

Burwood Residents Action Group

PUTTING LOCALS FIRST

The General Manager
PO BOX 240
BURWOOD NSW 1805

Mr N. Fterniatis
[REDACTED]
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RE: Submission to IPART on Burwood Council's Proposed Merger with Auburn and Canada Bay Councils

Dear Sir,

The Burwood Residents Action Group represents over 100 property owners in the suburb of Burwood in Sydney's inner west region.

Whilst our membership remains open to the idea of mergers between like-minded Councils, our members remain strongly opposed to any merger proposal involving Auburn Council. We strongly believe that such a merger only serves the vested interests of a few, is contrary to the "Fit for the Future" objectives and counterproductive to the delivery of improved governance and planning outcomes for inner west Sydney

Our detailed comments against a merger with **Auburn Council** are outlined below:-

1. Poor consultation by Labour controlled Burwood Council on the latest merger proposal

- a. Burwood Council's consultation on the proposed merger consisted of a phone survey of 408 people which translates to only the 1.1% resident Burwood population and conducted over a 4-day period in late May, 2015. The phone survey gave no accompanying information of the costs and benefits to those involved.
- b. Apart from the 1.1 % of those surveyed, 98% of Burwood residents were informed of Council's merger proposal with Auburn AFTER IT had been voted on by the Labor majority on Council.
- c. Burwood Council's community consultation from October, 2014 to May, 2015, did NOT include the merger proposal involving Auburn Council. The consultation was based on the Independent Local Government Panel's preferred 6 Council proposal.
- d. There was no mention in surveys or Council publications of a merger with Auburn Council. It is misleading to use this as evidence of Community consultation for a proposed merger with Auburn Council.

2. No Community Support on Merger Proposal with Auburn Council

- e. The results of Burwood Council's community consultation from October 2014 to May 2015 indicated that Burwood residents overwhelmingly supported (68%) the stand-alone option.
- f. The Burwood/ Auburn/ Canada Bay merger received the lowest level of support with only 3% of resident's preferred first option as compared to standalone which topped the poll at 48%.

- g. The merger proposal submitted to IPART wrongly indicates that Burwood residents gave majority support to the proposed merger with Auburn as the preferred second option. (Page 71 of Merger proposal).
- h. In terms of merger proposals, a Burwood, Strathfield and Canada Bay option received the greatest level of support (somewhat to complete support category).
- i. The proposed merger with Auburn came in last place out of the 4 options presented and had the least support in the same category.

3. Unworkable Geographical boundaries and weak links

- j. The proposed council merger involving Auburn creates a donut shaped entity (as Strathfield has opted out) because Burwood shares no physical boundary with Auburn.
- k. Parramatta Road is the principal boundary between Burwood & Canada Bay but currently provides no connectivity between the two.
- l. Auburn & Canada Bay share a common boundary along a small section of Homebush Bay Drive.
- m. There are no existing functional interaction, economic or social links today between the Burwood and Auburn Councils.

4. Inadequate Business Case

- n. The analysis of this proposed merger was undertaken in less than one week and as such, the data available for modelling has limitations. The timeframe limited Morrison and Low's capacity to refine both the available data and the model itself to a fine level of detail. This is not a rigorous business case on which to support any merger proposal.
- o. Burwood's report stated it was unable to comment on the impacts on rates and service levels with the proposed merger.
- p. There are significant financial risks in using the Morrison and Low report to support the suggested outcomes of a merger. (p5, Sydney Olympic Park City Council Merger Business Case, Morrison Low, June 2015).

5. Differing Communities of interest

- q. The communities of Burwood, Auburn and Canada Bay have significant differences. The cultural diversity differences include the place of birth, language spoken at home and religions.
- r. The economic differences include the occupations of residents, level of education, home ownership. This is borne out by the Ranking in social disadvantage (ABS) with Canada Bay in 20th place, Burwood 44th and Auburn 136th out of 152 NSW Councils.
- s. Burwood is an old established area developed in the late 1800s and dotted with significant heritage homes and numerous conservation areas that are integral to the values and expectations of Burwood Residents. Burwood Council's motto is "Progress, Heritage and Pride". Auburn on the other hand is a more recent

construct, established during the post war period with less focus on the conservation of its past but rather on creating a modern metropolis for its diverse citizens who come from all corners of the globe. . A merger with Auburn would lead to a dysfunctional Council entity with significant resources spent on placating diverse interest groups and leading to significant planning delays.

- t. Burwood's town centre is identified as a major centre for the inner west region by the NSW Government and is set to grow significantly in the next 25 years, taking advantage of the area's strong local economy and excellent transport infrastructure. The current merger option proposal with Auburn Council proposes to establish a new centre focused on Olympic Park. This is contrary to current government policy for the inner west region and will undermine the development of the Burwood Town Centre.
- u. Any merger option should focus on realising the objective of growing the Burwood Town Centre by maximising the area's growth, and ensuring that the town centre remains an exciting and vibrant place to live, work and visit. A merger involving Auburn will seriously jeopardise the achievement of this objective.

6. Fit for Future Recommendations:-

Residents wish to submit the following recommendations to IPART for consideration:-

- A. That the proposed merger involving Auburn Council **be rejected** as it is not enjoy the support of the community, is contrary to current metropolitan centres policy and least supported of the 4 options presented to the community.
- B. That **IPART acknowledge** that the results of Burwood Council's community consultation from October 2014 to May 2015 indicated that Burwood residents overwhelmingly supported (68%) the stand-alone option.
- C. That if the stand-alone option is not supported by Government, then a merger proposal involving Burwood, Strathfield and Canada Bay **be further explored** by an independent body in line with the community support that this option currently enjoys.
- D. That subject to further economic modelling and consultation, the recommendation of the Independent Local Government Panel's preferred 6 Council proposal (Strathfield, Burwood, Canada Bay, Ashfield, Marrickville, Leichardt) **receive further consideration.**
- E. Residents **support** the creation of a greater Parramatta Council and consider that Auburn Council should form an integral part of this new entity.
- F. That the new name for any merged entity in the inner west should encompass the following place based reference "**City of West Harbour**" with the administrative centre of any such entity **being located in the current Burwood Town Centre.**



On behalf of Burwood Residents Action Group