

INQUIRY INTO LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially Confidential

The Director
General Purpose Standing Committee No. 6
Parliament House
Macquarie St
Sydney NSW 2000
Fax: (02) 9230 2981

Dear Madam/Sir,

Parliamentary Inquiry into the State Government's Fit for the Future Local Government Reform Agenda.

I disagree with Hornsby Council's approach for a possible forced amalgamation for the following reasons:

- Hornsby Council cannot be trusted with rate-payers money. In 2011, our rates increased by 17.8% over 3 years with an IPART Special Rate Variation, yet projects to be funded by this SRV, e.g. Epping Aquatic & Leisure Centre projects, were not completed. Other councils should not be forced to amalgamate with a council that cannot be trusted.
- There was no community consultation about council amalgamations, unlike with other councils.
- Hornsby Council has resolved to divest itself of all childcare facilities, against community opposition to this, yet S94 fees were collected specifically for this purpose. Asquith's population is to increase by 52%, yet Hornsby Council is selling its childcare facility.
- Hornsby Council has resolved to sell a small park, 18X Water St, Hornsby, in a high density area with a documented shortage of open space, against community opposition to this. Not one person spoke in favour of the park's reclassification at the public hearing. In fact, Hornsby Council is listed as one of the developers of the 5 storey apartments to be built here in DA 1448/2014. This is surely a conflict of interest!
- Hornsby Council is closing community centres and community building used by community groups, e.g. in Mt Ku-ring-gai and Epping, against community wishes. These groups have nowhere else to meet. Epping's population will increase by 7,000 yet this council is closing its facilities.
- Hornsby Council made an \$8 million surplus last year, and collected an extra \$5 million in S94 fees last year, yet it is sitting on over \$14 million in unspent S94 funds while selling off open space and community centres against community wishes.

I disagree with the State Government's approach of forced amalgamations and Hornsby Council's proposal to incorporate Ku-ring-gai and to split the Parramatta and Ryde councils to incorporate some suburbs into Hornsby Council for these reasons:

- Amalgamations cost a lot of money, and it is the ratepayers who will have to pay.
- The Government has not provided any evidence that amalgamations will

benefit communities. In Queensland, 4 councils have de-amalgamated since the forced amalgamations in 2008, citing reasons such as loss of identity and loss of representation.

- The Government has not undertaken any community consultation and is not taking community feedback seriously.
- Amalgamations will be confusing and distracting, and while the new Council is focussing on making it work, local issues and customer service to ratepayers will suffer;
- Local Councils are supposed to be local, being close to the people and working with communities to plan for neighbourhoods and town centres.
- In addition all residents' access to their councillors will be reduced and this means even less say in our local community;

- . I believe that State Government should work with councils to find a better way to solve problems and to address future goals, instead of using amalgamations as a one size- fits- all solution, as bigger is not always better. If amalgamations do occur, it will be local ratepayers and residents that are expected to pay higher rates, accept reduced access to councillors and have less say in what happens in their neighbourhoods. I urge the Committee to give these matters close consideration during its deliberations.