



## KEEP COUNCILS LOCAL

Thursday 15 October 2015

### **LGNSW DELEGATES DEMONSTRATE OVERWHELMING SUPPORT FOR THE FORMATION OF JOINT ORGANISATIONS FOR METROPOLITAN SYDNEY**

This week, Local Government NSW Delegates at their annual conference in Sydney, demonstrated their overwhelming support for the formation of Joint Organisations for Metropolitan Councils in Sydney.

A motion put forward by the delegates from the City of Ryde and Lane Cove Council, supported by the delegates from Hunters Hill Council, asked for the Premier of NSW, The Hon. Mike Baird MP and the Minister for Local Government, the Hon. Paul Toole, to allow one set of rules to equally apply to all local government in NSW and allow regional joint organisations to be an option in the Sydney metropolitan area, in addition to rural and regional NSW.

When the motion was considered at the conference, there was an overwhelming demonstration of support for the motion, as it was adopted without debate.

On 30 June this year, the City of Ryde, Lane Cove and Hunter's Hill Councils made a joint submission to the State Government for the formation of a Joint Regional Authority (JRA) as a superior alternative to that of the Independent Local Government Review Panel's (ILGRP) merger proposals. The JRA is considered to be a more viable and advantageous model to that of amalgamation for metropolitan Sydney.

The core benefits of the JRA model proposed by the City of Ryde, Lane Cove and Hunter's Hill Councils includes:

- It is fit for purpose;
- It is a more functional and integrated approach to inter-government relations;
- It is well positioned to provide strategic decision making, service delivery and advocacy; and
- It is an option that avoids the huge cost of amalgamations.

From the research and studies conducted, it is apparent that disadvantages of mergers include the following:

- There is no evidence that forced mergers result in cost savings;
- That a 'one size fits all approach' of mergers is misplaced;



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- Empirical evidence of the 2000-2004 NSW Council mergers, shows no difference in performance between merged and unmerged Councils;
  - Empirical evidence of the 2008 Queensland amalgamations shows that most amalgamated Councils are operating under diseconomies of scale;
  - The proposed mergers do not represent ‘a common community interest’;
  - Local representations severely diminish; and
  - A loss of ‘local’ in Local Government.

The motion highlighted the benefits of Council’s proposed Joint Regional Authority (JRA) option for northern Sydney and it being a superior option over mergers, thereby enhancing the Local Government sector. It reinforces the recommendations of the ILGRP that Joint Organisations are a viable option for Councils across NSW and should be considered as an option for all Sydney metropolitan Councils.

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