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COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

UNDERTAKEN FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF KU-RING-GAI
COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO 'FIT FOR THE FUTURE' PROPOSALS

15 JUNE 2015



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Introduction

Ku-ring-gai Council has undertaken a range of communication and engagement activities to:

- inform the community about the state government's Fit for the Future (FFTf) proposals and what they may mean for Ku-ring-gai and;
- Consult with the community to gauge opinions about the proposals, particularly in relation to the proposed merger of Ku-ring-gai with Hornsby Shire Council.

Executive summary

This report outlines the Council's comprehensive community consultation strategy which was conducted over a two month period in May/June 2015 on the state government's proposed reforms to local government.

The strategy was focussed on two options; whether Ku-ring-gai should remain a stand alone council or merge with Hornsby Shire Council. This latter option was proposed by the Independent Local Government Review Panel specifically set up by the state government to examine council reform.

Council used a wide range of traditional and digital communication and engagement methods to ensure that the community were aware of proposed changes and could have their voices heard on this important issue. The methods employed and their outputs are outlined in this report. The results of community consultation will be incorporated into the Council's submission to the state government due on 30 June.

Under the terms of the state government's requirements, this submission will be an 'improvement proposal'. That is, the Council will unequivocally demonstrate that it has the financial strength, scale and capacity and most importantly, community support to remain a stand alone council. This is in line with the Council's adopted position of 28 April.

The Council understands that people's level of interest in matters relating to local government varies and that traditional opt-in engagement approaches may not provide a completely accurate picture of the opinion of a community. As a result and due to the high importance of this issue, Council employed an independent market research consultancy to develop and conduct a demographically representative telephone survey to obtain an accurate picture of community sentiment.

The telephone survey of 402 residents had a maximum sampling error of plus or minus 4.9% at 95% confidence. The results of the survey indicated that after being informed of the arguments for and against a merger with Hornsby and Ku-ring-gai Council's position, participant's preferences were as follows:

- 79% indicated a preference to stand alone
- 21% preferred to merge with Hornsby Council

Council also conducted a similar opt-in community survey between 15 May and 12 June 2015, available online and in print with 2077 responses received. The result of this survey was similar as follows:

- 77% indicated a preference to stand alone
- 23% preferred to merge with Hornsby Council

Council also conducted a community meeting to give people the opportunity to discuss FFTF with senior Council staff, Council's adopted position, to ask questions and take part in a ballot. 29 community members attended of which 26 people completed a ballot paper. The results showed

- 92% (24 people) oppose amalgamation
- 4% (1 person) supports amalgamation
- 4% (1 person) didn't know

The community has consistently indicated a preference for Ku-ring-gai to remain a stand alone council and does not support the Local Government Review Panel's recommendation to merge Ku-ring-gai Council with Hornsby Shire Council. The reasons for this view as stated in feedback collected in the representative telephone survey include the belief that standing alone will be a financially better solution, concern regarding the differences between Ku-ring-gai and Hornsby Councils and residents satisfaction with the current services and situation.

In conclusion, community feedback obtained during the two month period of consultation supports Council's adopted position taken on 28 April to remain a stand alone council.

Methodology and reporting

The communication and engagement strategy (in [Attachment 1](#)) outlines how Council has included the community in the project. The strategy allocated engagement levels for each activity as per the IAP2's Spectrum of Public Participation. Two levels of engagement were selected; 'Inform' and 'Consult'.

For clarity this report is divided into two parts; one reporting on the 'consult' activities; and one on 'inform' activities. Refer to the communication and engagement strategy for more information.

1) '**Consult**' activities

Hearing the community's opinions about the FFTF proposals is important, especially about the Panel's recommended merger of Ku-ring-gai Council with Hornsby Shire Council. To this end council employed a number of methods by which the community could have their say.

'Consult' activities included:

- Opt in community survey (online and printed)
- Recruited community survey (demographically representative)
- Community meeting

2) '**Inform**' activities

Informing the community about the issue and how they could have a say about council's future needed a broad array of 'inform' activities to ensure maximum reach. Council used the following methods to communicate with the community about FFTF:

- Community drop-in information sessions
- Information leaflet
- Advertisements in local media
- Media releases
- Website - with banners and dedicated pages
- E-newsletters
- Social Media
- Staff Briefing
- Staff Newsletter

Communications and engagement actions and outputs summary

Engagement Action	Details	Level of engagement (IAP2 spectrum)	Timeframe	Engagement outputs
Demographically representative sample survey - 402 households across Ku-ring-gai (undertaken by independent market research company)	To obtain a clear view of the community views, in particular regarding the Panel's amalgamation proposal. The random survey is the most accurate gauge of community sentiment.	Consult	25- 28 May	<p>Telephone surveys conducted with 402 residents.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 79% support a stand-alone approach 21% prefer a merger with Hornsby
Opt-in online survey (the survey is set up to ensure that it can only be taken once)	To hear the views of the community, in particular regarding the Panel's amalgamation proposal. It is important to note that in an opt-in process, people who take the time to take part are more likely to have polarised views about the proposals.	Consult	14 May to 12 June	<p>Surveys completed – 2077 (including hard copy responses)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 77% - support a stand-alone approach 23% prefer a merger with Hornsby
Opt-in hard copy survey (available at Customer Service and KMC library branches designed to garner the views of those without access or ability to use a computer)	To hear the views of the community in particular regarding the Panel's amalgamation proposal. It is important to note that in an opt-in process, people who take the time to take part are more likely to have polarised views about the proposals.	Consult	14 May to 12 June	<p>149 printed surveys completed - outputs merged with opt-in online survey to give one data set (same questions)</p>

Engagement Action	Details	Level of engagement (IAP2 spectrum)	Timeframe	Engagement outputs
Community meeting at Council Chambers	Meeting held Council Chamber - gives the community the opportunity to hear about Council's position and ask questions.	Consult	3 June, 6.00pm to 8.00pm	<p>Participant ballot (voting on amalgamation proposal). Results:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 92% (24 people) oppose amalgamation 4% (1 person) supports amalgamation 4% (1 person) don't know <p>Q&A session outputs captured</p> <p>Meeting participant feedback captured</p>
Community drop-in information sessions (advertised in local media, on the website and social media)	Residents invited to meet with senior Council staff to discuss FFTF. This was a one-on-one activity allowing a better understanding of Council's position and ask questions in an informal environment.	Inform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thursday 4 June Monday 1 June Thursday 28 May Monday 25 May 	5 residents attended and were able to have extensive discussions with staff.
Information brochure sent to all households (letterbox drop)	To provide more information about FFTF and Council's adopted position and how the community can have a say.	Inform	To reach approximately 36,000 households by 25 May	To inform about FFTF and how to have a say
Advertisements in local media (North Shore)	To inform the community about	Inform	2x full page ad in North	To inform about FFTF and how to

Engagement Action	Details	Level of engagement (IAP2 spectrum)	Timeframe	Engagement outputs
Times) and digital media	FFTF, Council's adopted position and how the community can have a say. Large advertisements as well as copy in Council's regular corporate advertisement in the North Shore times were used. Digital banner advertising was also undertaken in News Local – North Shore Times and News Local - The Hills		Shore times: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 June and • 15 May 1 half page ad - Sydney Observer <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • June edition Corporate Ad <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 May • 8 May • 15 May • 22 May • 29 May Digital Banner (online) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 29 May to 11 June • 27 May to 11 June 	have a say
Media Release	To increase awareness about FFTF, Council's adopted position and how the community can have a say	Inform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 May • 8 May • 15 May • 22 May • 29 May 	To inform about FFTF and how to have a say
Dedicated web pages on council's corporate	To increase awareness about FFTF, Council's adopted position	Inform	15 May	To inform about FFTF and how to

Engagement Action	Details	Level of engagement (IAP2 spectrum)	Timeframe	Engagement outputs
website and the 'haveyoursay kuringgai'	and how the community can have a say. A banner was placed on Council's home page for maximum exposure.			have a say
E-newsletters	To inform about FFTF and how to have a say.	Inform	May	To inform about FFTF and how to have a say - approx. 32,000 emails sent to opt-in subscribers.
Social Media Campaign	To increase awareness about FFTF, Council's adopted position and how the community can have their say. This approach is good for people who do not often engage with council (e.g. young people, time poor and those engaged on social media)	Inform	Facebook posts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 June • 20 May • 15 May Twitter posts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 14 May (pinned to top of site) • 1 June • 25 May • 24 May • 20 May • 28 April 	Facebook statistics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average reach of posts = 1509 • Total post clicks = 428 • Total likes, comments, shares = 73 Twitter statistics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Favourites = 3 • Retweets = 2
Staff Briefings	The General Manager briefed the staff six (6) times allowing for questions from staff and answers and discussion.	Inform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May 2015 x3 • November 2014 x 2 • December 2014 x1 	Staff informed and given opportunity to ask questions.
Staff Newsletter	Information of the reforms in the staff newsletter	Inform	28 April 2015	Kept staff informed.

‘Consult’ activities

This section provides detailed information about the following activities.

- 1) Recruited community survey (demographically representative)
- 2) Opt in community survey (online and hard copy)
- 3) Community meeting

1) Recruited Community Survey

Details

Council employed an independent market research consultancy to undertake a demographically representative survey of the Ku-ring-gai community.

The survey was developed by Micromex Research and designed to obtain an accurate representation of the Ku-ring-gai community’s opinion about FFTF, and in particular the Panel’s proposed amalgamation of Ku-ring-gai with Hornsby.

It assessed the existing level of knowledge in the community about proposed local government reform including the Panel’s merger recommendations. It also measured the level of support both for Ku-ring-gai remaining a stand alone Council and for merging with Hornsby Shire Council. Measurement of support occurred in two stages; before and after information about Council’s adopted position and reasoning was provided to participants. This was done to find out the community’s opinion without having detailed information about the proposal and Council’s position, and then after to see how the information about Council’s adopted position affected the results.

Full details of the methodology employed, questions and the data relating to the demographics of participants can be found in the report in [Attachment 2](#).

When and where

The survey was conducted by telephone during the period 25 - 28 May 2015.

Participation

402 people were interviewed in the recruited telephone survey. The sample was weighted by age and gender to reflect the 2011 ABS community profile of Ku-ring-gai Council. Full details of the survey sample can be found in the report in [Attachment 2](#).

Outputs/results

Key results from the survey

52% of survey participants indicate that *prior to the telephone call that they were not aware of the potential merger of Ku-ring-gai Council with Hornsby Council*.

Prior to hearing Council's adopted position and reasons for standing alone:

- more than three-quarters (77%) of residents were at least somewhat supportive of Ku-ring-gai standing alone, with 31% being 'completely supportive'.
- Residents offered little support for the option of merging with Hornsby Council, with 55% stating they were 'not very supportive' to 'not at all supportive'

After hearing Council's adopted position and reasons:

- 50% of residents were 'completely supportive' of Ku-ring-gai standing alone, with a further 37% being 'somewhat supportive' or 'supportive' (total 87%)
- There was very little support for Council to merge with Hornsby Shire Council, with 69% stating they were 'not very supportive' to 'not at all supportive'

When comparing participant responses before and after being told Council's adopted position the results changed as follows:

- Support for standing alone (those who selected completely supportive, supportive and somewhat supportive) INCREASED 10%
- Support for merging with Hornsby Council (those completely supportive, supportive and somewhat supportive) DECREASED by 14%

The table below outlines the results and shows the changes as a result of council's position being outlined.

	How supportive are you of Ku-ring-gai Council standing alone?			How supportive are you of Ku-ring-gai Council merging with Hornsby Shire Council?		
	Before	After	Difference	Before	After	Difference
Completely supportive	31%	50%	+19%	9%	5%	-4%
Supportive	24%	21%	-3%	14%	7%	-7%
Somewhat supportive	22%	16%	-6%	22%	19%	-3%
Not very supportive	12%	7%	-5%	26%	23%	-3%
Not at all supportive	11%	6%	-5%	29%	46%	+17%

Support was measured for remaining stand alone and secondly to merge with Hornsby Council. Participants were then asked for their overall preference regarding the future for Ku-ring-gai Council. Participant's preferences were as follows:

- **79% indicated a preference to stand alone**
- **21% preferring to merge with Hornsby Shire**

Reason for view on Council mergers

Ku-ring-gai standing alone	% of total	Merging with Hornsby Shire	% of total
Financially better solution	36%	Too many councils in NSW	11%
Differences between proposed councils	21%	Provision of services would be improved	9%
Happy with current services/situation	19%	Financially better solution	8%
Services/efficiency will be affected	15%	Disagree with current council situation	5%
Too large/developed an area	14%	Support merger to help all council areas	2%
Focus on local area/identity	12%	Need more information	1%
Better Council representation	9%	Support merger, but with another council	1%
The information provided through survey	6%		
No benefit to merging	1%		
Prefer to merge with other councils	1%		

2) Opt-in Community Survey (online and printed)

Details

The survey developed by Micromex Research for the telephone survey was also used for an opt-in community survey. The survey was available online (via Council's website) and also made available in print to allow those without access or ability to use a computer to participate. It was widely promoted to encourage maximum participation.

The online survey was set up to ensure only one response could be provided per IP address (computer). However as the survey was also available in print a small amount of duplication could have occurred.

A copy of the survey questions can be seen in [Attachment 3](#).

When and where

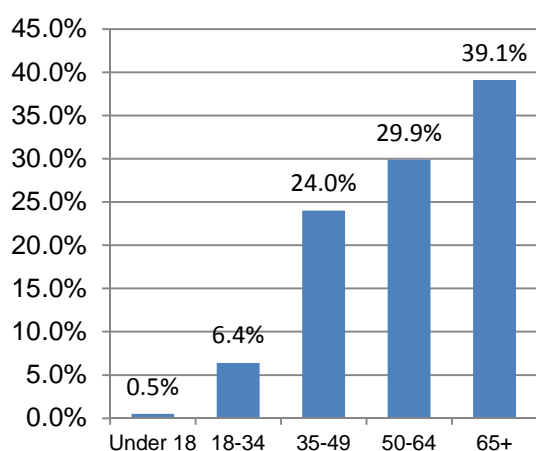
The survey was live from 14 May 2015 and 12 June 2015 and available online, accessed via council's website and in print at council's customer service centre (818 Pacific Highway, Gordon) at four library branches (Gordon, Turramurra, St Ives, Lindfield) and at Ku-ring-gai Fitness and Aquatic Centre.

Who participated?

2077 people participated in the survey. More men completed the survey than women (52% to 48% respectively) and the highest represented age group was 65+.

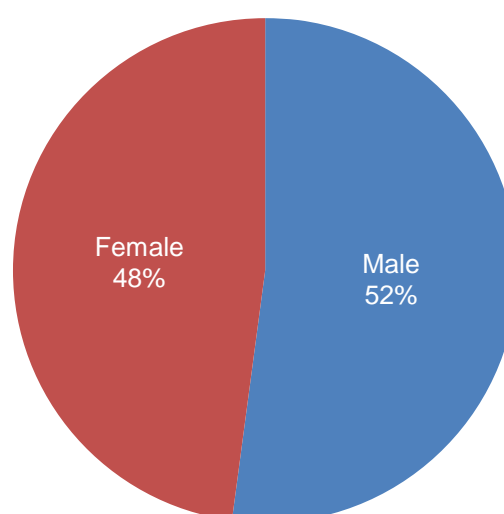
Age of respondents

2034 responded to this question, 43 skipped this question



Gender of respondents

2026 responded to this question, 51 skipped the question



Outputs/results

Before reading Council's adopted position and reasons in the survey:

- more than 70% of residents were 'supportive' and 'completely supportive' of Ku-ring-gai standing alone with 60% being 'completely supportive'. This went up to over 75% including those who were somewhat supportive.
- Residents offered minimal support for the option of merging with Hornsby Shire, with three quarters 7% stating they were 'not very supportive' to 'not at all supportive'.

After reading Council's adopted position and reasons:

- 65% of residents were 'completely supportive' of Ku-ring-gai standing alone, with a further 14% being 'somewhat supportive' or 'supportive' (total 79%).
- There was little support for Council to merge with Hornsby Shire Council, with 75% stating they were 'not very supportive' to 'not at all supportive'.

When comparing participant responses before and after being told Council's adopted position the results changed as follows:

- Support for standing alone (those who selected completely supportive, supportive and somewhat supportive) INCREASED 3%
- Support for merging with Hornsby Council (those completely supportive, supportive and somewhat supportive) DECREASED by 3%

It should be noted that participants of the opt in survey may have read about council's position prior to completing the survey.

The table below outlines the results and shows the changes as a result of council's position being outlined.

	How supportive are you of Ku-ring-gai Council standing alone?			How supportive are you of Ku-ring-gai Council merging with Hornsby Shire Council?		
	Before	After	Difference	Before	After	Difference
Completely supportive	60%	65%	+5%	14%	12%	-2%
Supportive	11%	9%	-2%	8%	8%	0%
Somewhat supportive	5%	4%	-1%	6%	5%	-1%
Not very supportive	10%	9%	-1%	14%	11%	-3%
Not at all supportive	14%	12%	-2%	58%	64%	+6%

Support was measured for remaining stand alone and secondly to merge with Hornsby Council. Participants were then asked for their overall preference regarding the future for Ku-ring-gai Council. Participant's preferences were as follows:

- **77% indicated a preference to stand alone**
- **23% preferring to merge with Hornsby Shire**

Reason for view on Council mergers

Survey participants were invited to provide the reason behind their preference for the future of Ku-ring-gai Council. 1511 comments were received and key points mentioned included:

Supporting Ku-ring-gai standing alone	Supporting merging with Hornsby Shire
Satisfaction with current services	A merged Council will enjoy the benefits of scale
Concern regarding potential loss of representation	More efficient - less duplication of roles
Ku-ring-gai residents may be disadvantaged following a merger	There are too many Councils at present
Concern about possible increase in rates	Not satisfied with current performance – change is needed
Concern about losing local identity	A larger Council will have more influence
Concern about future development under a new Council	
Ku-ring-gai is good size as it is	

3) Community meeting at Council Chambers

When and where

3 June 2015 at Ku-ring-gai Council Chambers, 6.30pm - 8pm.

Who participated?

29 Ku-ring-gai community members attended.

Details of the activity

The meeting gave the community an opportunity to hear about the State Government proposals and Council's position. The meeting included a presentation from the General Manager and the Corporate Services Director plus a question and answer session followed by a paper ballot. Attendees also provided feedback about the meeting via a feedback form.

Outputs/results

Ballot paper

A ballot paper (see [Attachment 4](#)) was provided to all attendees to enable them to vote on the matter of Council mergers. Out of the 29 attendees 26 people (90%) cast a vote.

The table below details the voting options and the results

1	Support proposed amalgamation with Hornsby Shire Council	1
2	Oppose proposed amalgamation with Hornsby Shire Council	24
3	Don't know	1

Question and answer session

A total of 15 questions were asked at the meeting:

- Will it mean rate increases?
- Whether other options for Council mergers (not Hornsby Shire) had been explored?
- Whether there is evidence to show that merged councils elsewhere have performed better?
- The infrastructure/asset backlog?
- Impact on the Council if it stands alone?
- Effect of mergers on number of independent Councillors?
- What is the community view?
- Legitimacy of the process - is the outcome predetermined by the state government?
- What does it mean for the future of Regional Organisations of Councils (ROCs)?
- What will be the impact on council staff?
- Development in a new Council area?
- Can the state government force mergers?

Feedback about the session

Attendees were invited to provide feedback on the community meeting (see feedback in [Attachment 4](#)). 21 of the 29 attendees completed a feedback form. The results said that:

- 95% said that the information provided was useful and easy to understand.
- 94% said that the meeting had given them a better understanding of Council's position and why it has been taken.

‘Inform’ activities

This section provides detailed information about the following activities:

- 1) Community drop-in information sessions
- 2) Information leaflet
- 3) Advertisements in local media
- 4) Media releases
- 5) Website
- 6) E-newsletters
- 7) Social Media
- 8) Staff Briefing
- 9) Staff Newsletter

1) Community drop-in information sessions

Details

The drop-in information sessions provided community members the opportunity to speak directly to senior staff about FFTF and ask questions. These were face-to-face meetings with interested residents attended by the Corporate Services Director, Manager of Corporate Planning and the Manager of Finance.

When and where

4 sessions held at Kur-ring-gai Council Chambers on the following dates:

- Monday 25 May
- Thursday 28 May
- Monday 1 June
- Thursday 4 June

Participation

5 community members attended the drop in sessions. Approximately one hour was spent with each resident.

2) Information Brochure

Details

An information leaflet was produced and distributed to all households in the Ku-ring-gai Council area to inform the community about FFTF and how they could have a say. See the leaflet in [Attachment 5](#).

When and where

Approximately 36,000 leaflets were delivered all households on or before 25 May 2015. The leaflet was also available at Council’s customer service centre, library branches and Ku-ring-gai Fitness and Aquatic Centre.

3) Advertisements in local media

Details

Local media (print and digital) was used to inform the community about FFTF, Council's adopted position and how the community could have a say. Council used a combination of full page and half page advertisements in the North Shore Times and the Sydney Observer. Information was also included in council's regular corporate advertisement in the North Shore Times.

When and where

Publication	Type	Date
North Shore Times (circulation – 35,538, readership 79,000)	Full page advertisement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 15 May• 5 June
	Corporate Advertisement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1 May• 8 May• 15 May• 22 May• 29 May
Sydney Observer (circulation 50,000)	Half page advertisement	June Edition
Online <ul style="list-style-type: none">• News Local - Local North Shore• News Local - Local The Hills	Banner advertising	29 May to 11 June
		27 May to 11 June

A copy of the advertising materials can be viewed in [Attachment 6](#).

4) Website

Details

Council used the website to inform the community about FFTF:

- Council's Corporate Site (www.kmc.nsw.gov.au)- home page banner and dedicated page
- Council's online community engagement portal (haveyoursaykuringgai.com.au) with a dedicated page.

Council first created a FFTF webpage in 4 March 2015. This was updated over time as new information became available. Council's website also hosted all Council reports relating to the project.

On 12 May 2015 Council launched the *Fit for the Future: Proposed Council mergers page* on the *Have Your Say Ku-ring-gai* website. This provided all the relevant information about

FFTF and Council's adopted position. It also hosted all relevant documents (including Council reports and links to other relevant document and websites) as well as a link to the online opt-in survey.

The documents included:

- Council's FFTF leaflet
- Council's community meeting presentation slides
- Related Council report (and resolution)

The web page also included links to relevant the State Government and IPART web pages.

Participation

The Fit for the Future page on Council's corporate website received 155 page views between its launch on 4 March 2015 and 12 June 2015.

The *Have Your Say Ku-ring-gai Fit for the Future: Proposed Council mergers* web page received 2898 unique visitors between its launch on 12 May and 12 June with 3960 page views. The peak visitation of 585 visitors occurred on 27 May 2015.

Screen shots of both the websites can be seen in [Attachment 7](#)

5) Media releases

Details

Four media releases were provided to local and metropolitan media to inform them about FFTF and the Ku-ring-gai Council's view. The media release can be seen in [Attachment 8](#).

When and where

Media releases were distributed on 29 April, 14 May, 25 May and 1 June to the following media outlets:

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| • North Shore Times | • ABC Radio |
| • Hornsby Advocate | • Sydney Morning Herald |
| • Northside Radio | • Sydney Observer |
| • Triple HHH Radio | • Epoch Times |
| • North Shore Living | • Government News |
| • The Monthly Chronicle | • Living Local |
| • Bush Telegraph | • Sydney Jewish Report |
| • Ku-ring-gai Examiner | • 2UE |
| • 2GB | |

Media coverage:

Print media

Instances where Ku-ring-gai Council was discussed in relation to FFTF

- North Shore Times – 22
- Hornsby Advocate – 10
- Northern District Times – 3
- Sydney Morning Herald – 2
- Daily Telegraph – 1

Radio

Instances where Ku-ring-gai Council was discussed in relation to FFTF

- 702 ABC Sydney – 1
- 2UE – 8 (including interview the Mayor of Ku-ring-gai)

6) E-newsletters

Details

Ku-ring-gai Council has a suite of e-newsletters that it uses to provide information to the community about council related issues and activities. Subscribers are self-selected and self-managed (i.e. they sign up to the e-newsletter and manage their own subscriptions.)

E-newsletters were used to communicate with the community about FFTF and to inform them about how to have a say.

When and where and outputs/results

Four e-newsletters were sent (one was resent due to a broken hyperlink) with a total of approximately 32,000 emails sent on the following dates:

- **27 May - Ku-ring-gai E-news: Complete our survey on proposed Council mergers**
Sent to 7,353 subscribers of which 43.16% opened the e-newsletter. Of those 20.58% (650 people) clicked a link
- **28 May - Sustainability E-news: Complete our survey on proposed Council mergers**
Sent to 1,860 subscribers of which 37.39% opened the e-newsletter. Of those 19.31% (134 people) clicked a link
- **29 May - Library E-news: Complete our survey on proposed Council mergers**
Sent to 19,797 subscribers of which 27.04% opened the e-newsletter. Of those 14.7% (778 people) clicked on a link
- **5 June - Ku-ring-gai E-news - FFTF was the top item.** It was also featured in the mayor's message
Sent to 7,320 subscribers, of which 41.17% opened the email. Of those 25.54 (183 people) clicked the link 'Have your say' link.

Screen shots of the e-newsletter can be seen in [Attachment 9](#)

7) Social Media

Details

Social media was utilised to increase awareness of FFTF, Council's adopted position and information about how to have a say. This included Facebook and Twitter

When and where and outputs/results

Facebook

Posts were placed on Council' Facebook page (see [Attachment 10](#) for screen shots)

Date	Reach	Post clicks	Number of likes, comments, shares	Public comments
2 June	1,054	101	11	1) Alone 2) Alone 3) Alone
20 May	2,379	270	51	1) Seems that not much Ku-ring-gai residents know about this proposal and survey. I think our council should send out an email/ leaflet specifically on this matter. So that more people can express their views, which will make the result of the survey more compelling. My answer is No. 2) Survey done. 3) Separate councils please do not merge 4) No. It should not merge. 5) If we have to merge I'd rather it be with Willoughby Council. 6) I think Hornsby is big enough. 7) No merging 8) If they merge, will Gordon golf course stay as it is? 9) No! 10) It's interesting the way this post is worded. Clearly not representing an unbiased position in terms of requesting survey responses. Personally I'd keep them separate (and maybe get rid of the states)
15 May	1,095	57	11	No comments

Twitter

Posts were placed on Council' Twitter feed (see [Attachment 10](#) for screen shots)

Date of Tweet	Tweet text	Comments
14 May (pinned to top of site)	Have your say on #FitfortheFuture and proposed Council mergers! Learn more & complete our online survey by Fri 12 Jun http://bit.ly/1RLNjnk	No comments
1 June	Want to learn more about proposed Council mergers? We're holding a info meeting at Council Chambers 6.30pm tomorrow http://bit.ly/1RLNjnk	No comments
1 June	Complete our survey on whether we should stand alone or merge with Hornsby Shire Council. http://bit.ly/1RLNjnk #fitforthefuture	No comments
25 May	Should Ku-ring-gai merge with Hornsby Shire Council or remain a standalone Council? Have your say by 12 June http://bit.ly/1PJccl5	No comments
24 May	Have a chat with us about how proposed council reforms could affect Ku-ring-gai http://bit.ly/1PGHOaV	No comments
20 May	Should we merge with Hornsby Council or would you be better represented if we cont as a stand alone Council? Survey: http://bit.ly/1RLNjnk	1) Coming from Mosman I have always thought Kuringai is too big. Merging with another area would be stupid 2) Ku-ring-gai area is large enough as it is. Including Hornsby would be extreme.
28 April	The Council voted unanimously last night to stand alone under the NSW Govt's #FitfortheFuture reforms #nomerger http://bit.ly/1Ksh2N3	No comments

8) Staff Briefings

Details

Council staff were invited to attend meetings hosted by the general manager and senior staff and provided with updates regarding FFTF and what it would mean for the Council, community and staff. Question and answer sessions were included to allow staff their chance to have a say and get clarification of any issues of concern.

When and where

6 meetings were held as follows:

- May 2015 x3
- November 2014 x 2
- December 2014 x1

9) Staff Newsletter

Details

The staff newsletter was used to inform staff about FFTF.

When and where

The newsletter was distributed to 450 staff at Council on 28 April 2015. A screenshot of the article can be seen in [Attachment 11](#).



Attachments



**Communication and Engagement Strategy
Development of response to 'Fit for the Future'
proposals**

May 2015

Introduction

This communication and engagement strategy outlines how Ku-ring-gai Council will communicate and engage with the community regarding the NSW State Government's Fit for the Future proposals.

The objective for the communication and engagement is to inform and hear the views of the community about the proposals, and in particular whether the community supports or opposes the proposed merger of Ku-ring-gai Council with Hornsby Shire Council.

Background

NSW Government announced its Fit for the Future reform package in September 2014 in response to two significant reviews of local government:

- review of the Local Government Act 1993 (Local Government Acts Taskforce); and
- Investigation of options for a more efficient and effective system of local government (Independent Local Government Review Panel).

The State Government requested councils to respond to the Fit for the Future proposal by 30 June 2015, with each council being asked to look at its current situation and consider the future needs of its community and the Local Government Review Panel's recommendations.

In response to the Fit for the Future proposals Ku-ring-gai Council reviewed its current position against criteria as outlined by the state government and undertook discussions with its neighbouring councils to investigate opportunities for mergers or for setting up other joint arrangements. Councils included Warringah, Pittwater, Willoughby, Hornsby and Ryde. A comprehensive analysis on all possible combinations has been prepared and is outlined in the 28 April Council report.

On 27 April 2015 the State Government announced that the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) would be assessing all Council responses to the reform package. IPART published a consultation paper 'Methodology for Assessment of Council Fit for the Future Proposals' in which in section 1.5.1 (pg 7) it stated that other factors that may inform its assessment of FFTF proposals will include '*how the council consulted with its community regarding its proposal or alternative options as relevant, and the outcomes from these consultations*'.

A report was put to Ku-ring-gai Council on 28 April where the council resolved:

- *That Council advise Hornsby Shire Council that a merger would be highly unfavourable for the residents and ratepayers of Ku-ring-gai and will not be further considered.*
- *That the Mayor write to Hornsby Shire Council thanking the Councillors and staff for their interest in pursuing a merger and explaining the reasons for Council's decision.*
- *That Council prepare an Improvement Proposal to meet the requirements of Fit for the Future.*

- *That Council delegate the General Manager to conduct consultation as required to inform the community and seek feedback regarding Council's Fit for the Future improvement proposal, prior to reporting back to Council seeking endorsement and approval to submit to the NSW Government. This consultation will include a range of methods including those outlined in the report, an online survey and community forum.*

This communications and engagement strategy outlines the steps that Council will take to do this.

Objectives of this Strategy

The objectives of the strategy are to:

- ensure that the Ku-ring-gai community is aware of the proposal outlined in the Fit for the Future reform package
- outline what the proposal will mean for the Ku-ring-gai Community
- communicate Council's adopted position and why it has been agreed
- provide the community a range of opportunities to make its views known to Council about the State Government's proposals

Underpinning best practice principles

This engagement approach will be robust and transparent and will ensure where reasonably practicable that all community stakeholders will have an opportunity for comment and input. Our approach will be underpinned by two key principles:

1. NSW Social Justice Principles

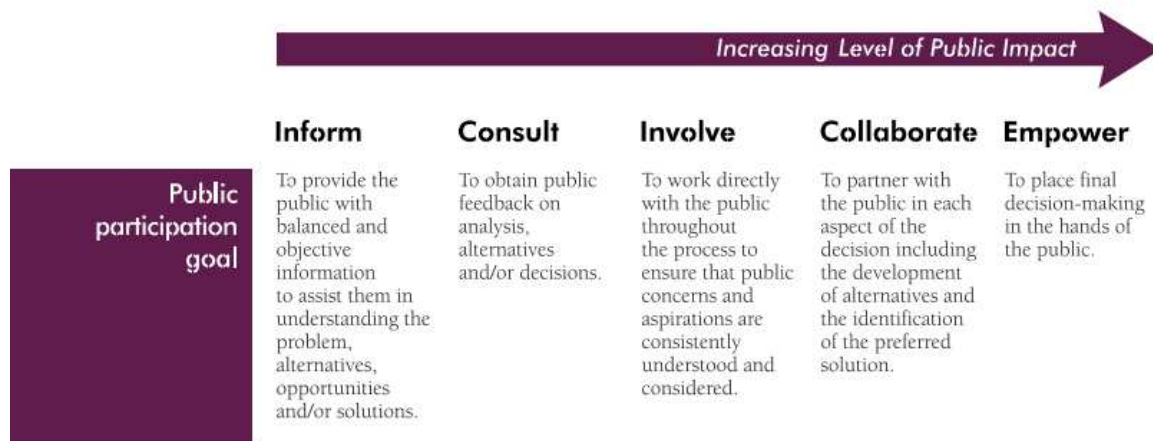
- **Equity** - There is fairness in decision making and prioritising and allocation of resources.
- **Access** – All people have fair access to services, resources and opportunities to meet their basic needs and improve their quality of life.
- **Participation** – Everyone has the maximum opportunity to genuinely participate in decisions which affect their lives.
- **Rights** – Everyone's rights are recognised and promoted.

2. International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) spectrum

The International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) spectrum illustrates that a variety of engagement techniques will reflect the IAP2 spectrum including:

- **Inform** We will keep you informed.
- **Consult** We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.
- **Involve** We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.
- **Collaborate** We will look to you for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.

IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation



Community Communications and Engagement Strategy

Due to the short timeframe between the announcement of IPART's involvement in assessing council submissions on 27 April and the closing date to receive submissions by 30 June, this project will be a one phase communications and engagement process. This process will use information that informed Council's position on 28 April, as well as information available from the State Government and IPART.

The communications and engagement process will begin on 14 May and continue up until 12 June.

Stakeholders

The impact of the outcome of the Fit for the Future package (i.e. how local Government is structured in NSW) will affect everyone who has an association with Ku-ring-gai Council.

The community stakeholders are wide and varied. They not only include people living within Ku-ring-gai's boundaries, but also people that use local services, are members of clubs and run local businesses. The stakeholders include but are not limited to the following groups:

- Rate paying and non-rate paying residents
- Local community organisations, clubs and groups
- Business groups and chambers of commerce
- Regional organisations
- State agencies relevant to the State Plan and neighbouring councils

Communication and Engagement Methods

To engage with the community a range of engagement methods will be employed:

- Community meeting
- Community drop-in information sessions
- Information brochure sent to all households (letterbox drop)
- Advertisements in local media, including digital advertising
- Media Releases
- Demographically representative sample survey of 400 households across Ku-ring-gai (undertaken by independent market research company)
- Opt-in online survey
- Opt-in printed survey (available at customer service centre, Ku-ring-gai library branches and Ku-ring-gai Fitness and Aquatic Centre)
- Website page (on council's website and the 'haveyoursaykuringgai' page hosted by Bang the Table)
- E-newsletters
- Social Media Campaign
- Staff briefing
- Staff newsletter

Community Communications and Engagement Strategy - Actions

Engagement Action	Details	Level of engagement (IAP2 spectrum)	Timeframe	Engagement outputs
Community meeting at Council Chambers	Meeting held Council Chamber - gives the community the opportunity to hear about Council's position and ask questions.	Consult	3 June, 6.00pm to 8.00pm	Q&A to be captured to inform Council's submission to IPART. Participants also allowed to vote on merger proposal via ballot
Staff Briefings	The General Manager has briefed the staff six times allowing for questions from staff and answers and discussion.	Inform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May 2015 x3 November 2014 x 2 December 2014 x1 	Keep staff informed and give them the opportunity to ask questions.
Staff Newsletter	Information on the reforms appears regularly in the staff newsletter	Inform	28 April 2015	Keep staff informed
Community drop-in information sessions	Residents invited to meet with senior Council staff to discuss the Fit for the Future proposal, get a better understanding of Council's position and ask questions in an informal environment.	Inform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monday 25 May Thursday 28 May Monday 1 June Thursday 4 June 	Keep people informed and give them the opportunity to ask questions.
Information leaflet sent to all households (letterbox drop)	To provide more information about the proposal and Council's adopted position and how the community can have a say.	Inform	To reach 36,000 households on 25 May	Keep people informed about project and how to have a say
Advertisements in local media (North Shore Times) and digital media	To inform the community about the proposals, Council's adopted position and how the community can have a say. Large advertisements as well as	Inform	14 May to 12 June	Keep people informed about project and how to have a say

Engagement Action	Details	Level of engagement (IAP2 spectrum)	Timeframe	Engagement outputs
	copy in Council's regular corporate advertisement in the North Shore times were used. Digital banner advertising was also undertaken in News Local – North Shore Times and News Local - The Hills			
Media Releases	To increase awareness of the proposals, Council's adopted position and how the community can have a say	Inform	15 May	Keep people informed about project and how to have a say
Demographically representative sample survey - 402 households across Ku-ring-gai (undertaken by independent market research company)	To get a clear view of the community views, in particular the amalgamation proposals. The random survey will be the most accurate gauge of community sentiment	Consult	25- 28 May	Results will be collated and analysed and used to inform Councils final submission to IPART
Opt in online survey	To hear the views of the community, in particular the merger proposal. Note that as this is an opt in process, people who take the time to take part are more likely to have polarised views about the proposals	Consult	14 May to 12 June	Results will be collated and analysed and used to inform Councils final submission to IPART
Opt in printed survey (available at Customer Service and KMC library branches)	To hear the views of the community, in particular the amalgamation proposals. Note that as this is an opt in process, people who take the time to take part are more likely to have more polarised views about the proposals	Consult	14 May to 12 June	Results will be collated and analysed and used to inform Councils final submission to IPART xx
Website page (on Council's website and the 'haveyoursay kuringgai' page)	To increase awareness of the proposals, Council's adopted position and how the community can have a say	Inform	14 May to 30 June	Keep people informed about project and how to have a say
E-newsletters	Informing Council e-news subscribers about Fit for the	Inform	May	Keep people informed

Engagement Action	Details	Level of engagement (IAP2 spectrum)	Timeframe	Engagement outputs
	Future and options to give feedback			about project and how to have a say
Social Media Campaign	To increase awareness of the proposals, Council's adopted position and how the community can have their say. This approach is good for people who do not often engage with council (e.g. young people, time poor etc.)	inform	May/June	Keep people informed about project and how to have a say

Attachment 2 - report of Micromex Research

Ku-ring-gai Council

Fit for the Future

Prepared by: Micromex Research
Date: June 2015



micromex
research

Methodology & Sample

Data collection

Micromex Research, together with Ku-ring-gai Council, developed the questionnaire.

Data collection period

Telephone interviewing (CATI) was conducted during the period 25th – 28th May 2015.

Sample

N=402 interviews were conducted.

A sample size of 402 provides a maximum sampling error of plus or minus 4.9% at 95% confidence.

This means that if the survey was replicated with a new universe of n=402 residents, that 19 times out of 20 we would expect to see the same results, i.e. +/- 4.9%.

For the survey under discussion the greatest margin of error is 4.9%. This means, for example that the answer "yes" (62%) to the awareness of State Government reviewing local council boundaries, could vary from 57% to 67%. As the raw data has been weighted to reflect the real community profile of Ku-ring-gai Council, the outcomes reported here reflect an 'effective sample size'; that is, the weighted data provides outcomes with the same level of confidence as unweighted data of a different sample size. In some cases this effective sample size may be smaller than the true number of surveys conducted.

Interviewing

Interviewing was conducted in accordance with the AMSRS Code of Professional Conduct. Where applicable, the issues in each question were systematically rearranged for each respondent.

Data analysis

The data within this report was analysed using Q Professional.


Percentages

All percentages are calculated to the nearest whole number and therefore the total may not exactly equal 100%.



Sample Profile

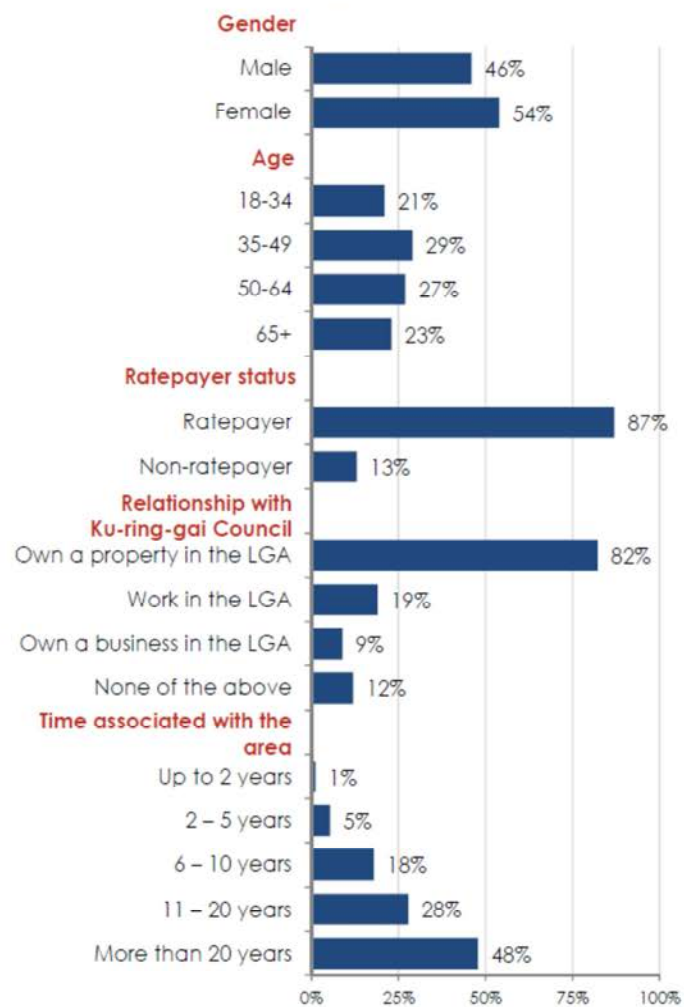




 The sample was weighted by age and gender to reflect the 2011 ABS community profile of Ku-ring-gai Council

Base: n = 402

Sample Profile

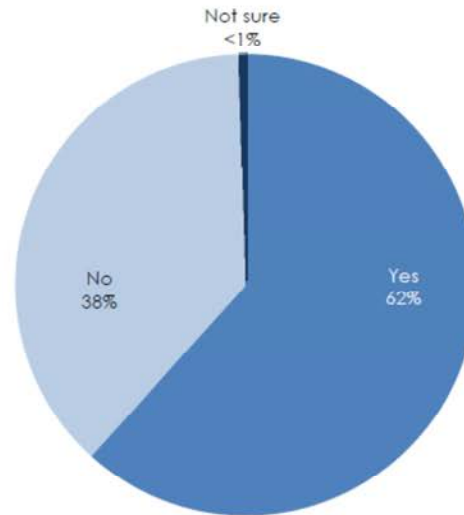


Results



Awareness of the Review of Local Council Boundaries

Q4. Are you aware that the State Government is reviewing NSW local council boundaries?



	Ku-ring-gai Council	Micromex's Awareness Benchmark
Awareness	62%	59%

	Overall	Male	Female	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	Ratepayer	Non-ratepayer
Yes	62%	64%	61%	23%▼	66%	72%▲	81%▲	68%	21%▼
No	38%	36%	38%	77%	34%	27%	18%	31%	79%
Not sure	<1%	0%	1%	0%	0%	1%	1%	1%	0%

Base: Overall n = 402

▲ ▼ = significantly higher/lower (by group)

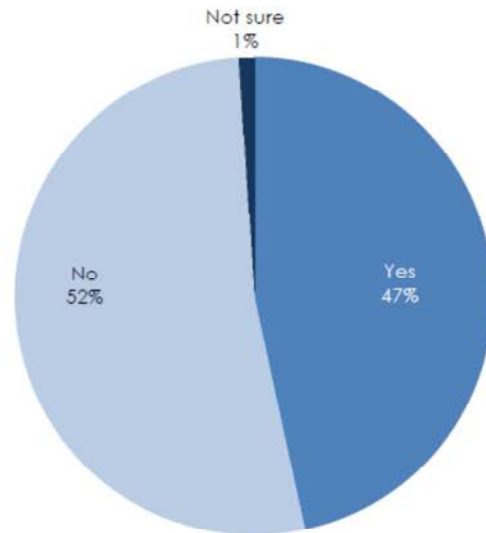


The majority of residents, 62%, were aware of the State Government's review of local council boundaries.

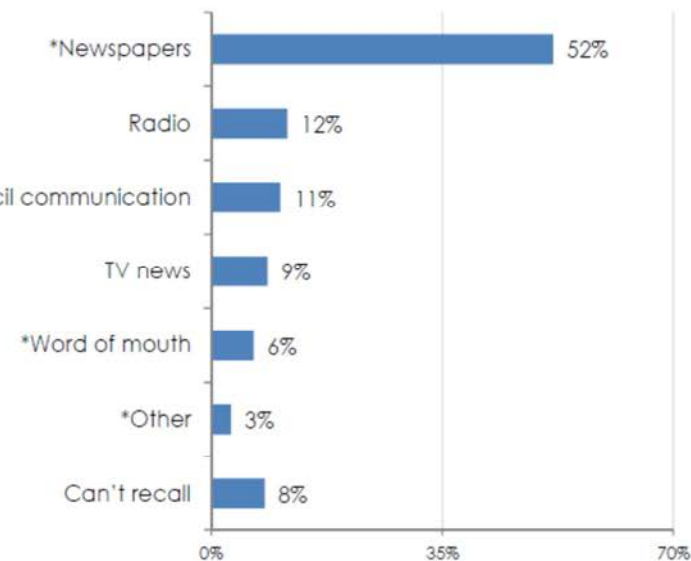
Those aged 50+ were significantly more likely to be aware, whilst those aged 18-34 and non-ratepayers were significantly less likely

Prior Awareness of Potential Amalgamation

Q8a. Prior to this call were you aware of the potential amalgamation of Ku-ring-gai Council with Hornsby Council?



Q8b. Where did you first hear about this proposal?



* Please see the Appendix for detailed lists

Base: N=187

	Overall	Male	Female	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	Ratepayer	Non-ratepayer
Yes	47%	47%	46%	18%	46%	52%	67%▲	52%▲	10%
No	52%	52%	53%	82%▲	54%	46%	30%	47%	90%▲
Not sure	1%	0%	2%	0%	0%	1%	3%	1%	0%

Base: Overall n = 402

▲ ▼ = significantly higher/lower (by group)

Residents were less likely to be aware of the potential amalgamation of Ku-ring-gai and Hornsby Councils, with those aged 65+ and ratepayers being singularly more aware and those aged 18-34 and non-ratepayers being less aware.

The primary means of hearing about the proposal was through 'newspapers'

Concept Statement 1

Residents were read this statement before being asked the relevant questions

Fit for the Future Options

The State Government Fit for the Future program includes a recommendation that Ku-ring-gai Council merge with Hornsby Shire Council.

Ku-ring-gai Council has the following options:

- 1) Stand alone and show how we are Fit for the Future by submitting a council improvement proposal to the State Government
- 2) Merge with Hornsby Shire Council to form one council area of around 285,000 residents and five times the physical area (Ku-ring-gai Council currently has a population of 120,000)

The general arguments for and against mergers

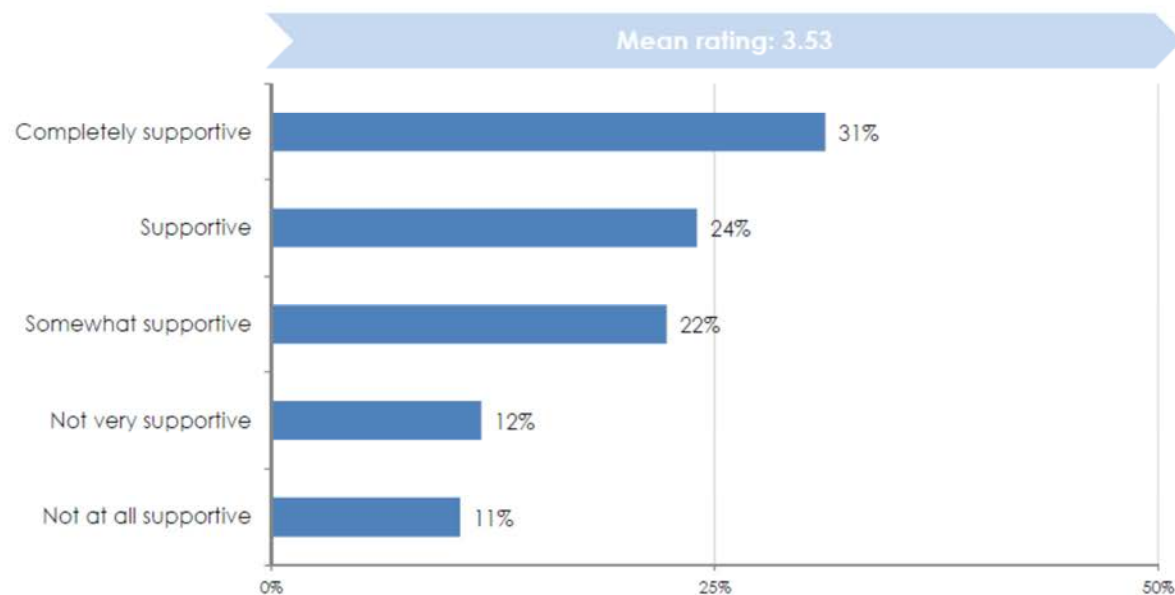
- There are 152 councils in NSW, including 41 Sydney metropolitan councils. The State Government is proposing to reduce these metropolitan councils from 41 to 18
- The State Government is of the view that larger councils would have better scale and capacity to deliver services, infrastructure, and strategic planning outcomes. They consider that larger councils would be more sustainable and be a valued partner of State and Federal Governments
- Arguments against mergers include that larger councils would be less responsive to the community's needs and local issues, there would be less councillor representation, and less say in how money is spent and in planning for the future of the local area. The cost of amalgamating councils would be high and there would be long term disruption to the delivery of services



Ku-ring-gai Standing Alone

Option 1: Ku-ring-gai Council standing alone – prior to detailed information being read to the resident

Q5a. With this in mind, how supportive are you of Ku-ring-gai Council standing alone?



	Overall	Male	Female	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	Ratepayer	Non-ratepayer
Mean ratings	3.53	3.33	3.71▲	3.92▲	3.35	3.51	3.44	3.50	3.78

▲ ▼ = significantly higher/lower (by group)

Base: Overall n = 402

Scale: 1 = not at all supportive, 5 = completely supportive



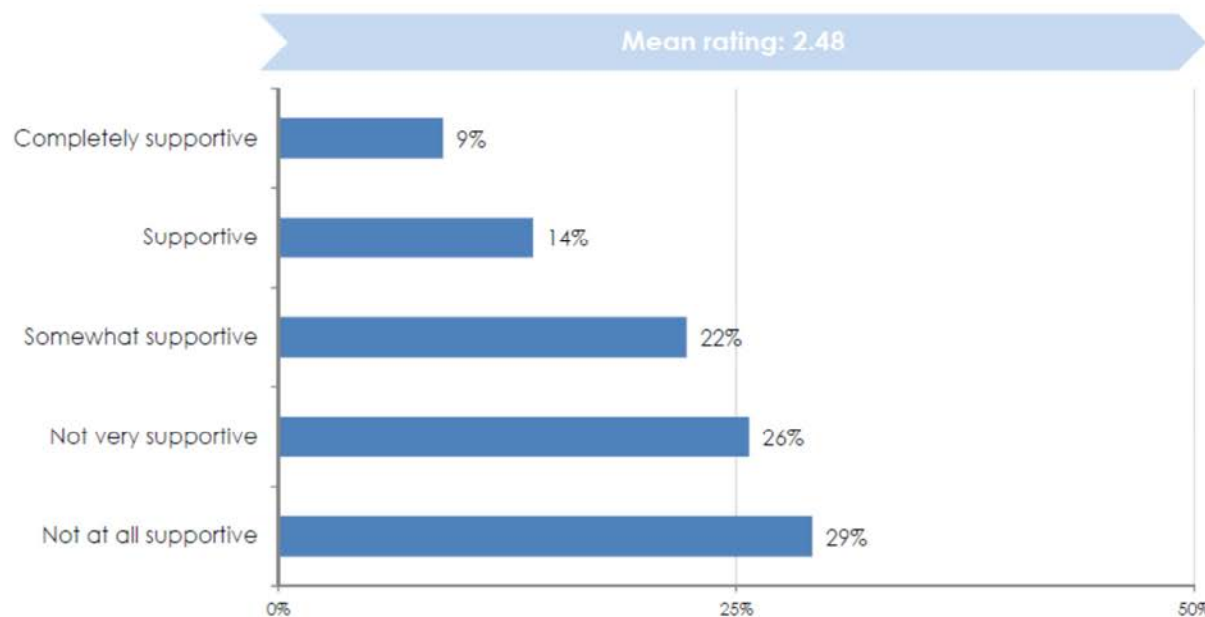
More than three-quarters of residents were at least somewhat supportive of Ku-ring-gai standing alone, with 31% being 'completely supportive'.

Females and those aged 18-34 were significantly more likely to support this option

Ku-ring-gai Merging with Hornsby Shire Council

Option 2: Ku-ring-gai Council merging with Hornsby Council – prior to detailed information being read to the resident

Q5b. How supportive are you of Ku-ring-gai Council merging with Hornsby Shire Council?



	Overall	Male	Female	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	Ratepayer	Non-ratepayer
Mean ratings	2.48	2.71 ▲	2.28	2.40	2.60	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.70

▲ ▼ = significantly higher/lower (by group)

Base: Overall n = 402

Scale: 1 = not at all supportive, 5 = completely supportive



Residents offered little support for this option, with 55% stating they were 'not very supportive' to 'not at all supportive'

Concept Statement 2

The specific case against a merger of Ku-ring-gai Council with Hornsby Shire Council

Ku-ring-gai Council has undertaken comprehensive research to determine the specific impacts of a merger with Hornsby Shire Council on the residents and ratepayers of Ku-ring-gai. It has been established that Ku-ring-gai Council is strongly positioned to provide for its community in the future, and that a merger with Hornsby would be highly unfavourable for its residents and ratepayers.

Ku-ring-gai Council has unanimously voted to stand alone, for the following reasons:

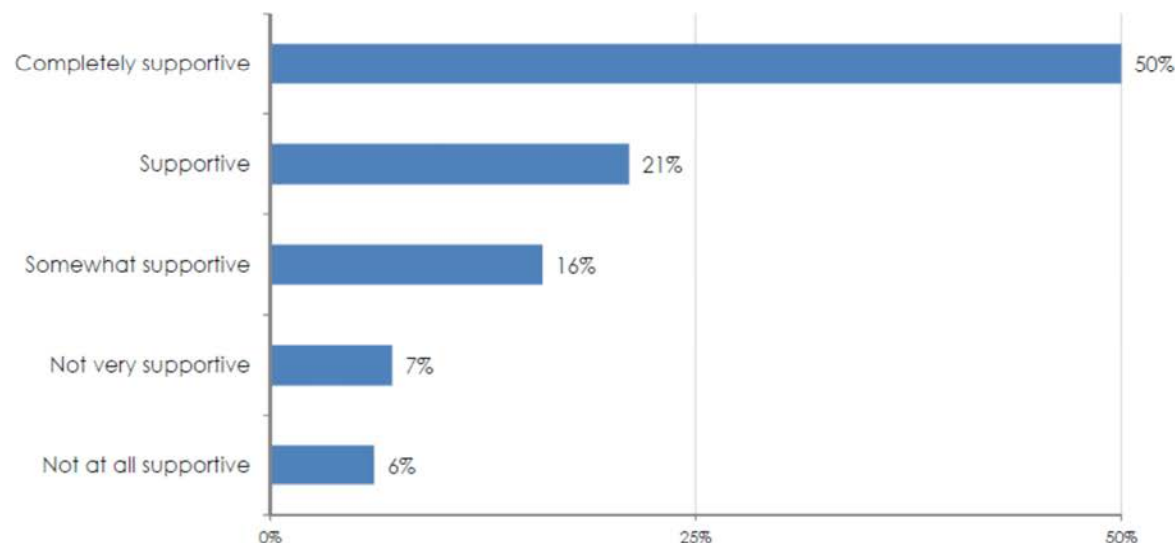
- Ku-ring-gai is in a healthy financial position and provides high quality services and facilities
- Ku-ring-gai Council already services one of the larger populated metropolitan areas in Sydney
- The NSW Treasury Corporation rated Ku-ring-gai's financial sustainability as being one of the 16 strongest out of 152 in the state
- A merger would increase rates in Ku-ring-gai by between 5% and 17% and decrease them in Hornsby Shire due to land values being much higher in Ku-ring-gai
- Ku-ring-gai ratepayers would subsidise services in Hornsby, due to the higher rates
- Hornsby Shire Council has a weaker financial position than Ku-ring-gai, as assessed by the NSW Treasury Corporation. A merger would weaken Ku-ring-gai Council's financial position
- A merger would expose Ku-ring-gai residents to financial risks related to a \$50 million project to make the Hornsby quarry safe and useable for recreation
- A merger would result in less say for Ku-ring-gai residents in decisions about how money is spent and in planning for the future development of the area
- Councillor representation would significantly reduce in a merged council with the majority of councillors elected from Hornsby due to their larger population
- The two areas are very different, with Ku-ring-gai being urban while the much larger Hornsby Shire has more rural land than residential and includes remote communities
- Ku-ring-gai Council won the Bluet Award in 2014 - the highest award for excellence in NSW local government
- Judged against the State Government's criteria, Ku-ring-gai Council will meet all Fit for the Future benchmarks



Support for Ku-ring-gai Standing Alone

Option 1: Ku-ring-gai Council standing alone – after detailed information being read to the resident

Q6a. With this in mind, how supportive are you of Ku-ring-gai Council standing alone?



	Overall	Male	Female	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	Ratepayer	Non-ratepayer
Mean ratings	4.02	3.83	4.18▲	4.28	3.83	4.13	3.89	4.01	4.10

▲ ▼ = significantly higher/lower (by group)

Base: Overall n = 402

Scale: 1 = not at all supportive, 5 = completely supportive

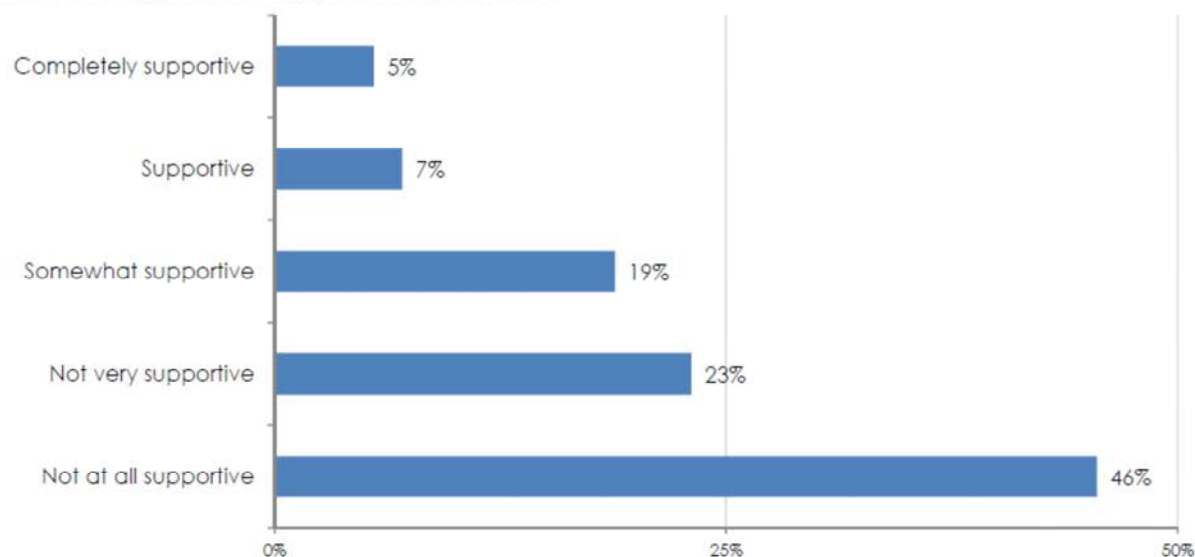
50% of residents were 'completely supportive' of Ku-ring-gai standing alone, with a further 37% being 'somewhat supportive' or 'supportive'

Females were significantly more supportive of Council standing alone

Ku-ring-gai Merging with Hornsby Shire Council

Option 2: Ku-ring-gai Council merging with Hornsby Council – after detailed information being read to the resident

Q6b. How supportive are you of Ku-ring-gai Council merging with Hornsby Shire Council?



	Overall	Male	Female	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	Ratepayer	Non-ratepayer
Mean ratings	2.04	2.20	1.90	1.84	2.18	2.00	2.09	2.04	2.00

Base: Overall n = 402

Scale: 1 = not at all supportive, 5 = completely supportive

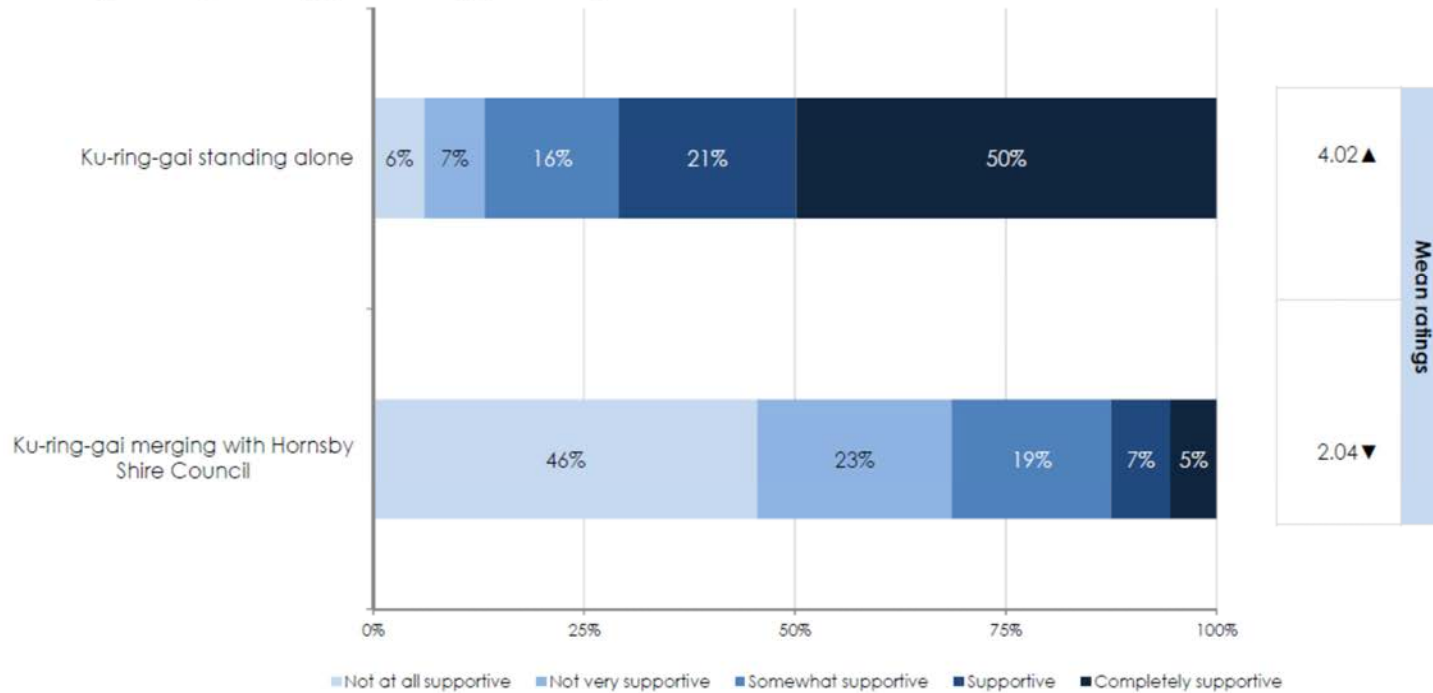


There was very little support for Council to merge with Hornsby Shire Council, with 69% stating they were 'not very supportive' to 'not at all supportive'

Summary of Support for Prompted Options

These results were captured after outlining Concept Statement 2

Q6a. With this in mind, how supportive are you of Ku-ring-gai Council standing alone?
Q6b. How supportive are you of Ku-ring-gai Council merging with Hornsby Shire Council?



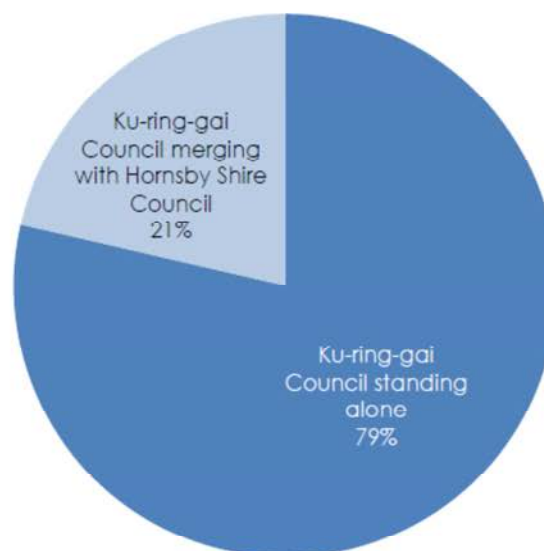
Base: n = 402

▲▼ = significantly higher/lower (by group)
Scale: 1 = not at all supportive, 5 = completely supportive

It is clear that residents wish for Ku-ring-gai Council to maintain the status-quo and not merge with Hornsby

Preferred Outcome

Q7a. Now that you have been informed of the arguments for and against amalgamation, and Ku-ring-gai Council's position, which option would be your preference?



	Overall	Male	Female	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	Ratepayer	Non-ratepayer
Ku-ring-gai Council standing alone	79%	74%	83%	88%	71%	82%	75%	78%	85%
Ku-ring-gai Council merging with Hornsby Shire Council	21%	26%	17%	12%	29%	18%	25%	22%	15%

Base: Overall n = 402



After being informed of the arguments both for and against amalgamation, and being given Council's preference, residents were strongly supportive of Ku-ring-gai standing alone.



The most frequently mentioned reason for selecting Stand Alone as their 1st preference was that financially it would be a better result

Reasons for Preference Selection

Ku-ring-gai Standing Alone

- Q7a. Now that you have been informed of the arguments for and against amalgamation, and Ku-ring-gai Council's position, which option would be your preference?
- Q7b. Why do you say that?

79% of 1 st Preferences – N=316	% of total
Financially better solution	36%
Differences between proposed councils	21%
Happy with current services/situation	19%
Services/efficiency will be effected	15%
Too large/developed an area	14%
Focus on local area/identity	12%
Better Council representation	9%
The information provided through survey	6%
No benefit to merging	1%
Prefer to amalgamate with other councils	1%



The most frequently mentioned reason for selecting to merge with Hornsby Shire Council as their 1st preference was their agreement with the State Government that there are too many councils in NSW

Reasons for Preference Selection

Ku-ring-gai Merging with Hornsby Shire Council

- Q7a. Now that you have been informed of the arguments for and against amalgamation, and Ku-ring-gai Council's position, which option would be your preference?
- Q7b. Why do you say that?

21% of 1 st Preferences – N=86	% of total
Too many councils in NSW	11%
Provision of services would be improved	9%
Financially better solution	8%
Disagree with current council situation	5%
Support merger to help all council areas	2%
Need more information	1%
Support merger, but with another council	1%

Base: Overall n = 402



Reasons for Preference Selection

Ku-ring-gai Merging with Hornsby Shire Council

- Q7a. Now that you have been informed of the arguments for and against amalgamation, and Ku-ring-gai Council's position, which option would be your preference?
- Q7b. Why do you say that?

Verbatim responses
"Australia is over governed, reducing government is economically advantageous in general"
"A merge will result in more qualified and capable people running the council"
"As a society we are over governed"
"Ku-ring-gai Council is in a stronger financial position than Hornsby Council and so the Council should share their wealth by merging to improve the Hornsby area"
"Lived in both council areas and feel the communities are similar"
"Merging would allow wealthier areas to mix with less wealthy areas and share the finances to better improve all the areas"
"More options need to be available for merging because Ku-ring-gai Council is not viable standing alone"
"Seems to make more sense to minimise councils in Sydney as there are so many"
"Services will be more efficient for the whole area by amalgamating similar organisations"
"It is a waste of money keeping two lots of councillors and do not agree with the research"
"Use of both councils' services has shown me that Ku-ring-gai is the worse of the pair and would be helped by a merge"
"Would support a merge but concerned that Hornsby Shire Council would not be the best candidate"
"Do believe that to have a more even standard between the two areas is a good thing"
"Advantages in scale outweigh the costs, country councils with small populations and large areas are hugely inefficient"
"It will remove a duplication of services so ratepayers are not paying Councillors to do nothing"
"Services will be more efficient for the whole area by amalgamating similar organisations"

Conclusion



Conclusion

Awareness of Amalgamation

- 62% of residents claimed awareness of the Local Council Boundary Review
- 47% were aware of the potential amalgamation prior to being contacted, with the majority of these residents (52%, 24% overall) using 'newspapers' as their source

Response to Proposed Amalgamation

- There was significantly higher support for Ku-ring-gai Council to stand alone as opposed to merging with Hornsby Shire Council, 77% v 45% indicating they were at least 'somewhat supportive'
- Having been supplied information by Council as to why they were against the merger, the incidence of those electing to stand alone rose to 87%. Correspondingly, those who were at least 'somewhat supportive' of the merge fell to 31%.
- 79% of residents indicated a preference for standing alone, with this result being resolute across all demographics. Residents gave their reasons for supporting this decision primarily as financial, followed by citing differences between the two councils, and being satisfied with Council's current provision of services



Appendix

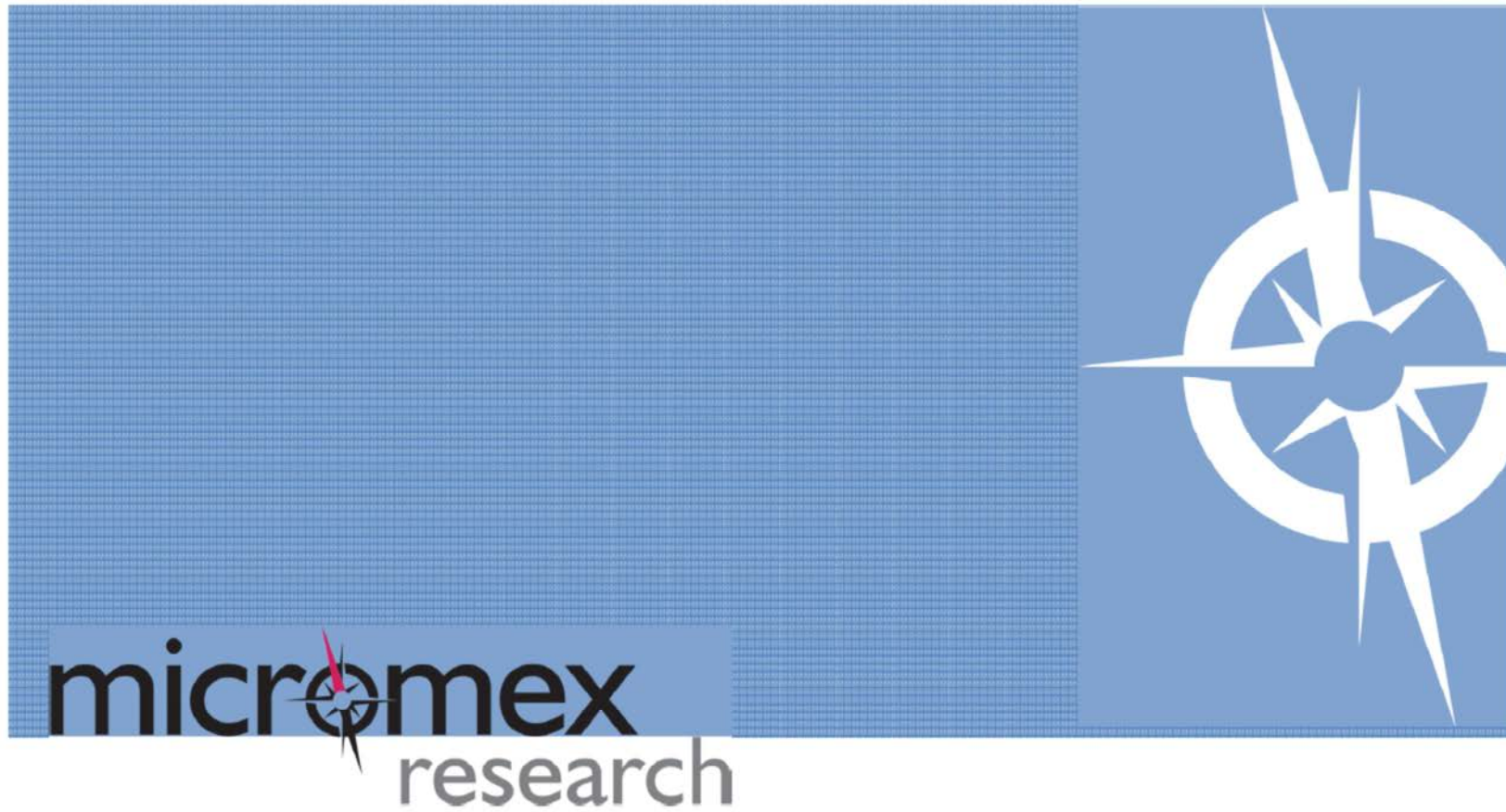


Respondent Breakdown by Subcell

All respondents	Overall	Male	Female	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	Ratepayer	Non-ratepayer
Base	402	185	217	84	117	109	92	349	53

Q8b	Overall	Male	Female	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	Ratepayer	Non-ratepayer
Base	187	88	99	15	53	57	62	182	5





Telephone: (02) 4352 2388
Fax: (02) 4352 2117
Web: www.micromex.com.au
Email: stu@micromex.com.au

Attachment 3 – opt in survey



Local Council Mergers – Fit for the Future

The State Government is undertaking a review of the performance and sustainability of local government. This process is called Fit for the Future.

Councils need to demonstrate how they will be sustainable, provide effective and efficient services, and have the scale and capacity needed to meet the needs of communities into the future. Many councils are being asked to consider merging to reduce the number of councils in NSW.

The State Government's Fit for the Future program includes a recommendation that Ku-ring-gai Council merge with Hornsby Shire Council.

Ku-ring-gai Council voted unanimously in April 2015 to stand alone, based on our financial strength and capacity to deliver services to the community in the future.

We are now seeking your views. Could you please take 10 minutes to complete this short survey and **return by 12 June 2015** to any Ku-ring-gai Library branch or at the Council's customer service centre, 818 Pacific Highway, Gordon.

Please note that an electronic version of this survey, along with other supporting documentation is available on Council's website - www.kmc.nsw.gov.au/fitforthefuture

Section 1 - About you

So we can better understand the views of our community please provide the following information.

- 1) What is your suburb of residence? _____
- 2) Do you or an immediate family member work for Ku-ring-gai Council? (tick)
☐ Yes ☐ No
- 3) What is your gender? (tick)
☐ Male ☐ Female
- 4) Which of these age groups do you fit into? (tick)
☐ Under 18 ☐ 8-34 ☐ 35 - 49 ☐ 50 - 64 ☐ 65+
- 5) Were you aware that the State Government is reviewing NSW local council boundaries? (tick)
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure

Section 2 - Options and arguments

Fit for the Future Options

The State Government Fit for the Future program includes a recommendation that Ku-ring-gai Council merge with Hornsby Shire Council.

Ku-ring-gai Council has the following options:

- 1) Stand-alone and show how we are Fit for the Future by submitting a council improvement proposal to the State Government.
- 2) Merge with Hornsby Shire Council to form one council area of around 285,000 residents and five times the physical area (Ku-ring-gai Council currently has a population of 120,000).

The general arguments for and against mergers

There are 152 councils in NSW, including 41 Sydney metropolitan councils. The State Government is proposing to reduce these metropolitan councils from 41 to 18.

- The State Government is of the view that larger councils would have better scale and capacity to deliver services, infrastructure and strategic planning outcomes. They consider that larger councils would be more sustainable and be a valued partner of State and Federal governments.
- Arguments against mergers include that larger councils would be less responsive to the community's needs and local issues; there would be less councillor representation, and less say in how money is spent and in planning for the future of the local area. The cost of amalgamating councils would be high and there would be long term disruption to the delivery of services.

6) With this in mind, how supportive are you of Ku-ring-gai Council standing alone? (tick)

- ☐ Completely supportive
- ☐ Supportive
- ☐ Somewhat supportive
- ☐ Not very supportive
- ☐ Not at all supportive

7) How supportive are you of Ku-ring-gai Council merging with Hornsby Shire Council? (tick)

- ☐ Completely supportive
- ☐ Supportive
- ☐ Somewhat supportive
- ☐ Not very supportive
- ☐ Not at all supportive

Section 3 - The specific case against a merger of Ku-ring-gai Council with Hornsby Shire Council

Ku-ring-gai Council has undertaken comprehensive research to determine the specific impacts of a merger with Hornsby Shire Council on the residents and ratepayers of Ku-ring-gai. It has been established that Ku-ring-gai Council is strongly positioned to provide for its community in the future, and that a merger with Hornsby would be highly unfavourable for its residents and ratepayers.

Ku-ring-gai Council has unanimously voted to stand alone, for the following reasons:

- Ku-ring-gai Council is in a healthy financial position and provides high quality services and facilities.
- Ku-ring-gai Council already services one of the larger populated metropolitan areas in Sydney.
- The NSW Treasury Corporation rated Ku-ring-gai's financial sustainability as being one of the 16 strongest out of 152 in the state.
- A merger would increase rates in Ku-ring-gai by between 5% and 17% and decrease them in Hornsby Shire due to land values being much higher in Ku-ring-gai.
- Ku-ring-gai ratepayers would subsidise services in Hornsby, due to the higher rates.
- Hornsby Shire Council has a weaker financial position than Ku-ring-gai, as assessed by the NSW Treasury Corporation. A merger would weaken Ku-ring-gai Council's financial position.
- A merger would expose Ku-ring-gai residents to financial risks related to a \$50 million project to make the Hornsby quarry safe and useable for recreation.
- A merger would result in less say for Ku-ring-gai residents in decisions about how money is spent and in planning for the future development of the area.
- Councillor representation would significantly reduce in a merged council with the majority of councillors elected from Hornsby due to their larger population.
- The two areas are very different, with Ku-ring-gai being urban while the much larger Hornsby Shire has more rural land than residential and includes remote communities.
- Ku-ring-gai Council won the Bluett Award in 2014 - the highest award for excellence in NSW local government.
- Judged against the State Government's criteria, Ku-ring-gai Council will meet all Fit for the Future benchmarks.

8) With this in mind, how supportive are you now of Ku-ring-gai Council standing alone? (tick)

- ☐ Completely supportive
- ☐ Supportive
- ☐ Somewhat supportive
- ☐ Not very supportive
- ☐ Not at all supportive

9) How supportive are you of Ku-ring-gai Council merging with Hornsby Shire Council? (tick)

- ☐ Completely supportive
- ☐ Supportive
- ☐ Somewhat supportive
- ☐ Not very supportive
- ☐ Not at all supportive

10) Now that you have been informed of the arguments for and against amalgamation, and Ku-ring-gai Council's position, which option would be your preference? (tick)

- ☐ Ku-ring-gai Council merging with Hornsby Shire Council
- ☐ Ku-ring-gai Council standing alone

Why?

11) Where did you first hear about this proposal? (tick all that apply)

- ☐ TV news
 - ☐ Radio
 - ☐ Newspapers (please specify)
 - ☐ Word of mouth (please specify)
 - ☐ Other (please specify)
 - ☐ Can't recall
-

Section 4 – Your connection with Ku-ring-gai local government area**13) Do you own or rent the property you are living in? (tick)**

- ☐ I/We own/are currently buying this property
- ☐ I/We currently rent this property

14) How long have you been associated with the Ku-ring-gai local area? (tick)

- ☐ Up to 2 years
- ☐ 2 – 5 years
- ☐ 6 – 10 years
- ☐ 11 – 20 years
- ☐ More than 20 years

15) What is your relationship with Ku-ring-gai? (tick all that apply)

- ☐ Live in the Ku-ring-gai Council area
- ☐ Work in the Ku-ring-gai Council area
- ☐ Own a business in the Ku-ring-gai Council area
- ☐ Own a property in the Ku-ring-gai Council area
- ☐ None of the above (please specify).....

Thank you for completing the survey

Attachment 4 - feedback materials from community meeting



FEEDBACK FORM

Community meeting on Council Mergers

Thank you for attending Ku-ring-gai Council's community meeting about council mergers. Please provide your feedback about the meeting by answering the following questions:

1) Did you find the information provided at this meeting useful? Yes ☐ No ☐
Why? _____

2) Was information provided in a way that was easy to understand? Yes ☐ No ☐
Why? _____

3) Has attending this meeting given you a better understanding of council's position and why it has been taken? Yes ☐ No ☐
Why? _____

4) What could be done to improve meetings such as this?

5) How did you find out about this meeting? (tick all that apply)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper | <input type="checkbox"/> Website |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Word of Mouth | <input type="checkbox"/> E-newsletter |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Letterbox Drop | <input type="checkbox"/> Online advertisement |
| <input type="checkbox"/> TV/Radio | <input type="checkbox"/> Can't Recall |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other – please specify _____ | |

Community meeting ballot paper



**FIT FOR
THE FUTURE**

OUR COMMUNITY. OUR COMMITMENT.



Please vote with this card by inserting into the ballot box when leaving Council Chamber.

Voting options (mark with X):

☐

Support the State Government's proposed Amalgamation with Hornsby Shire Council

☐

Oppose the State Government's proposed amalgamation with Hornsby Shire Council

☐

Don't Know

Attachment 5 - brochure

FIT FOR THE FUTURE

'Fit for the Future' is the name given to the review of local councils by the State Government. Fit for the Future proposes reducing the number of Sydney councils through mergers. On that basis, Ku-ring-gai Council would merge with Hornsby Shire Council.

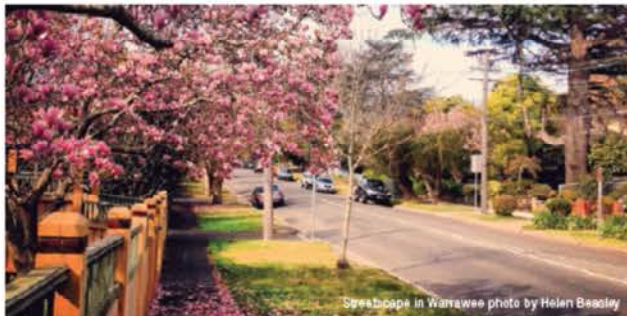
The State Government requires all councils to submit either an 'improvement proposal' or a 'merger proposal' by 30 June 2015. An improvement proposal must demonstrate that a council is financially sustainable by meeting a set of performance benchmarks, shown inside this leaflet.

A merger proposal may be submitted if a council cannot meet the government's benchmarks and therefore intends to merge with one or more councils.

Ku-ring-gai Council has completed a comprehensive review of our services, finances and infrastructure which shows we meet all the government's benchmarks. As a result Ku-ring-gai Council unanimously voted in April 2015 to prepare an improvement proposal.

This leaflet also outlines the ways you can have your say on Fit for the Future and how it affects Ku-ring-gai. Your feedback must be received by Friday 12 June 2015 so we can include it in our proposal to the government.

For more information about Fit for the Future, visit kmc.nsw.gov.au/fitforthefuture



The
Bluet
AWARD
2014 WINNER
For excellence in local government



**FIT FOR
THE FUTURE**

OUR COMMUNITY. OUR COMMITMENT.



HAVE YOUR SAY ON YOUR COUNCIL

KU-RING-GAI COUNCIL

818 Pacific Highway, Gordon NSW 2072

P 02 9424 0000 E kmc@kmc.nsw.gov.au W kmc.nsw.gov.au

kmc.nsw.gov.au/fitforthefuture

KU-RING-GAI COUNCIL'S CASE TO REMAIN STAND ALONE

- ▶ Ku-ring-gai is in a healthy financial position and provides high quality services and facilities.
- ▶ Ku-ring-gai Council won the Bluett Award in 2014 - the highest award for excellence in NSW local government.
- ▶ The NSW Treasury Corporation rated Ku-ring-gai's financial sustainability as being one of the 16 strongest out of 152 in the state.
- ▶ A merger would increase rates in Ku-ring-gai by between 5% and 17% and decrease them in Hornsby Shire as land values are 50% higher in Ku-ring-gai.
- ▶ Hornsby Shire has a weaker financial position than Ku-ring-gai, according to the NSW Treasury Corporation, which would weaken Ku-ring-gai Council's financial position.
- ▶ Ku-ring-gai ratepayers would subsidise services in Hornsby Shire due to the higher rates.
- ▶ A merger would expose Ku-ring-gai to the financial risks of a \$50 million project to make Hornsby Shire Council's quarry safe and useable for recreation.
- ▶ A merger would result in less say for Ku-ring-gai residents in decisions about how money is spent and in planning for the future development of the area.
- ▶ Ku-ring-gai councillor representation would significantly reduce in a merged council, with the majority of councillors elected from Hornsby Shire due to their larger population.
- ▶ The two areas are very different, with Ku-ring-gai being urban while Hornsby has much more rural land and includes remote communities.



An independent research company will be phone polling randomly selected residents over the next two weeks. If you are called we encourage you to take part.



Complete a 10-minute online survey at kmc.nsw.gov.au/fitforthefuture

THE CASE FOR COUNCIL MERGERS

- ▶ There are 152 councils in NSW, with 41 Sydney council areas. The State Government is proposing to reduce 41 metropolitan councils into 18 super councils.
- ▶ The State Government suggests that larger councils will have better scale and capacity to deliver services, infrastructure and strategic planning outcomes.
- ▶ The State Government believes larger councils would be more sustainable, with added capacity to meet the needs of local communities and be a valued partner of State and Federal governments.
- ▶ The State Government believes that larger councils would be able to employ a wider range of staff with advanced skills, have improved policy development and be better advocates for their communities.
- ▶ The State Government believes that larger councils would have a more robust revenue base and will provide an easier process for merged councils to increase rates.
- ▶ The State Government suggests that it is easier to deal with fewer councils and it is recommended that Ku-ring-gai merge with Hornsby Shire Council.



HOW TO HAVE YOUR SAY

Your feedback is very important and will help frame our proposal to the NSW Government.



Complete a 10-minute paper survey at our customer service centre at 818 Pacific Highway Gordon or at any Ku-ring-gai branch library.



Come to a community meeting on Wednesday 3 June at 6.30pm at Council Chambers, 818 Pacific Highway Gordon. No RSVP needed.



FIT FOR THE FUTURE BENCHMARKS

WE MEET THEM*

▶ COUNCIL OWN SOURCE REVENUE

> 60% **81.4%**

▶ OPERATING PERFORMANCE RATIO

> 0% **3.5%**

▶ ASSET RENEWAL RATIO

> 100% **125.7%**

▶ ASSET MAINTENANCE RATIO

> 100% **104.7%**

▶ DEBT SERVICE RATIO

< 20% **6.8%**

▶ INFRASTRUCTURE BACKLOG RATIO

< 2% **2%**

▶ REAL OPERATING EXPENDITURE PER CAPITA

Show a decline **\$877** & Declining every year

*By the Fit for the Future timeframe 2016/17

COMMENTS MUST BE RECEIVED BY FRIDAY 12 JUNE 2015



MAY TO JUNE 2015

Council seeks community feedback

BY 30 JUNE 2015

Council prepares submission to NSW Government

OCTOBER 2015

The Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) analyses submissions on behalf of the NSW Government

Government announces decision on Fit for the Future reforms

SEPTEMBER 2016

Local council elections in NSW

Attachment 6 - media advertising

North Shore Times

Full page advertisement – 5 June



FIT FOR THE FUTURE

OUR COMMUNITY. OUR COMMITMENT.

HAVE YOUR SAY ON YOUR COUNCIL

FIT FOR THE FUTURE COUNCIL REFORMS

Under the Fit for the Future reforms, all councils must submit a proposal to the NSW Government by 30 June 2015 showing that they can either stand alone, or need to merge with one or several councils.

Ku-ring-gai has prepared a case for standing alone as a council based on our financial strength and ability to serve our residents, both now and in the future.

Your feedback is important and must be received by 12 June 2016. Here are the ways you can have your say:

-  An independent research company will be phone polling randomly selected residents over the next few weeks. If you are called we encourage you to take part.
-  Complete a 10-minute survey online at kmc.nsw.gov.au/fitforthefuture
-  Complete a 10-minute paper survey at our customer service centre at 818 Pacific Highway Gordon or at any Ku-ring-gai library
-  Come to a community meeting on Wednesday 3 June at 6.30pm at Council Chambers 818 Pacific Highway Gordon. No RSVP needed.

FIND OUT MORE:
kmc.nsw.gov.au/fitforthefuture



1 May 2015



MAYOR'S MESSAGE

Fit for the Future

This week the Council considered and endorsed a detailed report on our proposed response to the NSW Government's program of council reforms, known as Fit for the Future. I'm happy to report that we have a demonstrably strong case to remain a stand-alone Council. On that basis we will be making our submission to the government by the deadline of 30 June. The alternative position is a merger with Hornsby Council, which for Ku-ring-gai ratepayers will mean significant increases in rates, reduced representation and a loss of control over development and services in our area. We will keep you informed on the progress of our proposal, including holding a community meeting in June to listen to your views on council reform.

8 May

KU-RING-GAI IS FIT FOR THE FUTURE



At its meeting on 28 April the Council unanimously voted in favour of Ku-ring-gai standing alone under the NSW Government's proposed reforms to local government and to not merge with Hornsby Shire Council. Council will be providing a submission to the State Government proving that Council is financially sustainable and 'fit for the future'.

For more information and to have your say visit
kmc.nsw.gov.au/fitforthefuture

15 May

Fit for the Future

Another important issue we are consulting our community on is the Fit for the Future reforms to councils proposed by the NSW Government. As part of our proposal to stand alone as a council rather than merge with Hornsby Shire, we are asking for feedback from our residents. You can have your say by completing an online or paper survey available at kmc.nsw.gov.au/fitforthefuture, the Council's customer service centre at 818 Pacific Highway Gordon or any Ku-ring-gai library. Feedback must be received by 12 June so we can prepare our submission to the government by 30 June. I encourage all residents to have their say on the future of local government and your council.

22 May

Fit for the Future drop-in sessions

Do you want to know more about proposed Council mergers? Senior Council officers are available to discuss the state government's Fit for the Future reforms to councils. Come and have a chat at Council, 818 Pacific Highway Gordon on: **Monday 25 May, 10am-12pm; Thursday 28 May, 2-4pm; Monday 1 June, 11.30-1.30pm; Thursday 4 June, 11.30-1.30pm.**



29 May



MAYOR'S MESSAGE

Fit for the Future

By now Ku-ring-gai households will have received a leaflet explaining the state government's proposed reforms to local councils and how they could affect Ku-ring-gai. We are asking for your input on a very important question – whether you wish to retain Ku-ring-gai Council or see us merged with Hornsby Shire Council. It is our contention that we meet all the required criteria to remain a stand-alone Council, based on our financial strength and capacity to deliver services to residents both now and in the future. However our community must have their say before we prepare our submission to the state government by 30 June. Please express your view by Friday 12 June via our website at kmc.nsw.gov.au We are also holding a public meeting at the Council Chambers on Wednesday 3 June from 6.30pm to answer your questions. Or drop in and talk to senior staff at selected times during the week – details below.

Wildflower Art & Garden Festival

This year's Festival on 30 August at the Wildflower Garden will have an exciting new artistic dimension and to celebrate, we are inviting artists and sculptors to submit a piece to form part of sculpture walk at the Senses Track. Artworks submitted should have the

Fit for the Future drop-in sessions

Do you want to know more about proposed Council mergers? Senior Council officers are available to discuss the state government's Fit for the Future reforms to councils. Come and have a chat at Council, 818 Pacific Highway Gordon on **Monday 1 June, 11.30am-1.30pm** and **Thursday 4 June, 11.30am-1.30pm**.



Sydney Observer

Half page advertisement - 15 May



FIT FOR THE FUTURE

OUR COMMUNITY. OUR COMMITMENT.



HAVE YOUR SAY ON YOUR COUNCIL

kmc.nsw.gov.au/fitforthefuture

FIT FOR THE FUTURE COUNCIL REFORMS

Under the Fit for the Future reforms, all councils must submit a proposal to the NSW Government by 30 June 2015 showing that they can either stand alone, or need to merge with one or several councils.

Ku-ring-gai Council has prepared a case for standing alone as a council based on our financial strength and ability to serve our residents, both now and in the future.

Your feedback is important and must be received by Friday 12 June 2015. Here are the ways you can have your say:



An independent research company will be phone polling randomly selected residents over the next few weeks. If you are called we encourage you to take part.



Complete a 10-minute survey online at kmc.nsw.gov.au/fitforthefuture



Complete a 10-minute paper survey at our customer service centre at 818 Pacific Highway Gordon or at any Ku-ring-gai library



Come to a community meeting on Wednesday 3 June at 6.30pm at Council Chambers 818 Pacific Highway Gordon. No RSVP needed.

Digital Banner advertising:

Example of banner advertising as appeared in News Local – The Hills – 27 May to 11 June

NEWSLOCAL

SYDNEY 6C-17C



PROPOSED COUNCIL MERGERS
Should Ku-ring-gai Council stand alone
or be merged with Hornsby Shire Council?
COMPLETE OUR ONLINE SURVEY AND HAVE YOUR SAY



Closes
Friday 12 June
kmc.nsw.gov.au/fitforthefuture



HOME NEWS SPORT WHAT'S ON COMPS DIGITAL EDITIONS REAL ESTATE

The Hills SELECT REGION

Daily Telegraph

THE HILLS

Northern Times Hornsby Advocate Rouse Hill Times Hills Shire Times

JOIN OUR MONTHLY eNEWSLETTER EVENTS, NEWS AND MORE... HORNBY

Abbotsleigh school secretary takes up dragon boating

SARAH SWAIN HORNBY ADVOCATE JUNE 01, 2015 11:09AM

SHARE f t in g+ 0 COMMENTS SAVE THIS STORY



Bennett's dragon boat team in action.



NEWSLOCAL FACEBOOK PAGE

PROPOSED COUNCIL MERGERS

Plenty of ways to have your say!

ONLINE SURVEY
DROP-IN INFO SESSIONS
PUBLIC MEETING WEDNESDAY 3 JUNE

Closes Friday 12 June
kmc.nsw.gov.au/fitforthefuture



ADVERTISEMENT

More The Hills News



Homeless housed!
Homelessness policy 'not council's responsibility'


At least a dozen homeless people in Hornsby have been housed since last June. And more have sought appointments with Housing NSW.



Giving back
On a mission to plant one million trees

Attachment 7 - website screenshots

Have Your Say Ku-ring-gai website screenshot




Have your say

Home wadames

Fit for the Future: Proposed Council mergers


Fit for the Future: Proposed Council mergers



PROPOSED COUNCIL MERGERS

Should Ku-ring-gai Council stand alone or be merged with Hornsby Shire Council?

COMPLETE OUR ONLINE SURVEY AND HAVE YOUR SAY



[f](#) [t](#) [i](#) [n](#)

Complete our online survey

Council is seeking the views of the Ku-ring-gai community regarding the State Government's plans for reforming local government.

Your feedback is very important and will help frame our proposal to the NSW Government. Survey closes on Friday 12 June 2015.

[Complete our 10 minute online survey](#)

Background information

'Fit for the Future' is the name given to the review of local councils by the State Government. Fit for the Future proposes reducing the number of Sydney councils through mergers. On that basis, Ku-ring-gai Council would merge with Hornsby Shire Council.

The State Government requires all councils to submit either an 'improvement proposal' or a 'merger proposal' by 30 June 2015. An improvement proposal must demonstrate that a council is financially sustainable by meeting a set of performance benchmarks, as shown in the right hand column.

FIT FOR THE FUTURE BENCHMARKS

WE MEET THEM* ✓

▶ COUNCIL OWN SOURCE REVENUE	>60%	81.4%	✓
▶ OPERATING PERFORMANCE RATIO	>0%	3.5%	✓
▶ ASSET RENEWAL RATIO	>100%	125.7%	✓
▶ ASSET MAINTENANCE RATIO	>100%	104.7%	✓
▶ DEBT SERVICE RATIO	<20%	6.8%	✓
▶ INFRASTRUCTURE BACKLOG RATIO	<2%	2%	✓
▶ REAL OPERATING EXPENDITURE PER CAPITA	Shows a decline ↓	\$877 & ↓ Declining every year	✓

Benchmark(2) *By the Fit for the Future timeline 2015-17

Performance Benchmarks explained

Council's corporate website screenshot



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[Home](#) > [Current projects & priorities](#) > [Key priorities](#) > [Fit for the Future: Proposed Council mergers](#)

[SHARE](#) [f](#) [t](#) [e](#) [...](#)

Current projects & priorities

Key priorities

- Environment & sustainability
- A new regional park on Gordon Golf Course
- Marian Street Theatre
- Activate Lindfield
- Activate Turramurra
- Integrated Planning and Reporting framework
- Local economy
- Reclassification of Council-owned land
- Fit for the Future: Proposed Council mergers**

Initiatives and campaigns

- Development and upgrades

Fit for the Future: Proposed Council mergers



Have your say on Fit for the Future reforms

The best place to learn more about the proposed reforms, view all supporting documents and learn how you can give feedback is by visiting our [Have your say Fit for the Future website](#). On this page you can also complete our online survey and let us know your thoughts on the proposal. **Survey closes Friday 12 June.**

[Visit our Have Your Say website](#)

What's proposed?

The NSW Government has released its 'Fit for the Future' program, which outlines a blueprint for change within the local government sector. Fit for the Future recommends a reduction of local councils in Sydney through mergers/amalgamations.

The NSW Government believes that councils need to change and that scale and capacity are key drivers for the future. According to the government, the Fit for the Future reforms will help councils and their communities grow outside their existing boundaries and play an active part in shaping Sydney's future. On this basis, an Independent Review Panel had previously recommended to the government that Ku-ring-gai Council merge with Hornsby Shire.

Councils are now required to submit an 'improvement proposal' or a 'merger proposal' to the government by 30 June 2015.

An improvement proposal must demonstrate that a council can stand alone while at the same time meeting a set of mandatory criteria. These include financial viability, ability to deliver a range of services and capacity to meet the needs of future generations and stakeholders.

A merger proposal must be submitted if a council cannot demonstrate it meets the criteria and on that basis needs to merge with a neighbouring council or several councils.

Attachment 8 - media releases

Public meeting to discuss council reforms

Published on 1 June 2015

The proposed merger is part of a suite of reforms to local councils in NSW being considered by the state government.

A merged Ku-ring-gai and Hornsby Shire Council could see the creation of a 'super council' of 300,000 residents stretching from Roseville to Wisemans Ferry.

Ku-ring-gai Council is currently consulting its community on the proposal through online and phone surveys, with comments due by 12 June.

A public meeting will be held from 6.30pm on Wednesday 3 June at the Council Chambers, 818 Pacific Highway Gordon to discuss the proposed merger and answer residents' questions.

Mayor Jennifer Anderson said the Council believed it was strong enough to stand alone without the need to merge.

"We have prepared a detailed financial analysis of our position and we intend to make the case to the state government that we are strong enough and big enough to remain as we are."

"However it's important for our residents to also have their say."

[Click here to complete an online survey](#). Printed copies of the survey are also available at the Council's customer service centre in Gordon and at Ku-ring-gai libraries.

ends

Media contact: Sally Williams Ku-ring-gai Council Ph: 9424 0982

Residents invited to drop-in information sessions on Fit for the Future

Published on 25 May 2015

The drop-in sessions will be hosted at the Council Chambers at 818 Pacific Highway Gordon from Monday 25 May to Thursday 4 June.

The Council is currently consulting residents about the proposed Fit for the Future reforms, which could see Ku-ring-gai merged with Hornsby Shire Council to form a new 'super council' of around 300,000 people stretching from Roseville to Wiseman's Ferry.

Mayor Jennifer Anderson said consultation would end on Friday 12 June, after which the Council would prepare a submission to the government reiterating its stated position that Ku-ring-gai was financially strong enough to stand alone without the need to merge.

"It's important for our residents to have their say on Fit for the Future, most particularly the proposal to merge Ku-ring-gai and Hornsby councils."

"This has the potential to increase Ku-ring-gai's rates significantly due to our higher land values and reduce the community's say in what services and development happen in their area."

"Hornsby is financially weaker as a council and has to deal with the disused Hornsby Quarry, which by their own estimates could cost between \$50 million and \$200 million to remediate."

Mayor Anderson said that senior staff would be available to discuss the state government's reforms

to local councils on the following dates:

- Monday 25 May between 10am and 12 noon
- Thursday 28 May between 2pm and 4pm
- Monday 1 June between 11.30am and 1.30pm
- Thursday 4 June between 11.30am and 1.30pm

Ku-ring-gai residents are also invited to complete a survey and participate in a telephone poll over the next two weeks.

[Click here for more information about council reforms and how you can have your say on Ku-ring-gai Council's future](#)

Comments close on Friday 12 June and will be incorporated into the Council's submission to the NSW government on Fit for the Future which is due on 30 June.

ends

Media contact: Sally Williams Ku-ring-gai Council Ph: 9424 0982

Community urged to have their say on Fit for the Future

Published on 14 May 2015

Under the Fit for the Future reforms, Ku-ring-gai Council could be merged with Hornsby Shire to form one 'super council' of nearly 300,000 residents stretching from the Hawkesbury River to Roseville.

Ku-ring-gai Council voted at the end of April to put a proposal to the government to stand alone, based on its financial strength and capacity to deliver services and facilities to the community.

Ku-ring-gai Council's current population is 120,000 residents, expected to grow to 147,000 in the next 15 years according to Census projections.

The Council is asking the public to give their view on whether the Council should stand alone or merge with Hornsby. Residents have until Friday 12 June to have their say via surveys, including a telephone poll conducted by an independent research company. An information leaflet is also being distributed to every Ku-ring-gai household.

A community meeting to hear residents' views and answer questions will be held on Wednesday 3 June at the Council Chambers at Gordon from 6.30pm. No RSVP is necessary.

Mayor Jennifer Anderson said there were compelling reasons why Ku-ring-gai could stand alone as a council.

"We meet all the state government's mandatory benchmarks to remain a single council area. We are also committing \$123 million to roads, footpaths and other essential infrastructure over the next five years."

"Ku-ring-gai residents need to consider whether their best interests are going to be served by being absorbed into a council area that is five times our current size and incorporates rural and riverside communities."

"Added to that is the potential for rates to increase by up to 35% just to maintain current service levels and less say in where and how their rates are spent, because of reduced representation."

Mayor Anderson said community feedback would be included in a submission to the state government due by 30 June.

"We have a long-term plan for our community's future and we have the financial capability to carry it out."

[Click here for more information about council reforms and how you can have your say on Ku-ring-gai Council's future.](#)

ends

Media contact: Sally Williams Ku-ring-gai Council Ph: 9424 0982

Ku-ring-gai is 'Fit for the Future'

Published on 29 April 2015

The report was unanimously endorsed by Council at its meeting this week. It will now form the basis of Ku-ring-gai's submission to the state government on the Fit for the Future proposed reforms due by 30 June.

The Fit for the Future program requires Council to submit either an 'improvement proposal' or a 'merger proposal' to the government by the due date.

Council has endorsed the report which recommended Ku-ring-gai submit an improvement proposal. Mayor Jennifer Anderson said the detailed report "clearly demonstrated that Ku-ring-gai has the scale and capacity, financial strength and ability to service our growing population."

'We have developed a proposal with a budget and long-term financial plan to meet all the government's criteria under Fit for the Future by the 2016/17 financial year, including a 2% infrastructure backlog.'

Under the financial plan adopted this week by Council, Ku-ring-gai's infrastructure backlog will be reduced to \$22 million and meet the Fit for the Future benchmark by 2017.

To achieve this Council has refined its strategic direction to indefinitely defer the relocation of Council's main administration offices. Assets sales previously proposed to go towards that acquisition will instead now reduce the infrastructure backlog.

"Council will fully lease 828 Pacific Highway to meet its purchase price and thus retain this important asset for the future," Mayor Anderson said.

According to the report, Ku-ring-gai has discussed mergers with neighbouring councils including Hornsby, which the independent panel tasked with reviewing local government had put forward as a potential merger partner.

Mayor Anderson said the detailed report presented at the Council meeting demonstrated that such a merger would be detrimental to Ku-ring-gai's ratepayers "on several levels."

"The impacts of a merger with Hornsby would inevitably include a substantial rate increase for Ku-ring-gai residents and the loss of local representation in decision-making. This could potentially lead to Ku-ring-gai residents losing their voice concerning where money, services and development are allocated," the Mayor said.

She said Council would formally advise Hornsby Council that it did not wish to proceed with a merger. "We will now focus our efforts on preparing our improvement proposal to meet the government's deadline."

Mayor Anderson added that a community meeting will be held in June to listen to community views on council reform.

"Residents will also be able to give their opinion through an online survey from next month and will also be kept informed via our website and newsletters."

ends

Media contact: Sally Williams Ku-ring-gai Council Ph: 9424 0982

Attachment 9 - e-newsletter screenshots

27 and 28 May - Ku-ring-gai E-news and Sustainability E-news: Complete our survey on proposed Council mergers (2 newsletters to different subscriber lists)



Good afternoon,
You are receiving this email as you are a subscriber to Ku-ring-gai Council's monthly sustainability e-news.

We are writing to you today in this one-off special communication to ensure you are aware of proposed council mergers and the opportunities available to you to have your say on this important matter. Should you wish to provide input, please read the information below and complete the 10-minute online survey.

Yours sincerely,
The environment and sustainability team, Ku-ring-gai Council

Complete our online survey

By now most Ku-ring-gai households should have received an [information leaflet](#) explaining the state government's proposed reforms to local councils and how they could affect Ku-ring-gai.

We are asking for your view on a very important question – **Whether you wish to retain Ku-ring-gai Council or see it merged with Hornsby Shire Council?**

Your feedback is very important and will help frame our response to the NSW Government. Survey

29 May - Library E-news: Complete our survey on proposed Council mergers



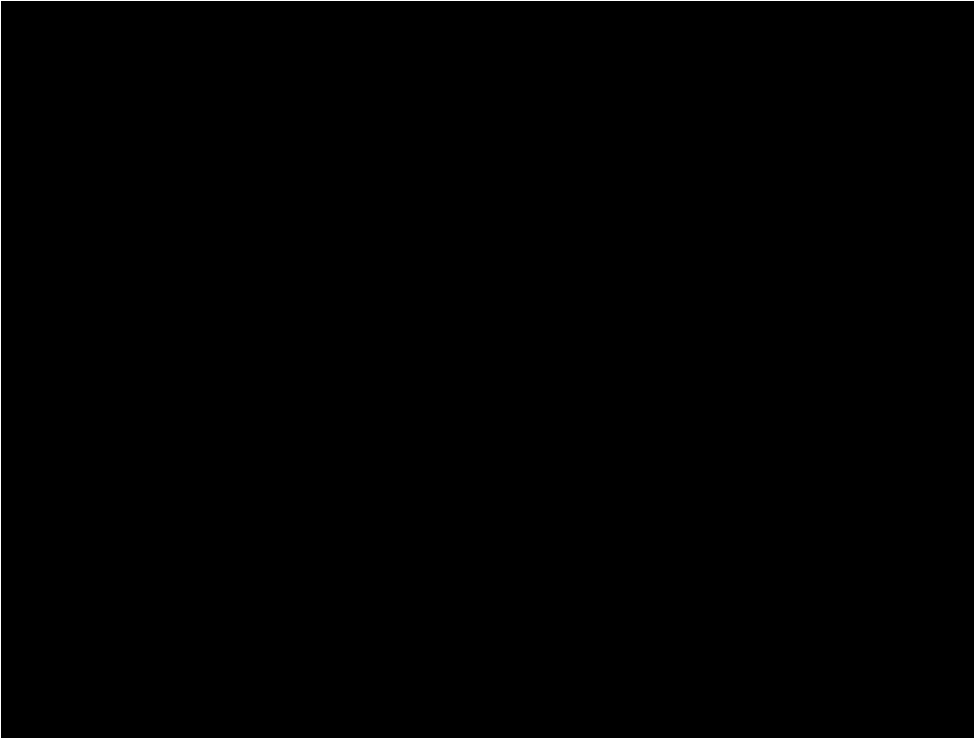
5 June - Ku-ring-gai E-news



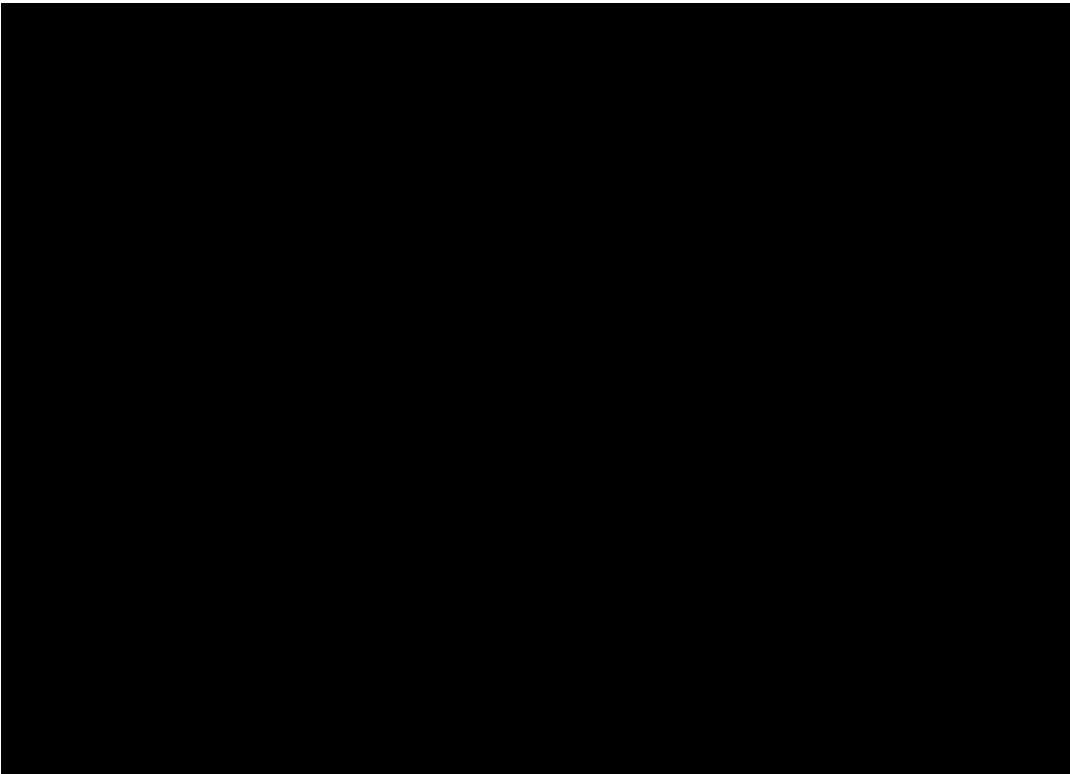
Attachment 10 - social media screen shots

Facebook Posts

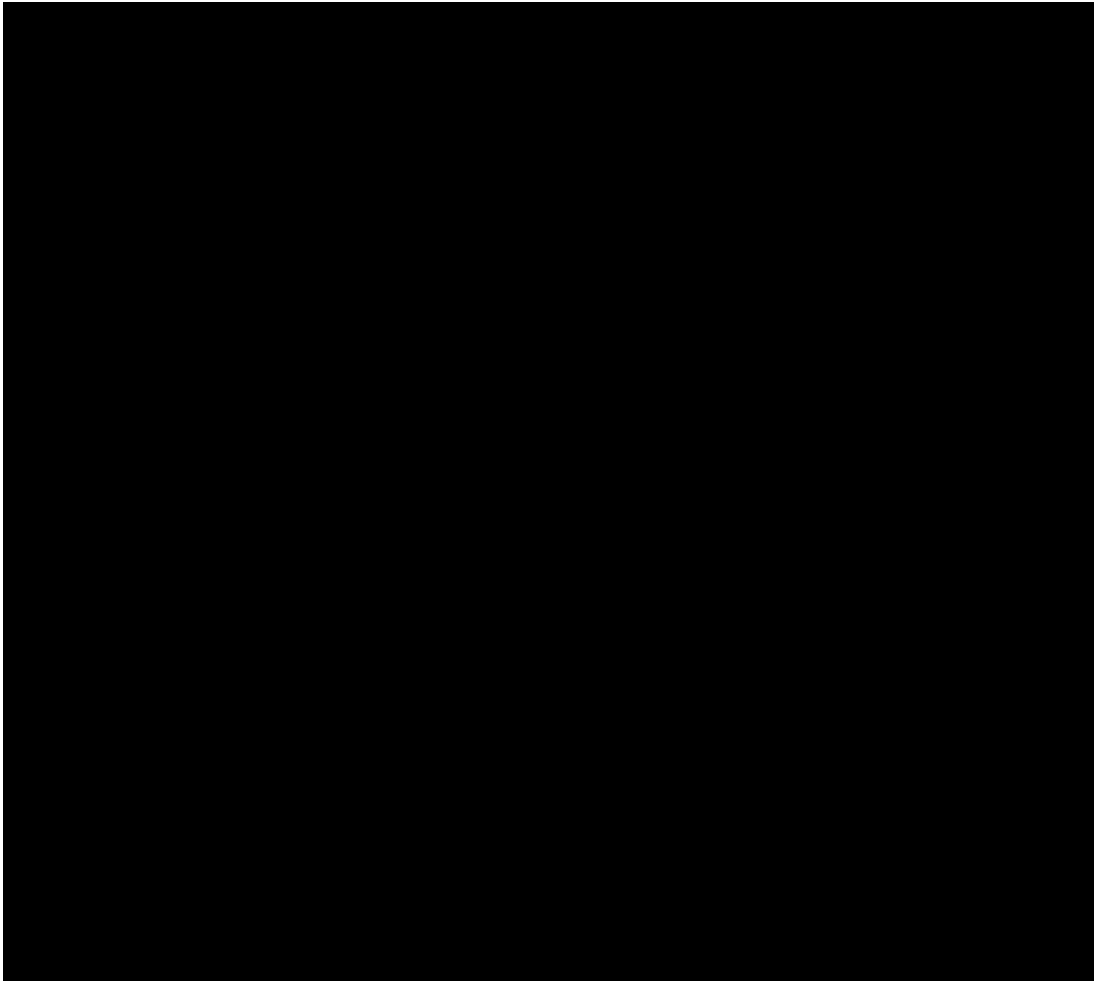
1 June



19 May



14 May



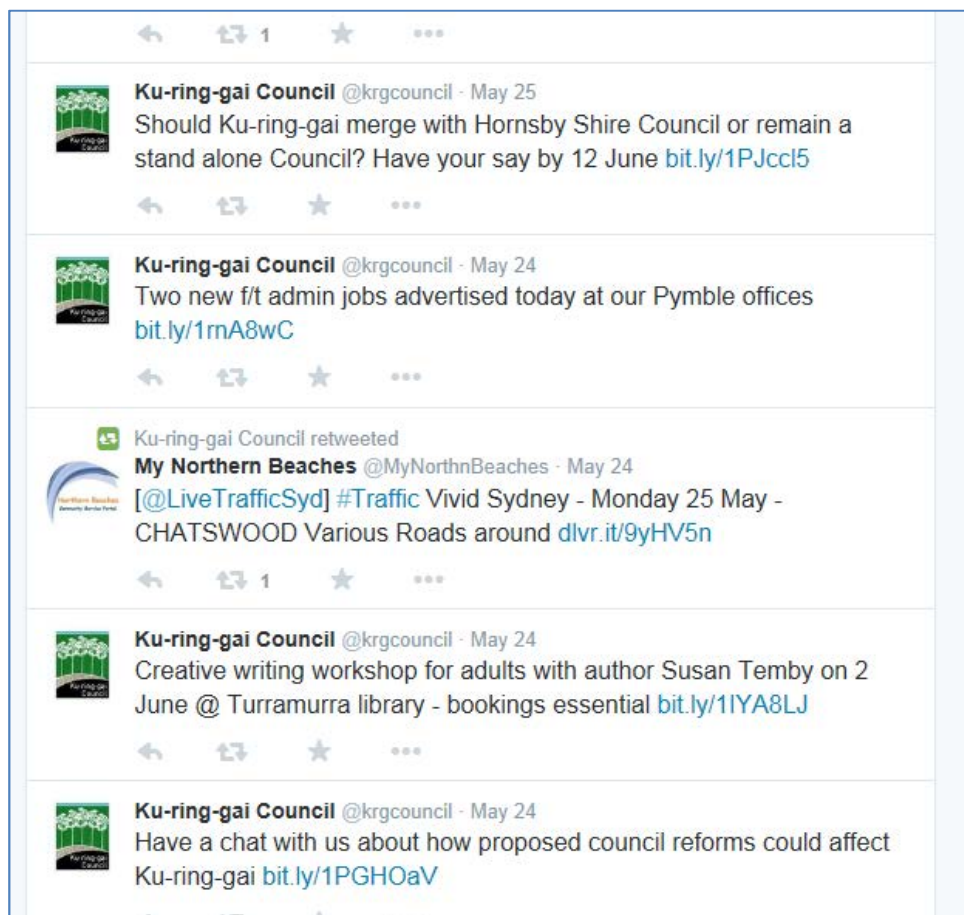
Twitter Posts

(pinned tweet since 18 May)

1 June



24 and 25 May



20 May

www.facebook.com/fightonthebeaches

View photo

1 1

 **Ku-ring-gai Council** @krgcouncil · May 20

Should we merge with Hornsby Council or would you be better represented if we cont as a stand alone Council? Survey: bit.ly/1RLNjnk

2 1

 Ku-ring-gai Council retweeted

 **Cordeau Marshall** @C21Group · May 19

Ku-ring-gai's Got Talent 2015 youtu.be/-M9yQCQSYvk [#talentshow](#) [#competition](#) [#kuringgaitv](#) @krgcouncil

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View media

 **Ku-ring-gai Council** @krgcouncil · May 20

Dress your dog up to win great prizes! Dogs Day Out Sunday 31 May

28 April

 Lindfield Village Green! Great project for the area >> kmc.nsw.gov.au/Current_projec...

1 3

 **Ku-ring-gai Council** @krgcouncil · Apr 28

The Council voted unanimously last night to stand alone under the NSW Govt's [#FitfortheFuture](#) reforms [#nomerger](#) bit.ly/1Ksh2N3

1

 **Ku-ring-gai Council** @krgcouncil · Apr 28

This little guy is loving a break from the rain and a roll in the leaves! Snapped by Carlo Brand... instagram.com/p/2AxJdfwalF/

1

 Ku-ring-gai Council retweeted

 **My Northern Beaches** @MyNorthnBeaches · Apr 28

[@LiveTrafficSyd] [#Traffic](#) BREAKDOWN Car - WAHROONGA M1 Pacific Mwy (E2) just past Edgeworth David Ave due to [#Zhu](#)

Attachment 11 – staff newsletter screenshot

Fit for the Future update



The Council voted at its meeting this week to submit a proposal to the NSW government that Ku-ring-gai is strong enough to stand alone as a council. Councillors also voted unanimously to reject a merger with Hornsby Shire.

The Council's 'improvement proposal' will be further developed over the next two months to meet the state government's deadline of 30 June. Part of the improvement proposal means that the relocation to 828 Pacific Highway is deferred indefinitely.

We'll be consulting the Ku-ring-gai community in the coming weeks to get their views on Fit for the Future.

More info on deferred plans to move Council offices: TRIM
2015/093010

[Fit for Future media release](#)

