

Submission
No 192

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

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially Confidential

The Director
General Purpose Standing Committee No. 6
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

I write to record my submission against the conduct of the NSW Government in regard to amalgamations of Local Government, both as an employee of that sector and a ratepayer in another LGA.

As has been demonstrated in Queensland amalgamations do not provide good outcomes. The cost of amalgamation is huge involving rebranding, rate hikes loss of service in a local community, job losses and most important, the loss of a local voice and a sense of being able to approach government and a sense of community ownership of the outcomes in the local area.

This state government has been wilfully secretive about the agenda behind all of this upheaval and has failed throughout to consult with local communities or to really disclose its agenda. It has failed to produce any real evidence of benefit to the community and it would appear relies solely on population density to argue that critical mass will lead to economies of scale. What it fails to disclose is that this will ultimately lead to the removal of all planning and local democratic process into the hands of the state and ignore local needs and determination.

In the case of Strathfield Council, there is absolutely no evidence of synergy or benefit and the Fit the Future process has been designed to deliver the State Government the desired result. It has been designed to ensure Councils will fail, based pure on population size and identified financial indicators. It makes not allowances for the what the current system delivers and what the local community wants. It ignores the local intelligence and knowledge that is held by Council employees; it also ignores the level of service satisfaction that the Council delivers. As an employee of this Council I take immense pride in my work and because of financial constraints, I am constantly challenged to be innovative in providing local programs with very little financial resource.

Were this Council to be amalgamated, the level currently provided would certainly disappear and communities would be left to deal with their own issues without guidance or support.

The State Government argues that it requires of Local Government transparency, accountability and economy. The Fit for the Future plan and the way in which it is being implemented is certainly not meeting these standards at all and very few rate payers in NSW are fully aware of the rights they have being usurped through this process. It is time the State Government of NSW was brought to account and obliged to be clear to all voters what the propose, allow for equitable and comprehensive consultation and then obliged to act as the residents of NSW direct.