

INQUIRY INTO LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Name: Name suppressed

Date received: 19/06/2015

Partially Confidential

Dear Mr Primrose

RE: Parliamentary Inquiry into the State Government's Fit for the Future Local Government Reform Agenda

In my local area of Ryde the State Government is proposing that

1. Ryde be split with one third of its Local Government area merging with Parramatta, Auburn and Holroyd to make a mega Council because:

- The new Council will have a projected 2031 population of 558,500;
- Close functional interaction and economic/social links between these councils;
- Need for stronger unified local government to develop Parramatta as the second CBD;
- Parramatta's northern boundary is very close to its CBD and relocating it to the M2 would facilitate planning and improve socio-economic mix and community linkages; and
- Incorporating part of Ryde would strengthen the link between Parramatta and the 'Global Sydney Corridor' and improve scope for integrated planning around Epping station.

2. Amalgamate the remaining two thirds with Hunter's Hill, Lane Cove, Mosman, North Sydney, Willoughby Councils because:

- The new Council will have a projected 2031 population of 365,400;
- Close functional interaction and economic/social links between these councils;
- Need for integrated planning for major centres, Sydney Harbour foreshores, etc; and
- 3 of these councils projected to have fewer than 50,000 people in 2031.

I disagree with this approach of the State Government to split Ryde and forced amalgamations.

I support what my local Council, City of Ryde is proposing: for Ryde to stand alone and continue to deliver local services and address local issues, in addition to working in partnership with our neighbouring Councils, Lane Cove and Hunters Hill on regional matters and to achieve efficiencies through shared services.

I support the City of Ryde's approach for these reasons:

- It is a win-win solution for local communities and the State Government;
- Instead of one-size-fits-all, the regional partnership model, would mean local issues stay local and regional matters are dealt with at the regional level by the three Councils working together;
- This solution is a much cheaper option, not confusing or messy for ratepayers and we get to keep our access to our local representatives, be able to participate in local decisions that affect our neighbourhoods and suburbs;
- It would also mean that Ryde is not split and keeps its local identity and its proud heritage does not disappear;
- The State Government will get what it wants, which is to deal with one organisation on subregional matters instead of three, with local government working together in planning and identifying priorities for the region;
- Through a regional partnership with Lane Cove and Hunters Hill we get a more powerful voice to advocate on critical regional matters like schools, hospitals and transport issues;
- A regional partnership also means that Councils could share delivery of some services and save money, it also means that they can gain more buying power in the market, all of this will save the ratepayer money;
- Local Councils are supposed to be local, being close to the people and working with communities to plan for neighbourhoods and town centres;
- If Ryde is split and is on the edges of two mega Councils, the residents will lose and not get the proper services and representation they deserve;
- Ryde has no close ties to Parramatta and does not share the same identity, the western part of Ryde is separated from Parramatta geographically with the Parramatta River and the Main North Rail Line;
- The Government's proposed split will dissect Macquarie Park, NSW's second largest commercial centre that continues to grow in economic output and jobs growth for Sydney and NSW. City of Ryde has carefully planned this commercial centre and this will be jeopardised if it sits between two mega Councils. The proposed splitting of Ryde seriously puts into question the continuation of the sustained and planned growth that has been achieved under the City Ryde's stewardship of Macquarie Park.

The Government has not provided any evidence that amalgamations will benefit communities.

I believe that the Committee should consider the benefits of partnerships and the joint collaboration models as proposed by the City of Ryde in preference to using amalgamations as a one size- fit- all solution, as bigger is not always better.

If amalgamations do occur, it will be local ratepayers and residents that are expected to pay higher rates, accept reduced access to councillors and have less say in what happens in their neighbourhoods.