's Future Directions Paper.

The workshop, held on 3 June 2013 and attended by 138 people, provided participants with an opportunity to find out more about the proposed reforms, and provide their feedback. The workshop was one of a number of consultation activities undertaken by the City of Ryde to inform the preparation of a submission to the Review Panel.

Based on the considerable attendance at the workshop and the nature of feedback received, it is evident that the proposed reforms are contentious and of interest to the Ryde community. Participants demonstrated a high level of pride in and attachment to their community, and emphasised the importance of local representation, decision makers' knowledge of local needs and issues, and Council being accessible and accountable.

An area of particular concern in relation to the reforms is the proposal to amalgamate Ryde with Parramatta, Auburn and Holroyd Councils. Therefore, much of the discussion at workshops focussed on challenges and issues associated with this particular aspect of the proposals. There is greater support for amalgamation with northern Council's on the basis of shared interests and identity, and an established relationship through NSROC.

Participants at the workshop were generally supportive of improving the governance and financial sustainability of local governments, though many felt that these outcomes could be achieved without amalgamation. NSROC was cited on a number of occasions as a well-functioning regional network, already achieving efficiencies through collaboration.

There is a high level of interest in the rationale for reform (particularly amalgamation) and concern regarding the adequacy research underpinning the proposed changes. Participants indicated a strong desire to know more and receive further information, to inform their views on the proposed reforms.

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All surveys, forecasts, projections and recommendations contained in or made in relation to or associated with this report are made in good faith and on the basis of information supplied to Urbis at the date of this report. Achievement of the projections and budgets set out in this report will depend, among other things, on the actions of others over which Urbis has no control.

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[Appendix A](#)

[Workshop agenda](#)

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City of Ryde community workshop – Council amalgamations

WORKSHOP AGENDA

RYDE CIVIC CENTRE

MONDAY 3 JUNE 2013, 7:30PM – 9:30PM

ITEM	DETAILS	RESPONSIBILITY
1.	Welcome and overview of the session	Urbis facilitator Urbis
2.	Presentation of context	Acting General Manager, Roy Newsome
3.	Introduction to Discussion Session 1	Urbis facilitator
4.	Discussion session 1: Living in Ryde <i>What do you think are the key strengths of the current model of local government?</i>	All
5.	Outline of the Independent Local Government Review Panel's proposals	Acting General Manager, Roy Newsome
6.	Introduction to Discussion Sessions 2 and 3	Urbis facilitator
7.	Discussion session 2: Opportunities afforded by proposed reforms <i>Thinking about the proposed reforms to local government, what do you see are the potential opportunities around:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance • Sustainability and finance • Structural reform (amalgamation) 	All
8.	Discussion session 3: Issues and challenges associated with the proposed reforms <i>Thinking about the proposed reforms to local government, what do you see are the potential challenges around:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance • Sustainability and finance • Structural reform (amalgamation) 	All
9.	Invite attendees to circulate	Urbis facilitator
10.	Notes displayed and community members circulate to review	All
11.	Resume seats and introduction to voting	Urbis facilitator
12.	Live voting	All, led by Urbis facilitator
13.	Thank you and close	Mayor Ivan Petch

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[Appendix B](#)

[Fact sheet](#)

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Community workshop, Council amalgamations

Local government in New South Wales (NSW) is currently undergoing a period of reform. The City of Ryde is seeking community input about potential changes to the way your area is governed.

BACKGROUND

In March 2012, the Independent Local Government Review Panel was established by the NSW Minister for Local Government to look into how local governments in NSW operate and are structured.

In April 2013, the Panel published **Future Directions for NSW Local Government: Twenty Essential Steps**. The report outlines a number of proposed changes to the way that local governments in NSW operate.

To view the Report, go to www.localgovernmentreview.nsw.gov.au or scan the QR Code below if you have a 'QR CODE READER' App on your smart phone.



PROPOSED CHANGES THAT AFFECT CITY OF RYDE INCLUDE:

Governance

- Ongoing professional development for Councillors
- Strengthen the authority and responsibilities of Mayors
- Require popular election of mayors in all councils with a population of 20,000 or more
- Provide additional governance options for larger councils, to improve local representation
- Take steps to improve Council-Mayor-General Manager relations

Sustainability and Finance

- Develop a standard set of sustainability benchmarks
- Require all Councils to appoint a qualified Chief Financial Officer
- Strengthen the guidelines for councils' 4-year Delivery Programs
- Place local government audits under the oversight of the Auditor General
- Improve the rating system and streamline rate-pegging to enable Councils to generate essential additional revenue
- Establish a State-wide Local Government Finance Agency to bring down interest costs and assist Councils make better use of borrowings

Structural Reform (Council Amalgamations)

- Seek to reduce the number of councils in the Sydney basin to around 15, and create major new cities of Sydney, Parramatta and Liverpool, each with populations of 600-800,000 people
- Introduce a package of incentives for voluntary mergers that offers a higher level of support to 'early movers'

For Auburn, Holroyd, Parramatta and Ryde:

- Amalgamate (eastern third of Ryde might be included with North Shore group), or
- Combine as strong County Council, and
- Move northern boundary of Parramatta and western Ryde to M2

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WHAT MIGHT AMALGAMATING COUNCILS MEAN FOR THE CITY OF RYDE?

There are a range of benefits and challenges associated with amalgamating Councils. These include:

Potential Benefits	Potential Challenges
1. Stronger relationships between state and local government	1. Costs associated with restructuring
2. Increased ability to advocate for community outcomes at a regional level	2. Disruption associated with restructuring
3. Increased ability to generate revenue	3. Reduced localised presence
4. Opportunities for greater efficiency due to economies of scale and shared resources	4. Fewer elected representatives
5. Planning and delivery of facilities and infrastructure at a regional level	5. Loss of local employment
6. Attraction of highly skilled Mayors, Councillors and staff.	6. Loss of local identity.

WHAT ARE COUNCIL'S VIEWS?

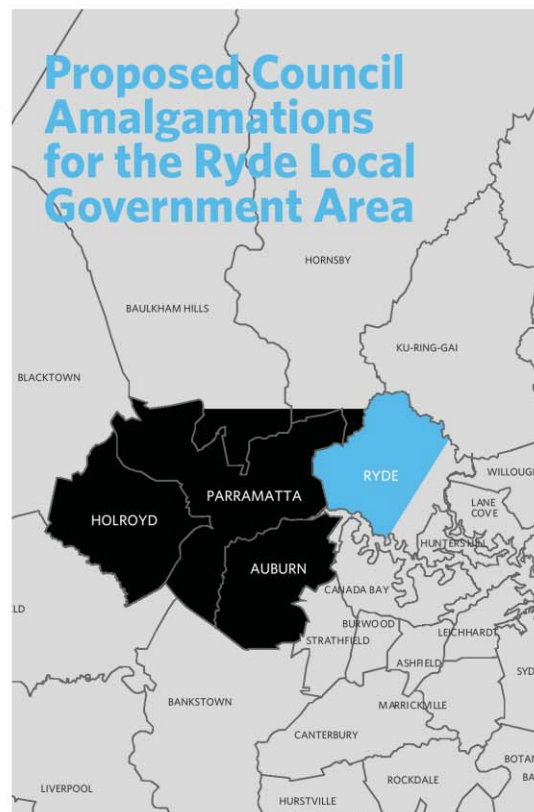
The City of Ryde resolved on 30 April 2013 to prepare a submission on the proposed changes. Council has some concerns regarding the amalgamation options and is investigating alternatives.

Council is seeking community members' views on the proposed amalgamation. Activities being undertaken include a telephone survey of approximately 600 residents, an online survey, and a workshop on Monday 3 June 2013.

In addition to providing feedback to Council, you can make your own submission to the Independent Local Government Review Panel by visiting www.localgovernmentreview.nsw.gov.au.

Submissions close Friday 28 June and can be made:

- Online www.localgovernmentreview.nsw.gov.au
- Email info@localgovernmentreview.nsw.gov.au
- Post Independent Local Government Review Panel, C/-Locked Bag 3015, Nowra NSW 25



Check back regularly at www.ryde.nsw.gov.au/amalgamation to find out more information.

ITEM 6 (continued)

ATTACHMENT 2

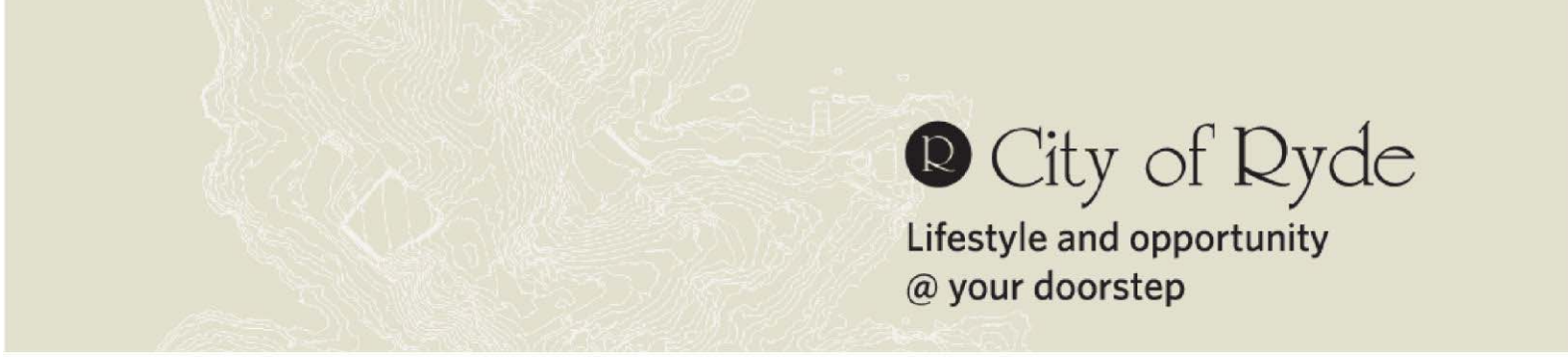
Appendix C

City of Ryde presentation

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ITEM 6 (continued)

ATTACHMENT 2



Local Government Reform

Community Workshop 3 June 2013

ITEM 6 (continued)

ATTACHMENT 2

Welcome

- **Purpose of the workshop**
- **Outline of format**
- **Ground rules**
- **Housekeeping**

ITEM 6 (continued)

ATTACHMENT 2

Introduction to the City of Ryde

TOTAL POPULATION: 110,390
(estimated resident population 2012)

POPULATION GROWTH IN THE LAST 5 YEARS: 5.6%
(population size 104,502 in 2008)

POPULATION PROJECTION:
2021: **122,354** 2031: **135,508**

POPULATION DIVERSITY:
37% OF COMMUNITY NESB

SUBURBS WITHIN RYDE:

Chatswood West	East Ryde	Marsfield	Putney
Denistone	Eastwood	Meadowbank	Ryde
Denistone East	Gladesville	Melrose Park	Tennyson Point
Denistone West	Macquarie Park	North Ryde	West Ryde

Introduction to the City of Ryde

NUMBER OF COUNCILLORS:

12 Councillors – 4 from each of the 3 Wards
The Mayor is elected by Councillors each year



ELECTIONS:

Council Elections held every 4 years

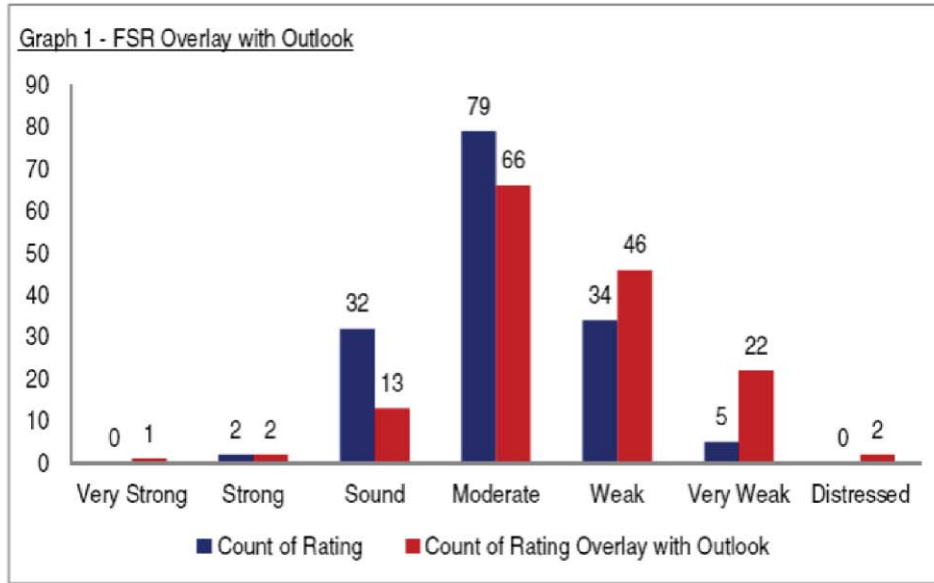
ITEM 6 (continued)

ATTACHMENT 2

Introduction to the City of Ryde

The City of Ryde’s financial position was recently assessed by Tcorp (NSW Treasury), as part of Independent Local Government Review Panel’s report:

RYDE TCORP RATING: SOUND **RYDE TCORP OUTLOOK: NEGATIVE**



SOUND MEANS:
“adequate capacity to meet to meet our financial commitments in short medium and long term”

NEGATIVE MEANS:
there is the potential for deterioration in our capacity to meet financial commitments

Independent Local Government Review Panel

WHY WAS THE PANEL ESTABLISHED?

NSW Minister for Local Government established the Panel
“to develop the options to improve the strength and effectiveness of local government in NSW”

WHO IS ON THE PANEL?

Professor Graham Sansom | Ms Jude Munro | Mr Glenn Inglis

WHAT ARE YOU BEING ASKED TO COMMENT ON?

Future Directions for NSW Local Government was published in April 2013. The final report is anticipated in September 2013.

ITEM 6 (continued)

ATTACHMENT 2

Independent Local Government Review Panel

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE PANEL?

The panel has been asked to investigate and identify options for governance models, structural arrangements and boundary changes for local government in NSW, taking into consideration:

Ability to support current and future needs of the community

Ability to deliver infrastructure and services efficiently and effectively

The financial sustainability of each local government

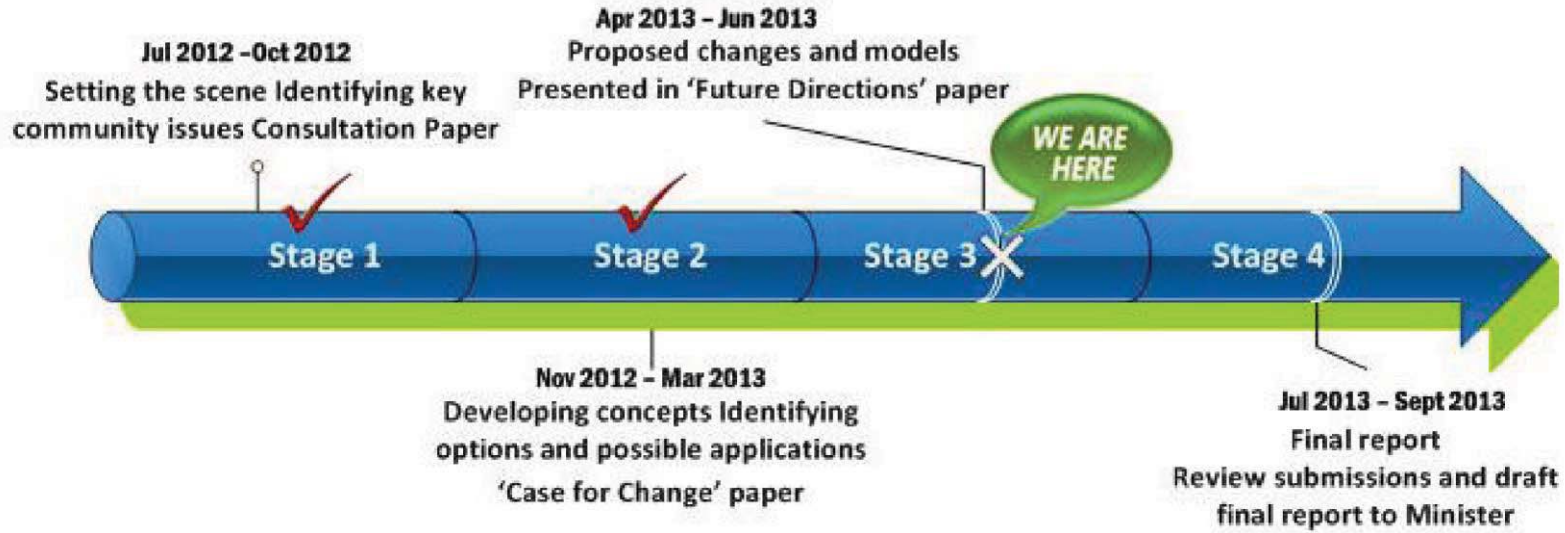
Consideration of incentives to voluntary boundary changes

ITEM 6 (continued)

ATTACHMENT 2

Independent Local Government Review Panel

WHAT IS THE PANEL'S PROCESS?



ITEM 6 (continued)

ATTACHMENT 2

Action by Council

COUNCIL RESOLUTION

At the Extraordinary Council Meeting held 30 April 2013 at North Ryde Community Centre, Council resolved as follows:

That Council advise the Independent Local Government Review Panel that while Ryde Council understands the principle of local government boundary adjustments, it does not see a future for the Ryde area as part of an enlarged Parramatta City and that in consequence, Council does not propose to attend the “Metropolitan Councils” workshop at Parramatta on 15 May 2013, but instead will attend as observers, at the Northern Sydney Councils workshop at Chatswood on 14 June 2013.

ITEM 6 (continued)

ATTACHMENT 2

Actions by Council

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

- ✓ Community Council meeting
- ✓ Telephone survey of 600 residents
- ✓ Community Workshop
- ✓ Online Survey (still open on website)
- ✓ Letterbox drop to all residents

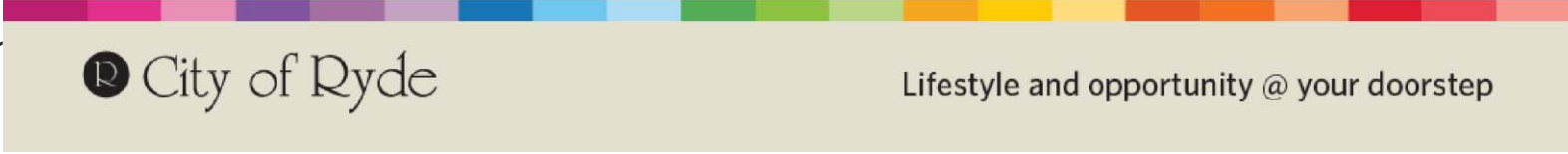
COUNCIL WILL BE MAKING A SUBMISSION

Draft submission will be presented to Council on 25 June. Submission to include community feedback

Submission due in by 28 June 2013

ITEM 6 (continued)

ATTACHMENT 2



Discussion Session 1: Strengths

What do you think are the key strengths of the current model of local government?

ITEM 6 (continued)

ATTACHMENT 2

Recommendations from the Independent Local Government Review Panel

Council is seeking your feedback on the following key themes covered in the report



ITEM 6 (continued)

ATTACHMENT 2

Recommendations from the Independent Local Government Review Panel

GOVERNANCE RECOMMENDATIONS

Ongoing professional development for Councillors

Strengthen the authority and responsibilities of Mayors

Require popular election of Mayors in all councils with a population of 20,000 or more

Provide additional governance options for larger Councils, to improve local representation

improve Council-Mayor-General Manager relations

ITEM 6 (continued)

ATTACHMENT 2

Recommendations from the Independent Local Government Review Panel

SUSTAINABILITY & FINANCE RECOMMENDATIONS

Develop a standard set benchmarks to help measure long-term financial sustainability

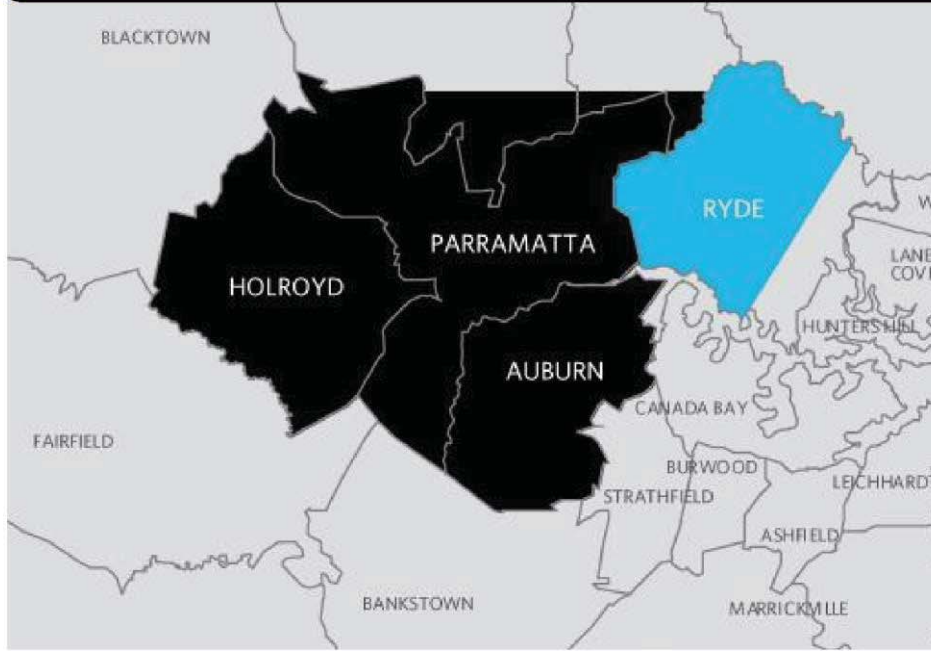
Strengthen the guidelines for councils' 4-year Delivery Programs

Improve the rating system and streamline rate-pegging to enable Councils to generate essential additional revenue

Establish a State-wide Local Government Finance Agency

Recommendations from the Independent Local Government Review Panel

STRUCTURAL REFORM / AMALGAMATION PROPOSAL



PROPOSAL:

“Seeks to reduce the number of councils in the Sydney basin to around 15, and create major new cities of Sydney, Parramatta and Liverpool, each with populations of 600-800,000 people”

ITEM 6 (continued)

ATTACHMENT 2

Recommendations from the Independent Local Government Review Panel

COMPARATIVE VIEW - PROPOSED AMALGAMATION COUNCILS

LGA	2013 Forecasted Population	2018 Forecasted Population	5 year growth	TCORP RATING	TCORP OUTLOOK
Ryde	110,157	118,057	7.2%	SOUND	NEGATIVE
Auburn	80,972	90,904	12.3%	SOUND	NEGATIVE
Parramatta	179,163	192,603	7.5%	MODERATE	NEUTRAL
Holroyd	105,772	116,990	10.6%	WEAK	NEUTRAL
AMALGAMATED COUNCIL	476,064	518,554	8.9%		

ITEM 6 (continued)

ATTACHMENT 2

Discussion Session 2: Opportunities

Thinking about the proposed reforms to local government, what do you see are the potential OPPORTUNITIES around:

- **Governance**
- **Sustainability and finance**
- **Structural reform**

Discussion Session 3: Issues and Challenges

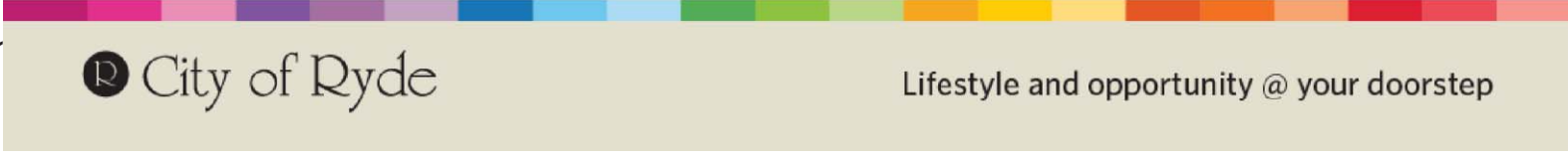
Thinking about the proposed reforms to local government, what do you see are the potential CHALLENGES AND ISSUES around:

- **Governance**
- **Sustainability and finance**
- **Structural reform**

ITEM 6 (continued)

ATTACHMENT 2

Please move around the room



ITEM 6 (continued)

ATTACHMENT 2

Live voting

To help us reflect your views in shaping Council's response to the proposed amalgamations, please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with these statements.

How supportive would you be of City of Ryde being amalgamated with other nearby Councils?

1. Completely supportive
2. Supportive
3. Somewhat supportive
4. Not very supportive
5. Not at all supportive
6. I do not have a view
7. I would like more information in order to form a view.

ITEM 6 (continued)

ATTACHMENT 2

Live voting

To help us reflect your views in shaping Council's response to the proposed amalgamations, please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with these statements.

If you had to choose, which one of the following options would be your preference?

1. Merge with Parramatta, Auburn and Holroyd Councils
2. Merge with Willoughby, Lane Cove, and Hunters Hill Councils
3. Merge with Canada Bay and Strathfield Councils
4. Merge with Ku-ring-gai and Hornsby Councils
5. Oppose amalgamation
6. Other alternative
7. I would like more information in order to form a view.

ITEM 6 (continued)

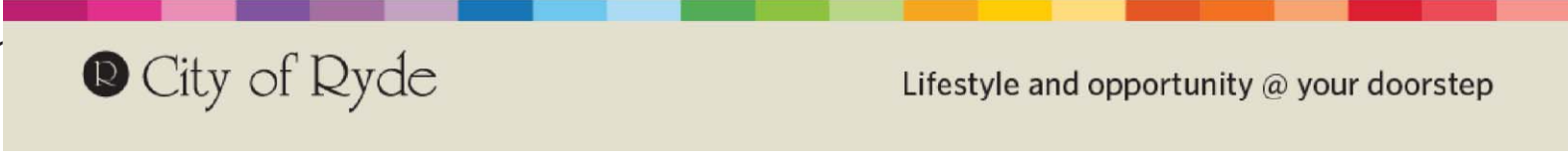
ATTACHMENT 2

Live voting

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
It is important to me to retain a sense of local identity within the City of Ryde	1	2	3	4	5
I am concerned about the potential impact of amalgamations on services in my local area	1	2	3	4	5
It is important that my local representatives are familiar with my area and its specific needs	1	2	3	4	5
The City of Ryde will become more financially sustainable through amalgamation with Parramatta, Holroyd and Auburn Councils	1	2	3	4	5
Overall, amalgamations are likely to result in greater efficiencies in the delivery of services for the City of Ryde	1	2	3	4	5

ITEM 6 (continued)

ATTACHMENT 2



Thank you and close – City of Ryde Mayor

ITEM 6 (continued)

ATTACHMENT 2

Thank you for attending

ITEM 6 (continued)

ATTACHMENT 2

[Appendix D](#)

[Live voting results](#)

ITEM 6 (continued)

ATTACHMENT 2

Table 2 – How supportive would you be of City of Ryde being amalgamated with other nearby Councils?

RESPONSE	PARTICIPANTS (%)
Not at all supportive	44.6%
I would like more information in order to form a view	20.7%
Somewhat supportive	12.4%
Not very supportive	11.6%
Completely supportive	5.8%
Supportive	5.0%
I do not have a view	0.0%

Table 3 – If you had to choose, which once of the following options would be your preference?

RESPONSE	PARTICIPANTS (%)
Merge with Willoughby, Lane Cove and Hunters Hill Councils	47.1%
Oppose amalgamations	26.9%
I need more information in order to form a view	11.8%
Merge with Ku-ring-gai and Hornsby Councils	5.0%
Other alternative	5.0%
Merge with Canada Bay and Strathfield Councils	3.4%
Merge with Parramatta, Auburn and Holroyd Councils	0.8%

Table 4 – To help us reflect your views in shaping Council's response to the proposed amalgamations, please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements

	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	SOMEWHAT AGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
It is important to me to retain a sense of local identity within the City of Ryde	78.9%	13.2%	3.5%	3.5%	0.9%
I am concerned about the potential impact of amalgamations on services in my local area.	67.8%	19.0%	5.8%	5.0%	2.5%
It is important that my local representatives are familiar with my area and its specific needs	83.1%	12.7%	4.2%	0.0%	0.0%
The City of Ryde will become more financially sustainable through amalgamation with Parramatta,	1.8%	3.6%	8.0%	21.4%	65.2%

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ITEM 6 (continued)

ATTACHMENT 2

Holroyd and Auburn Councils					
Overall, amalgamations are likely to result in greater efficiencies in the delivery of services for the City of Ryde	5.1%	4.3%	12.0%	23.1%	55.6%

ITEM 6 (continued)

ATTACHMENT 2

Sydney
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201 Sussex Street Sydney, NSW 2000
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ITEM 6 (continued)

ATTACHMENT 3



 City of Ryde

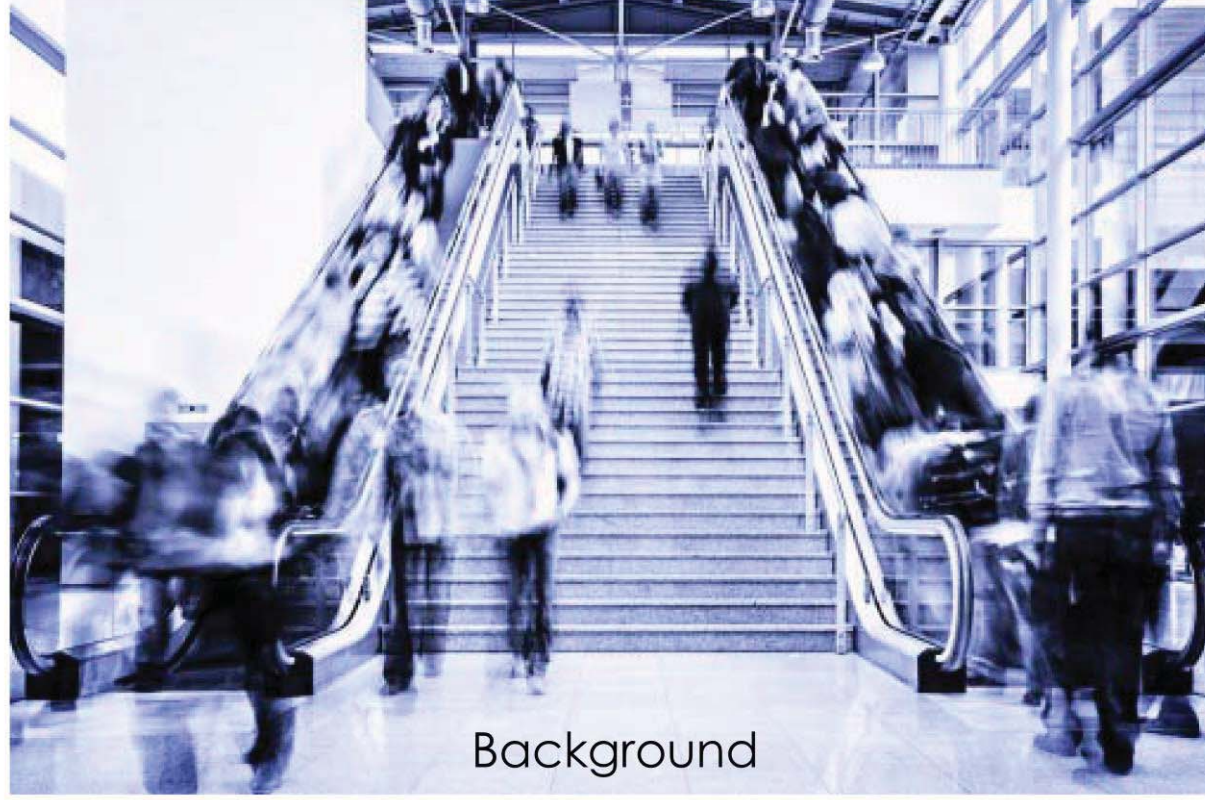
City Of Ryde

Amalgamation Research
Prepared by: Micromex Research
Date: June 2013


 micromex
research

ITEM 6 (continued)

ATTACHMENT 3



Background

 City of Ryde

1 City of Ryde

Methodology & Sample

Background

The State Government has instigated a process of review into Local Government. The Independent Local Government Review Panel has been created to analyse the councils in NSW, to identify their strengths and weaknesses, and to recommend a path for change.

One of the points raised by the Review Panel is the possible need for boundary changes, consolidations, or in simple terms 'amalgamations'.

City of Ryde wanted to undertake a community survey in order to measure the Ryde community's attitude towards amalgamation.

Interviewing

A random telephone survey of 600 residents was conducted between 28th May and 1st June 2013.

Interviewing was conducted in accordance with IQCA (Interviewer Quality Control Australia) Standards and the Market Research Society Code of Professional Conduct. Where applicable, the issues in each question were systematically rearranged for each respondent.

 micromex
research

ITEM 6 (continued)

ATTACHMENT 3

1 City of Ryde

Methodology & Sample

Sampling error

A sample size of 600 provides a maximum sampling error of plus or minus 4.0% at 95% confidence.

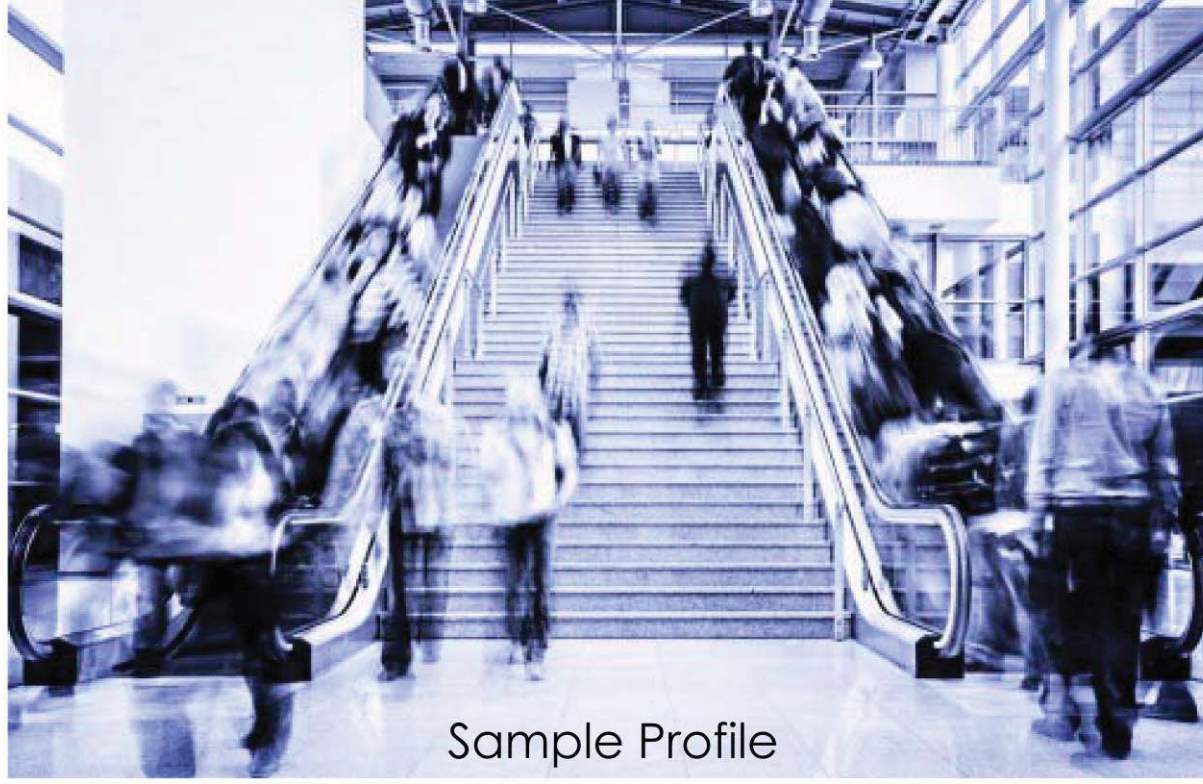
Data analysis

The data within this report was analysed using SPSS V15.


Errors: Data in this publication is subject to sampling variability because it is based on information relating to a sample of residents rather than the total number. This difference (sampling error) may occur due to imperfections in reporting and errors made in processing the data. This may occur in any enumeration, whether it is a full count or sample. Efforts have been made to reduce the non-sampling error by careful design of the questionnaire and detailed checking of completed questionnaires.

ITEM 6 (continued)

ATTACHMENT 3

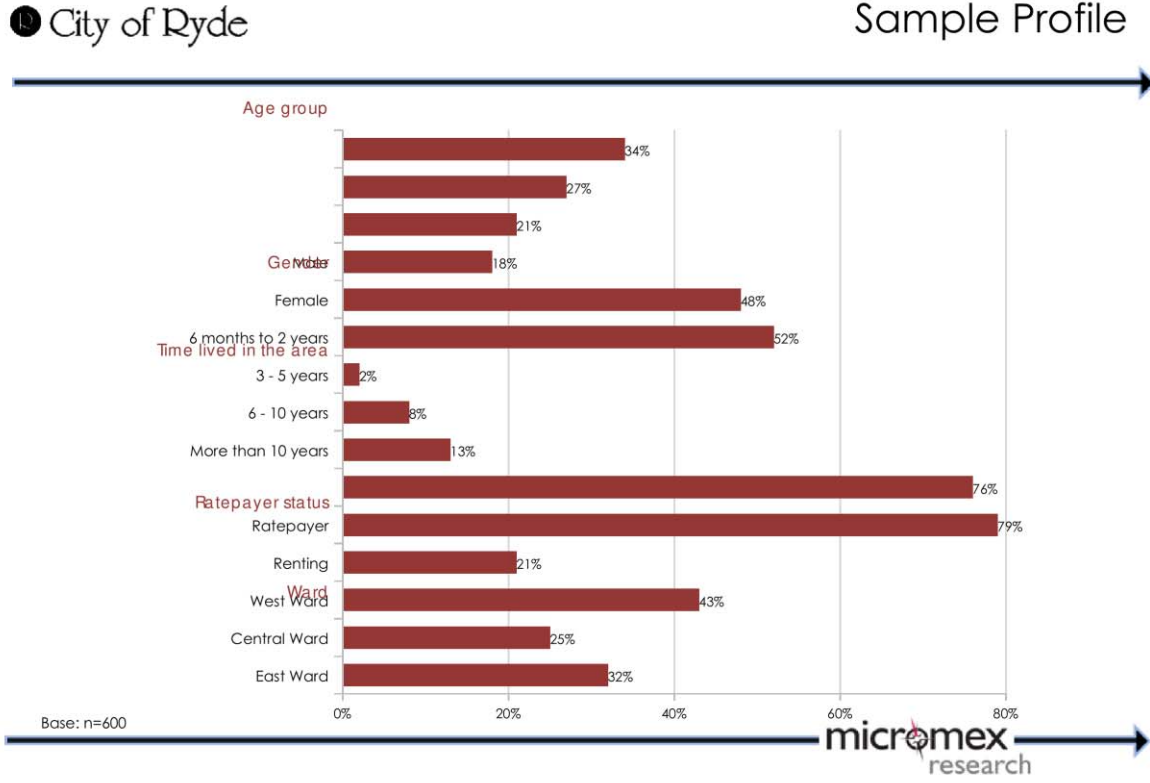


Sample Profile

 City of Ryde

ITEM 6 (continued)

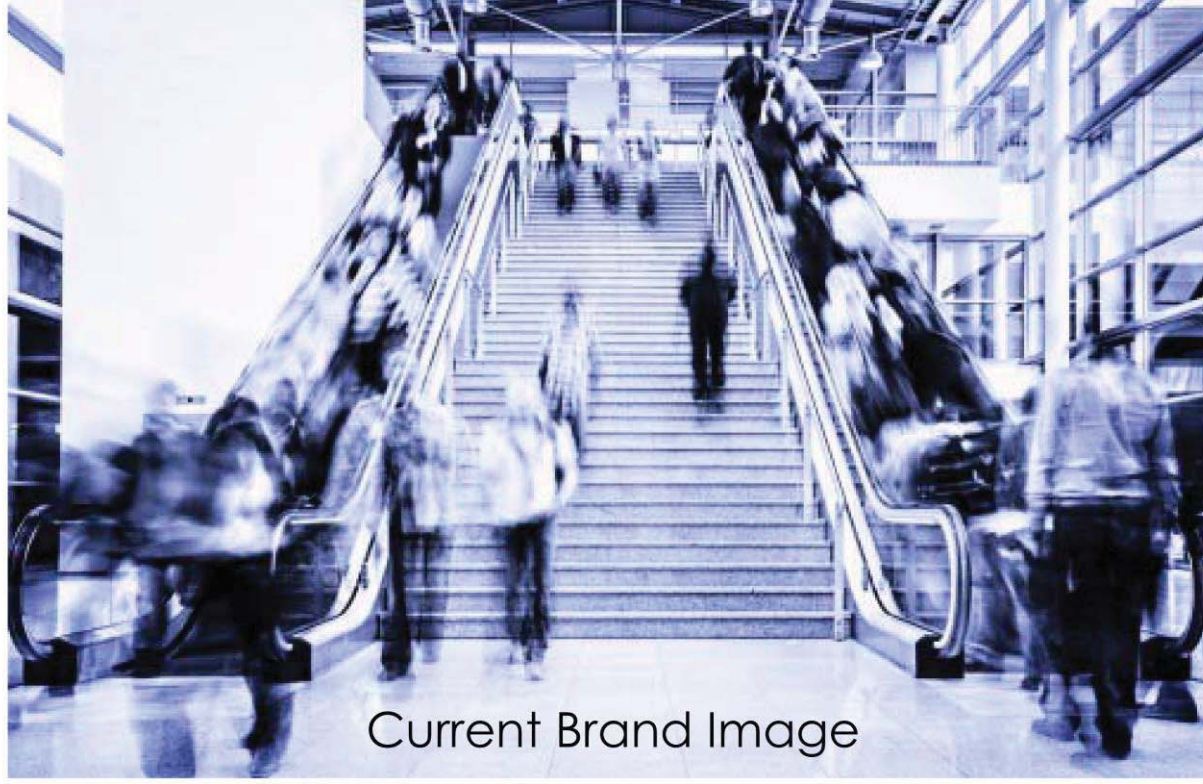
ATTACHMENT 3



The sample was weighted according to 2011 ABS Stats

ITEM 6 (continued)

ATTACHMENT 3



Current Brand Image

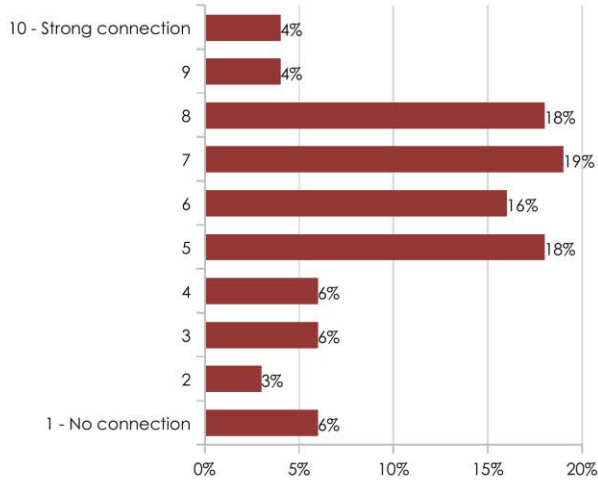
① City of Ryde

ITEM 6 (continued)

ATTACHMENT 3

City of Ryde 61% Of Residents Gave A Connection Score Of 6+

Q1. How would you rate your connection overall with the City of Ryde LGA (Local Government Area), which includes things such as the community and the physical place?



Mean ratings	18 - 34	35 - 49	50 - 64	65+	Overall
	5.88	5.68	5.76	6.50	5.91
	West Ward	Central Ward	East Ward	Male	Female
	5.79	6.14	5.90	5.94	5.89

Scale: 1 = no connection, 10 = strong connection
£ ¥ significantly higher/lower connection by group

Base: n=600



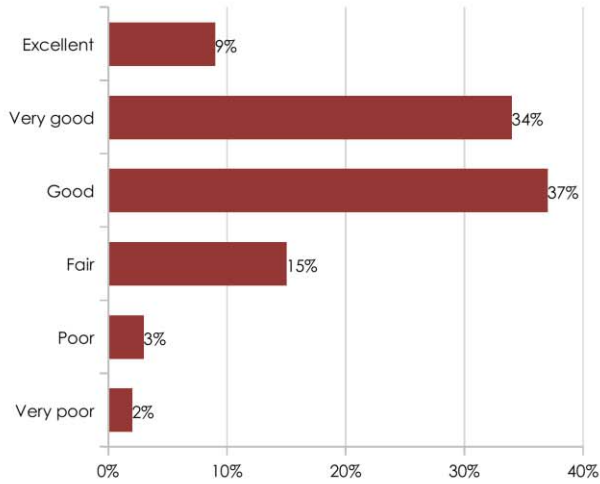
No differences were observed by Ward

ITEM 6 (continued)

ATTACHMENT 3

City of Ryde City Of Ryde Image Score Exceeds LGA Benchmarks

Q2a. Overall, how would you rate Council's image within the local community?
Q2b. Why do you say that?



	City of Ryde	LGA Benchmarks	
		Metro	Overall
Mean ratings	4.22	4.09	4.13

Mean ratings	18 - 34	35 - 49	50 - 64	65+	Overall
	4.31 £	4.39 £	4.14	3.90 ¥	
	West Ward	Central Ward	East Ward	Male	Female
	4.18	4.19	4.31	4.23	4.22

Scale: 1 = very poor, 6 = excellent
£ ¥ significantly higher/lower connection by group

Base: n=600




Younger residents are more likely to have a positive view of Council's image within the community

ITEM 6 (continued)

ATTACHMENT 3



 City of Ryde

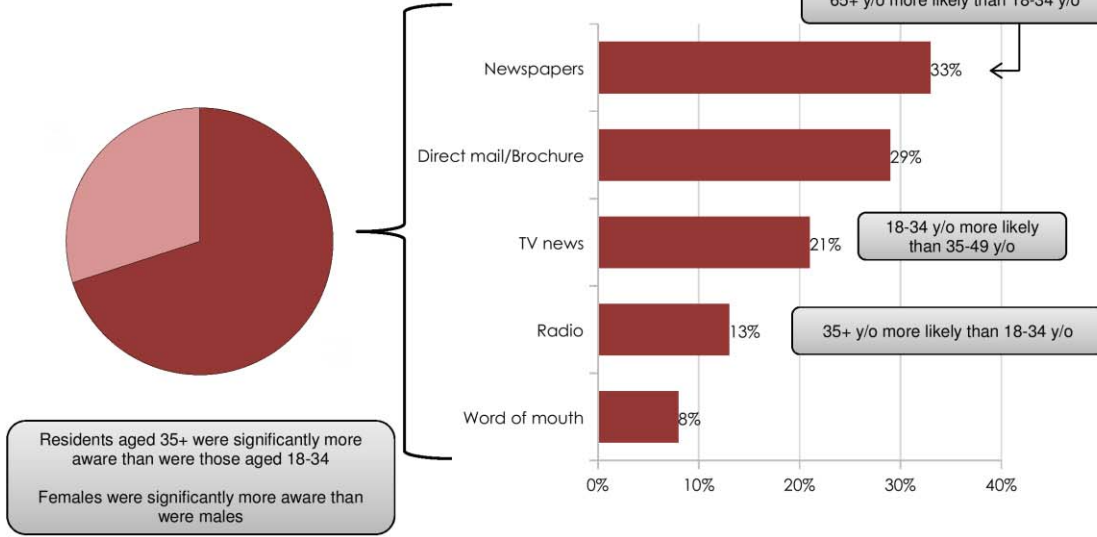
ITEM 6 (continued)

ATTACHMENT 3

City of Ryde

There Was A High Level Of Claimed Community Awareness (70%) Of The State Governments Review

Q3a. Are you aware that the State Government is reviewing the Local Government system?
Q3b. Where did you first hear about the proposed amalgamations?



Base: n=600

Base: n=422



Newspapers and direct mail/brochures are the most likely mediums of communication

ITEM 6 (continued)

ATTACHMENT 3

1 City of Ryde

Amalgamation Concept Statement

The NSW State Government appointed an Independent Local Government Review Panel to investigate options for a more efficient and effective system of local government.

The Panel has recommended sweeping changes, including reducing the number of Councils in metropolitan Sydney from about 40 to 15. This is to be achieved through merging/amalgamating councils.

One argument for amalgamation is that bigger councils could be more economically efficient in the delivery of services, and an argument against amalgamation is that bigger councils will not be able to represent local communities as effectively.

The Panel has recommended three options for City Of Ryde, however, there is also the option to oppose amalgamations or the option to propose an alternative idea. City Of Ryde is seeking our community's views to form its position on the recommendations.

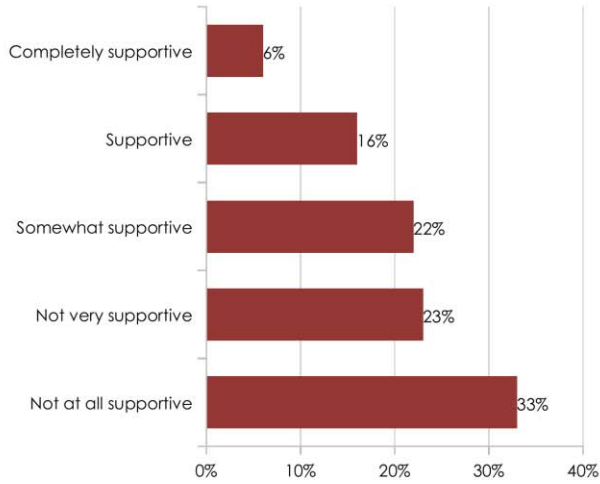
ITEM 6 (continued)

ATTACHMENT 3

City of Ryde

22% Of Residents Are Supportive – Very Supportive Of This Proposal, While 56% Are Not Very – Not At All Supportive

Q4a. How supportive would you be of City Of Ryde being amalgamated with other nearby Councils?
Q4b. Why do you say that?



Mean ratings	18 - 34	35 - 49	50 - 64	65+	Overall
	2.59 £	2.41	2.38	2.01 ¥	2.39
	West Ward	Central Ward	East Ward	Male	Female
	2.38	2.46	2.36	2.57 £	2.23 ¥

Scale: 1 = not at all supportive, 5 = completely supportive
£ ¥ significantly higher/lower level of support by group


Base: n=600

Females and older residents have the lowest support levels for amalgamation

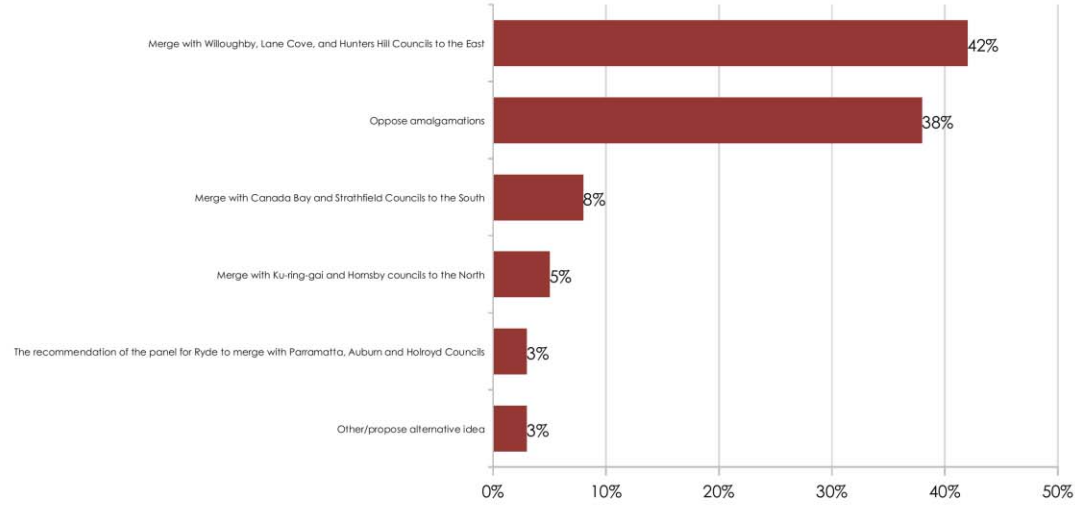


ITEM 6 (continued)

ATTACHMENT 3


City of Ryde If Pressed, 42% Would Prefer To Merge Eastward,
 However, 38% Would Always Oppose Amalgamation

Q5a. As we indicated, the Panel has recommended some options for City Of Ryde, however, there is also the option to oppose amalgamations or to propose an alternative idea. Which of the following options would be your preference?



Base: n=600



There is no support for the Panel's recommendation

ITEM 6 (continued)

ATTACHMENT 3

City of Ryde

Significant Differences Are Observed By Ward

Q5a. As we indicated, the Panel has recommended some options for City Of Ryde, however, there is also the option to oppose amalgamations or to propose an alternative idea. Which of the following options would be your preference?

	West Ward		Central Ward		East Ward	
	Count	Column %	Count	Column %	Count	Column %
Merge with Willoughby, Lane Cove, and Hunters Hill Councils to the East	69	26%	80	54%	105	55%
Oppose amalgamations	119	46%	40	27%	68	35%
Merge with Canada Bay and Strathfield Councils to the South	24	9%	15	10%	7	4%
Merge with Ku-ring-gai and Hornsby councils to the North	24	9%	4	2%	6	3%
The recommendation of the panel for Ryde to merge with Parramatta, Auburn and Holroyd Councils	12	5%	4	3%	4	2%
Other /propose alternative idea	12	5%	4	3%	3	2%
Total	259	100%	147	100%	193	100%

Significantly higher by group

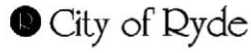
Significantly lower by group



The East & Central Wards are significantly more positive towards an eastern merge

ITEM 6 (continued)

ATTACHMENT 3



Significant Differences Were Observed By Age & Gender

Q5a. As we indicated, the Panel has recommended some options for City Of Ryde, however, there is also the option to oppose amalgamations or to propose an alternative idea. Which of the following options would be your preference?

	18 - 34		35 - 49		50 - 64		65+		Male		Female	
	Count	Column %	Count	Column %	Count	Column %	Count	Column %	Count	Column %	Count	Column %
Merge with Willoughby, Lane Cove, and Hunters Hill Councils to the East	88	43%	81	50%	52	41%	33	31%	122	43%	132	42%
Oppose amalgamations	67	33%	55	34%	48	38%	56	53%	94	33%	132	42%
Merge with Canada Bay and Strathfield Councils to the South	26	13%	7	4%	6	5%	6	6%	25	9%	21	7%
Merge with Ku-ring-gai and Hornsby councils to the North	15	7%	9	6%	7	6%	1	1%	23	8%	9	3%
The recommendation of the panel for Ryde to merge with Parramatta, Auburn and Holroyd Councils	3	1%	4	3%	6	5%	7	6%	13	5%	7	2%
Other/propose alternative idea	6	3%	5	3%	6	5%	3	3%	8	3%	12	4%
Total	205	100%	163	100%	126	100%	106	100%	286	100%	314	100%

Significantly higher by group

Significantly lower by group

Females and older residents are more likely to oppose amalgamation

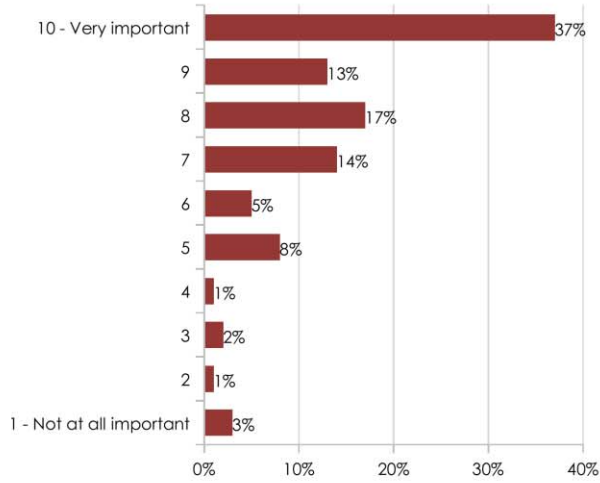


ITEM 6 (continued)

ATTACHMENT 3


81% Of Residents Gave The Importance Of Retaining Local Representation A Score Of 7 or Greater

Q6. Overall, how would you rate the importance of the City Of Ryde Area retaining local government representatives?



Mean ratings	18 - 34	35 - 49	50 - 64	65+	Overall
	7.83	8.05	8.10	8.41	8.05
	West Ward	Central Ward	East Ward	Male	Female
	8.02	8.04	8.09	7.89	8.19

Scale: 1 = not at all important, 10 = very important

Base: n=600



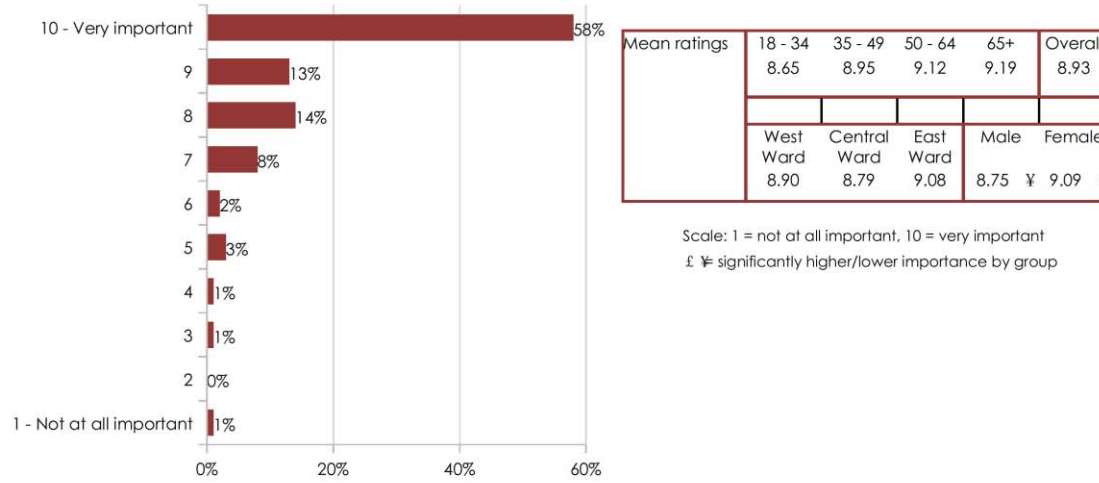
Residents still think it is important that the City of Ryde retains local representation

ITEM 6 (continued)

ATTACHMENT 3

City of Ryde 93% Of Residents Gave The Importance Of Council Consultation On The Issue Of Amalgamation A Score Of 7 Or Greater

Q7. How important is it to you for Council to consult with the community on the issue of amalgamations?



Mean ratings	18 - 34	35 - 49	50 - 64	65+	Overall
	8.65	8.95	9.12	9.19	8.93
	West Ward	Central Ward	East Ward	Male	Female
	8.90	8.79	9.08	8.75	9.09

Scale: 1 = not at all important, 10 = very important
£ ¥ significantly higher/lower importance by group

Base: n=600




Residents strongly feel that the issue of amalgamation requires community consultation

ITEM 6 (continued)

ATTACHMENT 3



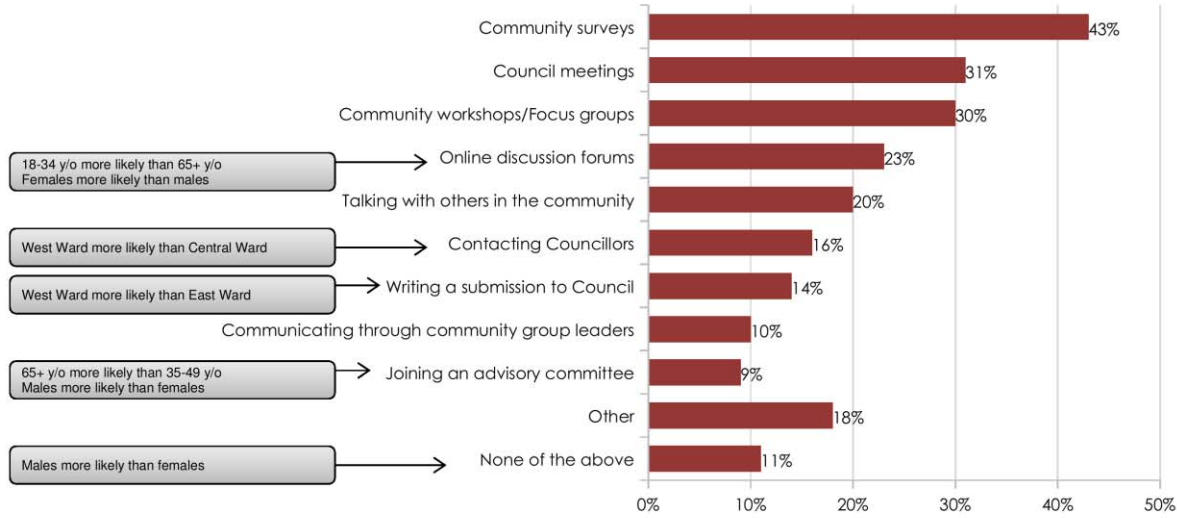
 City of Ryde

ITEM 6 (continued)

ATTACHMENT 3

City of Ryde Community Surveys Are seen As the Best Method Of Consultation

Q8. We are looking to understand the ways in which the community prefers to be involved in community consultation over the issue of amalgamations. How would you prefer to be consulted about this issue?



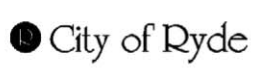
Base: n=600



Council meetings and workshops are also popular methods to engage the community

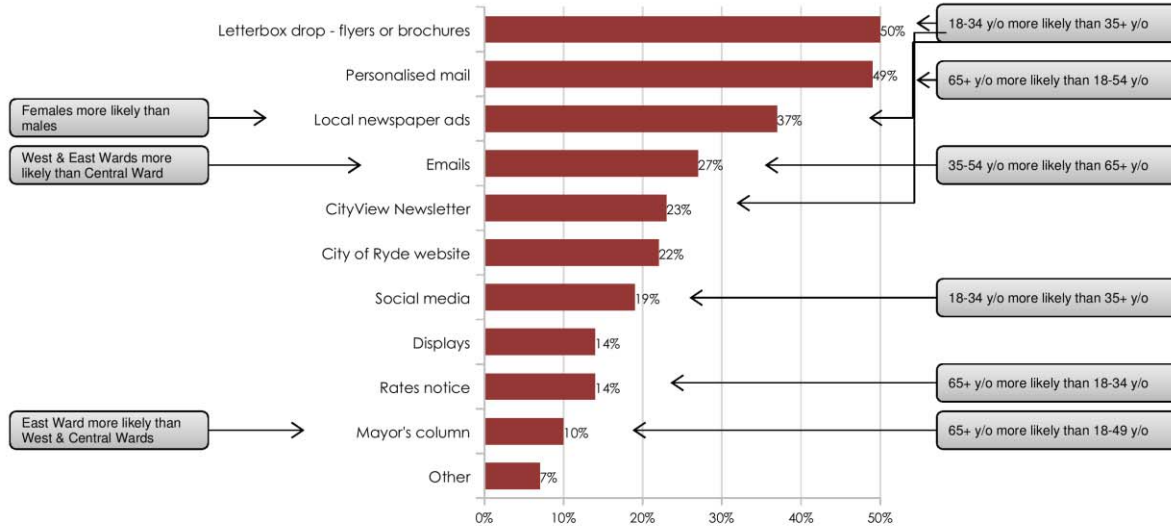
ITEM 6 (continued)

ATTACHMENT 3



Direct Mail/Brochures Are Seen To Be The Best Method Of Communicating with Residents

Q9. What do you believe would be the best ways for City of Ryde Council to communicate information to residents?



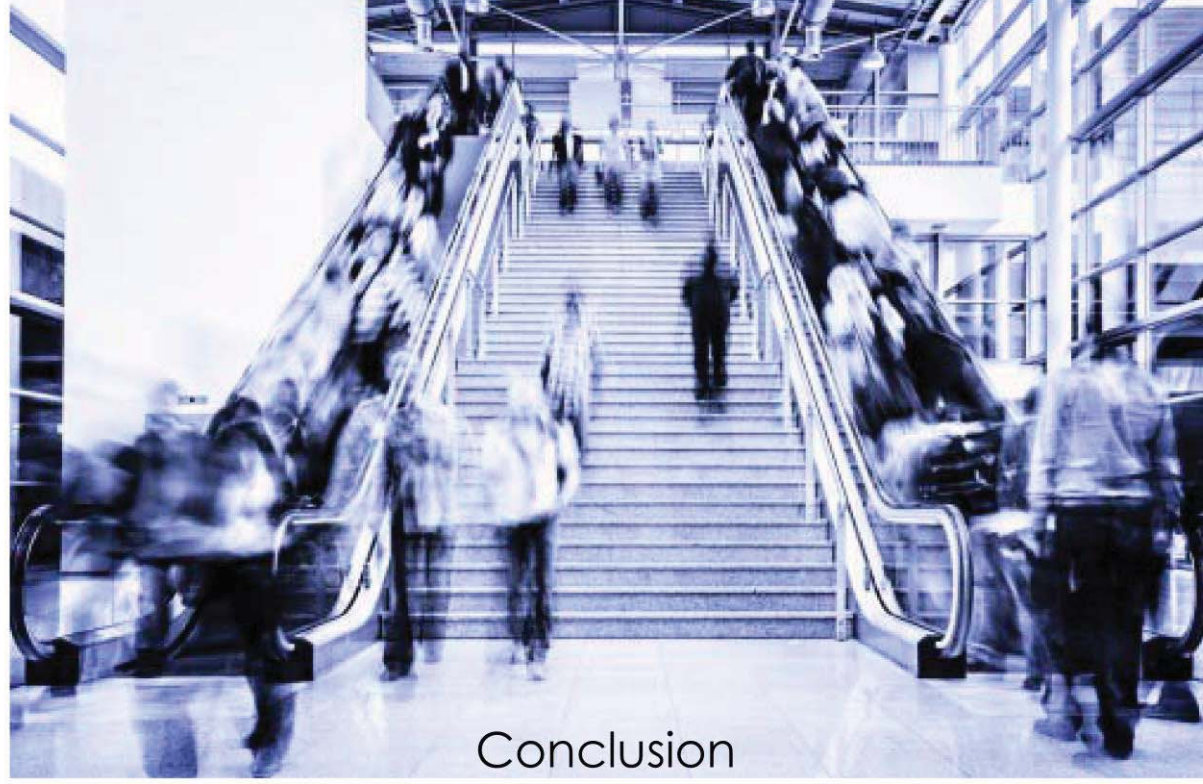
Base: n=600




Ultimately Council needs to communicate via a variety of platforms

ITEM 6 (continued)

ATTACHMENT 3



 City of Ryde

ITEM 6 (continued)

ATTACHMENT 3

1 City of Ryde

Conclusion

70% Of Residents Claim to Be Aware Of The Review Of The Local Government System.

93% of residents indicated that it is important to be consulted with about this issue.

At a broad level, 56% of residents are not very supportive - not at all supportive of the amalgamation option versus 22% who are supportive - very supportive.

- If we remove the fence-sitters (somewhat supportive 22%), the data shows that the community is 2.5:1 against amalgamation

If pressed, the preferred merge option is to merge eastwards (42%), however, 38% still oppose amalgamation outright.

- Only 3% of residents support the Panel's proposal of a merger with Parramatta, Holroyd and Auburn

ITEM 6 (continued)

ATTACHMENT 3



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