

**Submission
No 48**

**INQUIRY INTO LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN NEW SOUTH
WALES**

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Local Government Amalgamations Submission

It seemed clear to me from the first announcement about the proposed local council amalgamations that there was more to the “Fit for the Future” proposal than was indicated by the items to be used to judge the viability of existing local government areas. The obvious unspoken one was to ensure that local government was to be the prerogative of the major political parties. In the past the City of Sydney and South Sydney Council were separated and combined by Labor and Liberal State Governments to achieve dominance of one party or the other in the SCC. Now it would seem the same fiasco may be repeated to the detriment of smaller parties (for example the Greens) and independents by ensuring local council areas would have so many voting residents that independents would have little chance of being elected. It would seem to be more than a coincidence that the IPART amalgamations concept was introduced when support for the major political parties was waning and the popularity of independents controlled local councils in the UK was so clearly evident in places such as in Frome in Somerset, Arlesey in Bedfordshire and Buckfastleigh in Devon. While these small councils are being successfully governed by independents there was also the larger “independence” movement in Scotland that effectively ended the domination of the British Labour Party and the Conservatives there. At the very least IPART should give the reasons behind its stated “fit for purpose” items, especially the number of residents in each local government area, before any decisions are made about amalgamations.

One amalgamation item that is apparently not to be considered is that of the likelihood of corruption. Given the corruption in successive State Governments that ICAC has revealed it would seem that larger councils may well be more corrupt than smaller ones. Surely this should be an issue when considering amalgamations. The salaries of local government officers (bigger councils presumably mean bigger salaries) and the degree of supervision of staff in larger councils also need to be addressed.

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