

The Director
General Purpose Standing Committee No. 6
Parliament House
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Sydney NSW 2000
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Dear Madam/Sir

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

In my local government area of Ryde the State Government is proposing:

1. That Ryde be split with one third going to Parramatta, Auburn and Holroyd to make a mega Council for reasons including:
 - The new Council will have a projected 2031 population of 558,500;
 - Close functional interaction and economic/social links between these councils;
 - Need for stronger unified local government to develop Parramatta as the second CBD;
 - Parramatta's northern boundary is very close to its CBD; relocation to M2 would facilitate planning and improve socio-economic mix and community linkages; and
 - Incorporating part of Ryde would strengthen link between Parramatta and 'Global Sydney Corridor' and improve scope for integrated planning around Epping station.
2. Amalgamation of the remaining two thirds of Ryde with Hunter's Hill, Lane Cove, Mosman, North Sydney and Willoughby Councils for reasons including:
 - The new Council will have a projected 2031 population of 365,400;
 - Close functional interaction and economic/social links between these Councils;
 - Need for integrated planning for major centres, Sydney Harbour foreshores, etc ; and
 - 3 of these Councils are projected to have fewer than 50,000 people in 2031.

I **disagree** with the State Government's approach of forced amalgamations and to split the City of Ryde 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;
- 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;

- Ryde has no close ties to Parramatta and does not share the same community of interest; the western part of Ryde is separated from Parramatta geographically with the Parramatta River and the Main North Rail Line;
- The Government's proposed split will dissect Macquarie Park, NSW's second largest commercial centre that continues to grow in economic output and jobs growth for Sydney and NSW. The City of Ryde has carefully planned this commercial centre and this will be jeopardised if it is divided between two mega Councils. The proposed splitting of Ryde seriously puts into question the continuation of the sustained and planned growth that has been achieved under the City Ryde's stewardship of Macquarie Park;
- Ryde has a proud history, it is the third oldest local government area in Australia and its heritage should be respected enough not to be split and merged;
- Local Councils are supposed to be local, being close to the people and working with communities to plan for neighbourhoods and town centres;
- If Ryde is split and divided into two mega Councils, the residents will lose and not get the proper services and representation they deserve;
- In addition all residents' access to their Councillors will be reduced, so for Ryde residents this means even less say in our local community;
- An amalgamation will bring the 6 different local council areas together, that are so different it will mean that the communities will get a one size-fits-all services, instead of services that are customised for each community of interest;
- City of Ryde is providing the services that the community needs and expects;
- City of Ryde is financially sound, so why is there a need to amalgamate; and
- Residents have excellent access to our 12 Councillors now and they focus on the City of Ryde. We will not have this close relationship under an amalgamation.

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.

Regards