

Researcher: Sr. Kalo Sikimeti (Dr.) **120 participants from the Canterbury Emerging Communities Resource Centre:** A survey on the recommendation from the Independent Local Government Review Panel (ILGRP) regarding amalgamations of local councils. **Result:** 100% of the participants opposed to amalgamations for the following reasons:

- The participants support the ‘stand-alone option’ because currently they have excellent opportunities to have good access to personal communication and support from the local mayor, councillors and the staff of the local council. These have helped them to receive excellent and quality services to improve their lives.
- The population of the City of Canterbury is 152,000 (with about 150 nationalities from different cultural backgrounds) and has projected to increase to 178,000 to 200,000 by 2031. Therefore, there will be more disadvantages than advantages to the residents if two councils amalgamated.
- Expenses will be more, and the services will be less quality.
- If Hurstville, Kogarah and Rockdale, and Bankstown have chosen to take the ‘stand-alone option’, the participants do not support the ‘forced amalgamation option’.
- The City of Canterbury local government has developed plan and has delivered quality community services that are relevant to local needs.
- The City of Canterbury local government has a “capacity development” that has ensured that the development of services are in accordance with the local needs.

SUMMARY

The participants believe on ‘stand-alone option’ because it will continue to keep local services strong. As a stand-alone Council, the City of Canterbury will continue to deliver a diverse range of local services and programs that are valued by the local community. Local residents will continue the valuable and well established partnerships with local community groups. The City of Canterbury provides more than 240 services for local residents and communities. The participants also believe that it is less expensive for Canterbury council to stand alone and this is good savings for the NSW government. If amalgamation will take place, there is a risk that the number of aquatic centres, libraries, and community centres could be reduced. Furthermore, programs for seniors, children, people with disabilities and our culturally diverse community are at risk. A forced merger could also mean less access to our local councillors. There may also be more rigorous procedures and less flexibility in applying for grants for our emerging communities in grassroots level. All facilities, including local pools and libraries, would likely be the subject of a review under a new merged council. There is no guarantee that the facilities our community currently use will remain in the event of an amalgamation. This could mean travelling further to visit the local pool, library or community centre. Any cuts to staff or the number of community facilities will have a direct impact on the number of community focused programs that Council is able to run. Pressure to cut costs will also impact on Council’s programs. This also applies to other services such as Child Care, Community Safety, Youth Services, Senior’s Services, Multicultural programs, and Council’s Healthy Communities Initiative.