

**Submission
No 34**

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

Name: Dr Peter Mitchell

Date received: 30/06/2015

The Director
General Purpose Standing Committee No. 6
Parliament House
Macquarie St
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Madam/Sir,

Fit for the Future Local Government Reform Agenda

As you are aware the State Government is proposing to split the City of Ryde and wipe nearly 130 years of heritage off the slate under its 'Fit for the Future' planning proposal. Whilst I agree with many of the points made in this proposal and am convinced that serious boundary adjustments between many local government areas are desirable I hold the strong view that killing Ryde is a step too far.

Local Government is arguably the most important level of democratic community management in this country and although it can sometimes come unstuck and individuals can be dragged through ICAC type processes, at the end of the day the community has the final say at the ballot box. Ryde has been through some rough times in recent years but all the indications at the moment are that it is back on track. Dismissing our present Council representation and reducing local voices to a much smaller number of elected representatives in a mega-structure will not enhance the comfort or improve the well-being of ratepayers.

The western half of the proposed split makes little sense as most of Ryde has little in common with Parramatta as it presently exists, and none of Ryde has any real interest in Auburn and Holroyd. As for the eastern half I believe there is more sense in amalgamating Ryde and Hunters Hill, although the residents of that community are not likely to agree with me, but there are few 'natural' connections between eastern Ryde and Lane Cove, Mosman, North Sydney and Willoughby. Those areas may as well be in another State so far as most locals are concerned.

There must be better ways to rationalise boundaries than this simple cut and shunt approach seeking to meet some magic number of residents. Just consider the logistics of communication and management across the Lane Cove and Parramatta Rivers that the proposal requires. Equally consider a simple example of the difficulties of management of a business centre such as Gladesville where it is presently split between the objectives of two Councils with different priorities simply because it sits astride Victoria Road.

I am unconvinced that 'bigger is better' and have yet to see any firm data from the State that demonstrates how savings may really be made. On the other hand savings and better planning outcomes have come about in the last few years through the

ROC structure and I am of the view that reinforcement of this approach may well serve us all better.

In summary I do support some rationalisation of local government but not at the expense of community representation and certainly not to the extent that a whole LGA (Ryde) is eliminated. The City of Ryde is proposing improved cooperative management through a joint organisation approach with shared services and I would suggest that this deserves a fair trial. It should be cheaper than alternatives and it would retain that all important local representation and sense of identity.

Thank you for your consideration

Dr Peter Mitchell OAM