

INQUIRY INTO LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Organisation: Warringah Council

Date received: 3/07/2015

3 July 2015

The Director
General Purpose Standing Committee No. 6
Legislative Council Committees
Parliament House
Macquarie St
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Sir/Madam

Submission to Parliamentary Inquiry on Local Government Reform

Warringah supports the robust reform process that has been undertaken over the last four years, encompassing extensive sector involvement and community engagement.

Warringah supports the recommendations of the Independent Local Government Review Panel (ILGRP) as the framework for the Government's reforms – these are pivotal changes that the sector itself has asked for and helped develop. We believe they will effectively address the challenges of the sector as it currently stands, with too many small or unsustainable councils, ineffective regional organisation of councils (ROCs), various external constraints and a weak partnership with the State government.

The wide-ranging reforms will create a more sustainable and robust local government sector. Not only will Councils be able to work more effectively at State and regional scales, they will be freed up to improve, innovate and be more responsive to their communities.

We support the structural reforms recommended for the Sydney metropolitan area to improve not only local government's operations, but to forge a stronger partnership with the State in governing our global city.

Warringah was recommended to merge with Pittwater and Manly Councils, forming a moderate-sized Northern Beaches Council with a population of 259,000 (ERP 2013). Three business case studies have found the Northern Beaches Council to provide the greatest benefits of any merger option or the status quo. These benefits include:

- much stronger strategic capacity
- greater financial capacity and lower operating cost per capita
- significant savings of \$200m over 10 years
- increased services and infrastructure
- potential to freeze rates or equalise rates across the region
- retain local identity and community of interest
- enhance business and economic development

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- better management of the environment.

Creating one Northern Beaches Council has the lowest cost of all the merger options of around \$3.82m for changing systems and processes. Staff redundancy costs are offset by natural attrition and savings

Warringah's extensive consultation in 2014 and 2015 has overwhelming shown that one Northern Beaches Council is the community's preferred option. Feedback from more than 4,200 people found that 74% of Warringah respondents and 69% of all respondents preferred the option.

Warringah's Fit for the Future Proposal is attached. It includes the business case, community engagement results and a blueprint for a Northern Beaches Council. However, as our neighbouring councils do not wish to merge, this information forms an alternative strategy in Warringah's Improvement Proposal. In the absence of a merge, our Proposal shows that we are a high capacity council which is strong enough to stand alone, continually improve, and serve our community well into the future.

In closing we would like to make further observations on the operation of ROCs. It is our view that ROCs do not provide a viable alternative to mergers for achieving efficiencies and partnering with the NSW Government in planning the future of Sydney.

Warringah is a member of SHOROC which comprises Manly, Mosman, Pittwater and Warringah Councils. The current ROC voting model creates inequity and effectively reduces the value of Warringah residents' votes. The SHOROC model gives every Mosman resident five times the voice of a Warringah resident. Our experience is the ROC model has not always been in the best interest of the Warringah community.

Dealing with ROCs to plan strategic centres identified in the NSW Government's strategy '*A Plan for Growing Sydney*' has not been effective in Warringah's experience. Warringah has two strategic centres: Dee Why/Brookvale and Frenchs Forest. For example, Warringah's traffic engineers and planners were excluded from initial investigations of roadworks around the Northern Beaches Hospital at Frenchs Forest. As a result, the design of the roadworks does not cater for future growth.

Efforts to find efficiencies, such as ROC's joint procurement agreements, would be easier to manage under one larger Council – without the additional administrative overheads of a ROC.

We thank the Standing Committee for the opportunity to provide our views on the reforms. I would also request that the Mayor Michael Regan and I be able to address the Standing Committee Hearing on the 24 August 2015.

Yours faithfully

Michael Regan
Mayor

Rik Hart
General Manager