



KEEP COUNCILS LOCAL

Friday 18 December 2015

STATE GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCES FORCED MERGERS AND IGNORES OUR COMMUNITIES

Today's announcement by the State Government of a proposed forced merger between our Councils totally disregards the sophisticated and contemporary model we have put forward of a Joint Regional Authority between the City of Ryde, Hunter's Hill and Lane Cove Councils.

The report from the Parliamentary Inquiry into Local Government in NSW, strongly supported City of Ryde, Hunters Hill and Lane Cove Councils proposed Joint Regional Authority (JRA) and urged the NSW Government to work with local government on a statutory model for Joint Organisations based on the Hunters Hill, Ryde and Lane Cove Council model as a cooperative and consensus model for local council reform in Metropolitan Sydney.

Ryde Mayor Cllr Jerome Laxale said: *"For a Premier whose popularity has been based on trust and honesty, today's broken promise proves that he is no messiah, rather just another politician looking after the big end of town. Ryde, Australia's 3rd oldest settlement was proven to be financially fit, yet we will be smashed together with others in a forced merger. Costs of merging will far outweigh any benefit and our communities will lose their local identity. In short our ratepayers will be worse off thanks to Mike Baird, Victor Dominello and Anthony Roberts."*

Hunter's Hill Mayor Cllr Richard Quinn said: *"Hunters Hill Council is profoundly disappointed and outraged that the NSW Government has chosen to ignore the strong views of the great majority of our community. The Baird Government has no mandate from the people to force council amalgamations. We have maintained from the outset that this should be a decision of the voters of NSW. This is a very sad day for democracy."*

Lane Cove Mayor Cllr Deborah Hutchens said: *"To apply a blanket approach to so many councils shows just how out of touch the State government is with the reality of how local communities actually work. That is why we need the State government to give the opportunity for a poll of local communities – ratepayers should be in control of their own future, not have it handed down to them by the State"*.

Our Councils are financially fit and sustainable, and have the capacity for effective local government. The JRA is a sophisticated and contemporary model which breaks the traditional mould of amalgamations and we are convinced it would meet our communities'



needs and allow them to have a say in their future together in working with the State Government in the strategic planning of Greater Sydney.

Our residents have clearly shown their preference for us to work together which was demonstrated by their 92% level of support of our JRA as their first or second preference, which is a very clear mandate from our communities on this issue.

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

- The cost of creating a merged entity is estimated at \$120 million in the short and medium term.
- The first three years of the merged entity will accumulate deficits of \$62.2 million.
- Empirical evidence on amalgamations falls overwhelmingly against forced amalgamations and there is little, if any evidence that forged mergers result in cost savings.
- Empirical evidence of the 2000-2004 NSW council amalgamations shows no difference in the performance of merged and unmerged councils using the Fit for the Future criteria.

Whilst today's announcement is extremely disappointing, Ryde, Hunter's Hill and Lane Cove will continue to work together through the Boundaries Commission process to get the best outcome for our communities.

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