

**Submission
No 79**

INQUIRY INTO LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Organisation: Fourth Ward Combined Progress Association

Date received: 5/07/2015

4 July, 2015

**Submission Re : Local government in New South Wales (Inquiry)
From : Fourth Ward Combined Progress Association**

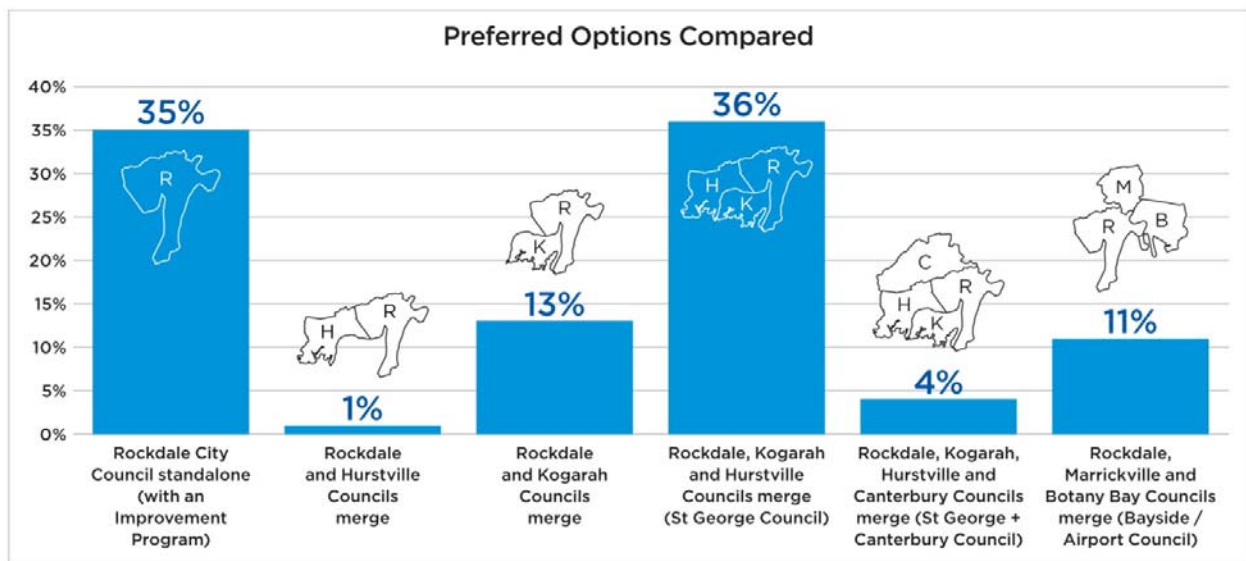
This submission is from the executive of the Fourth Ward Combined Progress Association, known to most as Carlton Progress Association. We are an active progress association with over 100 years of local history, whose local council is Rockdale City Council and whose elected representative is local Councillor Liz Barlow. Our charter is to be a voice for local residents so their views can be heard and passed on to Council for discussion and deliberation. We campaign for improvements to our local area, the area where we and our families reside.

Our vision of Local Government means that we have local representation by representatives we select that also live in our area and are concerned with the same issues. They are interested in creating better amenities for families such as upgrading children's playgrounds, swimming pools and sports centres, assisting our older residents with community services such as meals on wheels, creating Libraries of the 21st century and managing our waste whilst keeping rates affordable.

Currently, the State Government has proposed that Rockdale City Council should consider amalgamating with other local councils as part of its 'Fit for the Future' program.

Rockdale Council researched this option with local residents, ratepayers and others with an interest in the area. Some people contributed via a short survey, some simply took the opportunity to read the information available delivered via mailbox or on-line, many came to speak with the Mayor and the General Manager at one of five Council hour information stalls across the City and others made submissions such as this one.

The survey results are shown below.



However, comments have since been made by many who selected amalgamation with Hurstville and Kogarah that they voted for this merger because they believed that Rockdale Council could not meet the benchmarks set by the Independent Local Government Review Panel (ILGRP) and that they must accept one of the above mergers or the Government would make the decision.

ROCKDALE CITY'S FUTURE

Consider Our Options
November 2014 to March 2015

Inform Our Community
February to ongoing 2015

Engage Our Community
April 2015

Consider Community Feedback
May 2015

Decide on Our Response to NSW Government
May 2015

Submit Fit For the Future Response
June 2015

Update Our Community
July 2015

What is Fit for the Future?
NSW councils are being asked to consider the State Government's proposed reform program for Local Government - Fit for the Future. Council is obliged to carefully consider the options for Rockdale City and prepare a submission by 30 June 2015.

ST GEORGE COUNCIL

Amalgamation of the three existing St George Councils into one (Murrumbidgee, Negerah, and Rockdale) including the boundary of Sydney Airport. This may also include Canterbury Council.

BAYSIDE COUNCIL

An amalgamation of Botany Bay, Murrumbidgee and Rockdale Councils to create an urban employment hub. This would unite Port Botany and Sydney Airport.

What are the options for Rockdale City?

The NSW Government's preferred option is for a St George Council. Council is exploring both options. To proceed with an amalgamation, all partnering councils must support the proposal.

At this time, we are at the investigation phase and there has not been agreement amongst potential amalgamation partners to go ahead with either option.

If Council is unable to reach an agreement, we will be required to submit a standalone improvement. Proposed seeing Fit for the Future endorsement.

In our opinion, Council will continue to strongly oppose any boundary adjustment at Sydney Airport.

What if we do nothing?

The Minister for Local Government has said: "Doing nothing is not an option".

If we do nothing, the NSW Government may make a decision without Council's or our community's involvement.

It is in our community's best interest to seriously consider all options for Rockdale City and respond to the NSW Government.

What are the benefits and impacts?

In our assessment of the options, we are considering the potential benefits for and impacts on our community.

This includes possible changes to rates, services and planning for communities. Further information will be presented in the coming weeks.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Telephone 5562 1858

Web rockdale.nsw.gov.au/OurFuture

Stay informed and get involved

We are still at the early stages of formulating our approach. Throughout the process, we will keep you informed.

In late March and April, we will be seeking your feedback to help shape the future of Rockdale City. In order for Council to make decisions which reflect our community's wishes we need the community to let us know what they think.

Please take the time to consider the options for the future of Rockdale City and get involved!

Keep an eye out in your letterbox for the Options for Rockdale City Future Information Brochure over the coming weeks.

It will outline the State Government's Fit for the Future Program options for our Local Government Area, where and when you can speak with Council, and how you can have your say.

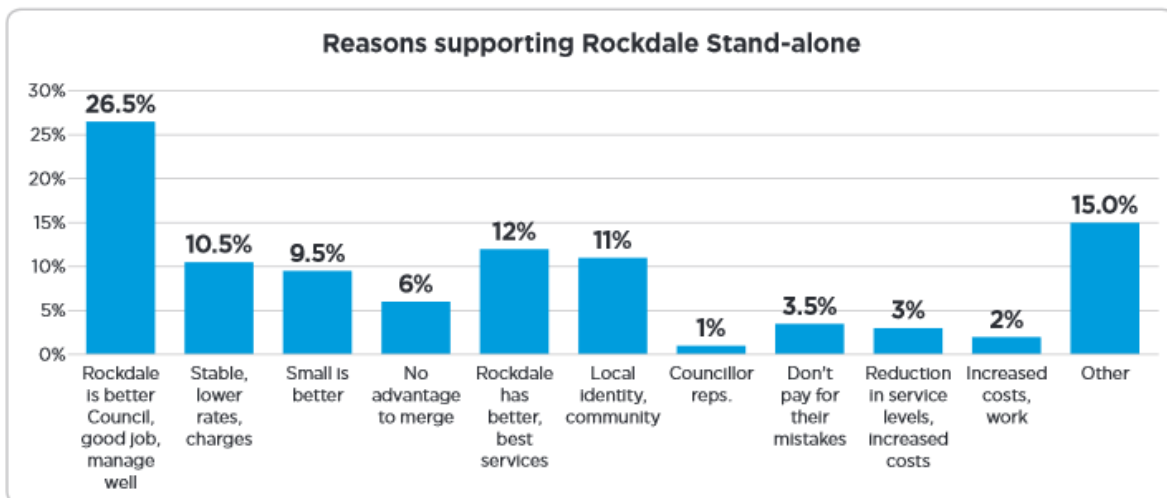
To register your interest in staying informed and/or being involved, email your name and daytime phone number to ourfuture@rockdale.nsw.gov.au

However, Rockdale Council as well as obtaining community input into the planned merger, also reviewed their processes and now believe that with the implementation of their proposed 'Improvement Plan', financial modelling shows that they will more than exceed the required performance on the seven benchmarks set by the ILGRP within the required timeframe.

This Option that is to remain standalone with an 'Improved Plan' is the option favoured by our Progress Association and we add our support to this proposal.

Our reasons are listed below :

- We want our local government representatives to have a local identity and be locally focussed.
- We believe that local residents ability to have a say in local affairs, would be significantly reduced, as would their access to elected representatives
- We are generally happy with Rockdale City Council and the range and quality of its services, associated costs and management provided. An increase in the size of Council and its geographical area would potentially realise a reduction in services and access to Council's administration. This view is also supported by those who selected 'Rockdale as a stand-alone' option in the council's survey.



- The increase in the size of our Council would also be detrimental to local independent representation and favourable to political parties. This would be a negative outcome as we are in favour of local issues resolved on merit and not by a politically motivated outcome along party lines.
- Rockdale already works with other councils when it is in the best interests of ratepayers and it is possible to do so. Examples are Council's membership in SSROC and regional bodies, ensuring our ongoing capacity for effective advocacy and partnerships. Shared arrangements with Hurstville and Kogarah Councils include the St George Regional Waste Contract (total value -\$100 Million), Design Review Panel and the Sydney RID squad. Council also collaborates with other inner west Councils including Marrickville Council on Airport issues. Therefore we have collaboration when needed.

The State Government has not made a case or proven that amalgamation is in the best interests of our community and we believe from the points raised in this submission that Rockdale Council, our council is on the right path to being a sustainable entity in the future.

Therefore our Progress Association recommends that Rockdale Council remains a standalone Council and continues to provide local management with local representative.

On behalf of the Fourth Ward Combined Progress Association

your sincerely

Cathy Jackson
Treasurer
Fourth Ward Combined Progress Association