

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

**Organisation:** Holroyd Christian Ministers' Fellowship

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# Holroyd Christian Ministers' Fellowship

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## THE CHAIR OF THE OFFICIAL INQUIRY LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN NEW SOUTH WALES

We lodge this submission on behalf of the Holroyd Combined Churches, especially the ministers and church leaders who are in regular communication with each other, and with the various organs of our local political structure.

At our weekly ministers' prayer meeting recently, the subject of the proposed "merger" of Sydney Urban Councils has arisen several times, and we have had a growing sense of alarm at the possible outcome of our own district's "merger" under Parramatta Council. To be frank, the language is sounding more and more like a takeover rather than a merger.

For many years, in our own district, the Council and Ministers' Fellowship have enjoyed not only cordial relations, but have synergised at several levels that affect the general wellbeing of our local community. We are **VERY** concerned that this state of affairs (which is very difficult to gauge in financial viability terms) is going to be marginalised, and possibly, even eliminated.

To date, we have seen little public addressing of this aspect of what amalgamations is going to accomplish (or, in fact, diminish).

For instance...

- Parramatta Council has no prayers in their regular meetings; we do – **every Council meeting** commences with a dedicatory prayer by a minister.
- **ALL** Holroyd Council citizenship ceremonies are addressed not only by politicians, but by representatives of our police LAC, and Combined Churches.
- We are very unconfident that the tradition of the annual Mayoral Prayer Dinner (now in its 38<sup>th</sup> year) will continue with the energetic involvement of both Holroyd Council and Combined Churches representatives.
- Several ministers (including ourselves) have been participating, at the invitation of the Holroyd LAC Commander (Supt. Matt Appleton), in the Police Community Safety Committee, as the Police seek to strengthen local bonds and communication with community representative groups. The Police are doing the **very opposite** of what we face with the merger proposals – because they know it works in producing safer, more synergised, more communication-friendly bonds - which result in better and quicker responses to observed needs.
- We still have **NO** sex (aka misnamed "adult") shops in our district (after years of diligent vigilance), and while Internet porn has made these somewhat redundant, the incidence in our district of sexual assault is still relatively very low.
- What few brothels are located in our district (mandated now by state law), they have been confined to the industrial areas and are nowhere near the proliferation of the Parramatta district ones; nor do any homosexual brothels exist that we are aware of (unlike Parramatta's district).
- Holroyd Council has proven over the years to be accessible to residents – all the way up to the Councillors. The management of local facilities has room for input from residents through their Ward Councillors so that we see local matters responded to within a reasonable timeframe. This is truly where "**local**" Government functions so well, yet relatively unnoticed.
- This notion of **accessibility** is one of the great strengths of the Australian style of representational structure. Within the broader framework of what makes our relatively young nation stand tall in its structure, has been this accessibility factor, one that so-called "super-councils" have a poor reputation in maintaining. Again, how do you gauge an accurate economic value on this great strength of the Australian way of life?

We are asking for your committee to plead the case of our (Holroyd City) district being potentially swamped by the current efforts to establish a “Greater Parramatta”. We are not opposed to that vision, nor to amalgamations per se; it is inevitable as Sydney continues to expand to the West, but we believe;

- there is little to be gained from our own City district (and its 115,000 residents) being swallowed up in the mergers that are going to take place, while,
- there is much to be lost - many aspects being almost impossible to be assessed on a financial/economic-alone basis.

We look forward to your response as a committee to these concerns and suggestion, and assure you that we, as a group of committed Christian leaders (including founder of the Mayoral Prayer Dinner, former Clr and 9-times Mayor, Allan Ezzy APM AM), do follow the Apostle Paul’s admonition to regularly pray for all those in (political) leadership over us

(Rev) Bob Dennis (President, Holroyd Christian Ministers' Fellowship)

(Rev) Brian Rensford (Secretary, Holroyd Christian Ministers' Fellowship)

***SERVING THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH, AND THE HOLROYD COMMUNITY  
OUR APPROACH IS RELATIONAL - IT'S "MEMBERSHIP BY PARTICIPATION"***