



KEEP COUNCILS LOCAL

Wednesday 17 June 2015

JOINT REGIONAL AUTHORITY - A SUPERIOR SOLUTION TO FORCED AMALGAMATIONS

In a show of unity, City of Ryde, Hunters Hill and Lane Cove Councils have adopted a Joint Response Submission to the State Government's *Fit for the Future* reform program, endorsing their rejection of forced amalgamation and detailing the formation of a Joint Regional Authority (JRA).

The trio of Councils collaborated on the preparation of the Joint Response Submission that details the community consultation undertaken in the three council areas, the reasons why the mega-council concept has been rejected by the communities and details of a Joint Regional Authority as a superior alternative for management of the region.

Ryde Mayor Clr Bill Pickering said the Councils were committed to working proactively with the State Government and were not opposed to local government reform: "Our goal was to combine our strengths, find common ground and present a workable solution to a complex set of criteria.

"Our JRA model is a superior alternative to forced amalgamation. It meets the requirements of scale and capacity, streamlines decision making, while allowing our individual communities to retain their local identity, their voice and the high quality, tailored services they currently enjoy.

Mayor Pickering added that it was surprising that a JRA model was available for country councils to consider but not metropolitan councils where the impact of forced amalgamations and mega-councils were shown to be unpopular with the community as well as costly and unsuccessful where they had been implemented in other states.

Under the *Fit for the Future* recommendations, the City of Ryde would be split in two and merged with Councils to the west (Parramatta, Holroyd and Auburn) and to the East (Hunters Hill, Lane Cove, Mosman, North Sydney and Willoughby).

Lane Cove Mayor, Clr David Brooks-Horn, said extensive community consultation showed that residents were opposed to the amalgamation proposal: "Residents unequivocally rejected the State Government's proposal with 92% of residents from all three council areas saying no to amalgamation.

"Residents told us they did not want to lose their local representation nor did they want a reduction in the quality of services such as childcare, disability support, libraries, sporting and recreational facilities provided by their Councils. This is why they have not accepted the 'bigger is better' myth and with our Council already being debt-free and financially sustainable, there is no evidence that the community would be 'better off' under a mega-Council".



Hunters Hill Mayor, Cllr Richard Quinn, said the JRA would operate as the decision making body for subregional planning, infrastructure delivery, procurement and shared services. “We have invited the Government to participate with us in this innovative alternative that would prevent the disintegration of our community’s identity.”

Core benefits of the JRA include:

- Subregional land use and infrastructure planning:
 - Single approach to subregional planning priorities and policy
 - Central management
 - Single set of State/Major local infrastructure priorities
 - Subregional Section 94 Plan
- Single point of contact for State and Federal Government
- Subregional advocacy
- Subregional procurement
- Shared service centre for economies of scale

These benefits are further detailed in a submission being made to the State Government later this month.

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