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HISTORY OF AMALGAMATION
AND BOUNDARY CHANGES

CITY OF SYDNEY COUNCIL FIT FOR THE FUTURE ATTACHMENTS

Political History of City of Sydney and Boundary Changes

For over a century, successive state governments have sought to ensure the City of Sydney Council has had a complementary political makeup. Attempts to influence the politics of the City of Sydney have included:

- **Sacking the Council;**
- **Changes to the City's boundaries;**
- **Changes to the electoral franchise; and**
- **Excising areas from the City for planning and development purposes.**



Council Sackings

The City of Sydney Council has been sacked four times in the past century

December 1927

A City Council with a Labor majority was sacked by Bavin Nationalist (conservative) government (elected October 1927) following claims that the Council was inefficient and corrupt, and purportedly to pave the way for a new metropolitan government for Sydney. Unelected Commissioners held office from 1 January 1928 to 30 June 1930.

November 1967

A City Council with a Labor majority sacked by Askin Liberal Government (elected May 1965) via an Act of Parliament (Local Government (City of Sydney) Boundaries Act). Three commissioners were appointed "to oversee the dismemberment of the city" from 14 November 1967 to 26 September 1969. New city boundaries came into effect on 1 August 1968.

The sackings were justified by the Minister for Local Government by claims that "needy residential areas were tacked onto the productive centre of the city and welfare services began to consume its rate revenue. As a result the Council was doing nothing to promote development in the centre." (Hilary Golder, Sacked.)

March 1987

The Council elected in 1984 was sacked by Unsworth Labor Government (elected May 1976) via the City of Sydney Act 1987. At the time of the sacking, the Council comprised 11 Labor (including directly elected Lord Mayor), 11 Independents and 6 Liberals. There was speculation that an Independent would be elected Lord Mayor and Independents would gain a majority at the elections due in 1988. Unelected officials held office from 26 March 1987 to 31 December 1988.

February 2004

The City of Sydney and South Sydney Councils were dismissed and amalgamated by proclamation. Administrators held office from 6 February, 2004 until 10 April, 2004.



Boundary Changes

Camperdown was included in the City of Sydney in 1909 and the boundaries remained unchanged until 1948. From 1948 to 2004, the boundaries changed six times. Council sackings preceded three of these boundary changes

1947-1949 Creation of the City of Greater Sydney

The Local Government (Areas) Bill was introduced into Parliament in 1947 that amalgamated the City with eight inner-City Councils: Alexandria, Darlington, Erskineville, Glebe, Newtown, Paddington, Redfern and Waterloo. The elections for the expanded council were held on 4 December 1948, with the Council taking office in early 1949. Labor had regained control and remained in control until the council was dismissed in November 1967.

1967-1969 The first carve up

Following the Council's sacking in November 1967, new boundaries came into effect on 1 August 1968. Part of Paddington was transferred to Woollahra; Glebe and Forest Lodge transferred to Leichhardt; part of Camperdown/Newtown transferred to Marrickville; part of Newtown transferred to Marrickville; and the remainder of Newtown plus Erskineville, Darlington, Alexandria, Redfern and Waterloo joined to create South Sydney Council (originally Northcott).

Elections for the new Councils were finally held in September 1969. Civic Reform won a majority on the new smaller City Council, and Labor began its long unbroken rein in South Sydney. Civic Reform continued to win majorities on the City Council until the September 1980 council elections. Changes to the electoral franchise and ward adjustments by the Wran Labor Government elected in May 1976 contributed to Labor gaining a majority. The new Labor caucus had a centre-left majority, however, which did always please Labor at the state level.



1981-1982 Amalgamation of the City and South Sydney Councils

An amalgamation of the City and South Sydney Councils was implemented by the Local Government (City of Sydney Boundaries) Act 1981. The Bill was introduced into Parliament without prior notice at 10.41pm on 2 December 1981 (the night of the Press Gallery Christmas party). It was declared urgent the next day, passed the Legislative Assembly following a gag motion, and passed the Legislative Council the next day to become law on 18 December 1981. A council of 27 Alderman plus a popularly elected Lord Mayor was created.

The addition of the South Sydney Labor Alderman changed the left-right balance in the caucus, which proceeded to dominate the Council for the remainder of its term. Despite requirements for a redrawing of ward boundaries (and a delay of the Council elections) they remained the same for the elections in April 1984.

No group won a majority at the April 1984 elections. The new council comprised twelve Labor, six Liberals (the result of a merger of Civic Reform and the Liberal Party) and nine Independents, plus a popularly elected Lord Mayor.

1987– 1988 The Goran Report

In mid-1987, Judge A.J. Goran was commissioned to report on future governance of the area covered by the Council sacked in March 1987. His May 1988 report recommended a new local government structure which split the City of Sydney into two areas:

- The first area called “City Central” would include the city centre peninsula plus the University of Sydney, Prince Alfred Hospital, Moore Park and Sydney Park as “special purpose areas”. It would be governed by a Board of seven appointed Commissioners. He suggested one Commissioner could be elected, which he considered “excessive democratic generosity” to allow an estimated 2,500 residents to elect one-seventh of the Board.
- The remaining area would be known as the “City of Sydney”, and would be governed by an elected Council. Commissioner Goran argued that this area was different as Sydney Central was predominantly non-residential area.

1988 The second carve-up

On 14 September 1988 the Greiner Liberal Government introduced the City of Sydney Act less than six months after its election in March 1988. The Act provided for a much contracted City of Sydney, which was similar to Goran’s proposed City Central with the addition of Pyrmont and Ultimo. The “special purpose areas” were not included. The remaining areas became a new City of South Sydney. The City included seven aldermen elected on a city-wide basis and who elected the Lord Mayor. Owners, ratepaying lessees, occupiers of rateable land as well residents were eligible to vote.

In December 1988, the new Council of the City of Sydney was elected, with a revived Civic Reform Group gaining a majority, and Jeremy Bingham subsequently elected Lord Mayor by his fellow councillors. At the 1991 Council elections, a ticket headed by Frank Sartor had three councillors elected. Sartor was subsequently elected Lord Mayor with the support of the sole Labor councillor. Civic Reform split, with one of its two councillors also voting for Sartor. Sartor subsequently formed Living City, which won majorities at the 1995 and 1999 council elections. From 1995, the Lord Mayor has been popularly elected.

May 2003 Expansion of the City of Sydney

In May 2003, a boundary change resulted in Glebe and Forest Lodge being transferred from Leichhardt Municipal Council to the City and the areas north of Oxford Street being transferred from South Sydney City Council to the City.

The boundary change followed the 2000–2001 inquiry by Professor Kevin Sproats into the structure of local government in eight council areas—The City, South Sydney, Leichhardt, Marrickville, Botany Bay, Randwick, Waverley and Woollahra. Professor Sproats was required to take into consideration the then Labor Government’s policy of no forced amalgamations. Sproats recommended that the eight councils be recast as four councils: an enhanced City of Sydney; a mixed residential/industrial city; a beachside/harbourside residential city; and an Inner West residential gateway city. These boundaries aimed to consolidate strategic expertise, respect suburb boundaries and integrate regional sites into a single LGA.

The May 2003 boundary change implemented an ‘alternative’ recommendation for the Sydney CBD, while taking no action on alternative recommendations for Bondi Junction and Port Botany/Sydney Airport.

February 2004 Amalgamation of the remaining South Sydney with the City

This amalgamation created the current City of Sydney boundary. The Labor Government had asked Professor Sproats to update his 2001 report with specific reference to the City and South Sydney City Councils. Sproats reported on 19 December 2003 acknowledging that a merger would be consistent with his previous recommendations and recommending that the Government consider submitting the amalgamation proposal to the Local Government Boundaries Commission.

A Boundaries Commission inquiry began, taking submissions until 27 January 2004 and undertaking to submit a report to the Minister by 9 February 2004. The two Councils were sacked and merged by proclamation in the early hours of 6 February 2004 hours before the City was due to test the merger’s legality in court.

Changes to the Electoral Franchise

Significant changes to the electoral franchise in the City of Sydney included

1941 (Labor)

All persons on the electoral roll within the City of Sydney becoming eligible to vote in City of Sydney elections – previously non-ratepaying residents had to meet other residential qualifications. This change enabled all citizens to vote.

1947 (Labor)

Compulsory voting introduced for all local government elections, including the City of Sydney.

1968 (Liberal): Compulsory voting abolished for all local government elections, including the City of Sydney and proportional representation replaced by majority preferential system – that is, a “winner take all” system.

1976 (Labor)

Compulsory voting and proportional representation reintroduced.

1980 (Labor)

Non-residential vote restricted to owners of rateable property – rate paying lessees and occupiers became ineligible. 6,000 voters removed from the roll in Gipps Ward, the area of the City centre north of Bathurst Street.

1988 (Liberal)

City of Sydney Act restored the vote to rate paying lessees and occupiers.

1995–2003 (Labor)

Amendments to City of Sydney Act limiting partnerships to one vote exercised by a nominee, requirement for non-residential rate paying lessees and occupiers to enrol before every election.

2014 (Liberal/Shooters)

Amendments to the City of Sydney Act requiring all businesses in the City of Sydney to be enrolled to vote and entitling corporations to two votes.



Areas Excised from the City for Planning and Development

Sydney Cove Redevelopment Authority - 1968 (Liberal)

An Act of Parliament excised The Rocks from the City's planning and development controls transferring responsibility to the new Sydney Cove Redevelopment Authority. This was subsequently merged into the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority (SHFA).

Darling Harbour Authority - 1984 (Labor)

The Darling Harbour Authority Act excised the area around Darling Harbour from the City's planning and development controls, and vested responsibility in a new Darling Harbour Authority. This Authority was subsequently merged into the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority (SHFA).

Redfern-Waterloo Authority - 2004 (Labor)

Redfern Waterloo Authority Act transferred responsibility for planning and development to those sections of Redfern and Waterloo designated in the Act. The RWA was wound up on 1 January 2012 with its functions transferred to the Sydney Metropolitan Development Authority and subsequently UrbanGrowth NSW.

Barangaroo Delivery Authority - 2009 (Labor)

Barangaroo Delivery Authority was established to develop Barangaroo with planning approval vested in the Department of Planning.

UrbanGrowth NSW - 2013 (Liberal)

UrbanGrowth NSW is undertaking strategic planning for land in the City of Sydney—Bays Precinct and Central to Eveleigh. UrbanGrowth took on responsibilities of the former Landcom, Sydney Metropolitan Development Authority (SMDA) and the Redfern Waterloo Authority (RWA).



