

SUBMISSION TO IPART - FIT FOR FUTURE

FROM RESIDENT OF BURWOOD LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA

Date: 23 July 2015

SUMMARY AND INTRODUCTION

I am totally opposed to the proposal for the merger between Auburn, Burwood and Canada Bay Councils for the reasons set out below.

I am not opposed to Council mergers, and would be supportive of a more limited form of merger between Burwood and Strathfield Councils, and potentially also Canada Bay Council.

A. MERGER OF BURWOOD WITH AUBURN AND CANADA BAY COUNCILS

I am opposed to the proposed 3 way of merger of Burwood with Auburn and Canada Bay Councils for the following reasons:-

1. Lack of community interest or identity

There is no community of interest or identity with Auburn Council. The merger does not make any sense geographically either. Auburn Council is a logical fit with Parramatta and/or other councils in that vicinity. The "doughnut" shape of the proposed council, leaving out Strathfield, is ridiculous.

2. Lack of community support and consultation

Burwood Council claims to have community support for the proposed merger. I have no idea who was consulted, or what the results were. I was not, and do not know anyone who was. I do not support the merger, and have yet to come across any fellow residents who support it. I seriously question any survey methodology that may have been undertaken and the representation of the results.

The only support for the merger within Burwood appears to me to be the 4 Labor councillors who have been pushing the merger (see also the following point).

3. Political motivation in proposing the merger

It is my belief that this proposed merger is being pushed solely for the purpose of the Labor Party creating a political stronghold in the area that it can control. It is designed to further the one particular party and reduce the ability of any other opposing views to seek a fair representation in the decision making for the community area. As such, it is contrary to the community interest.

IPART should not accept a merger that is designed for such a purpose and has the potential to disenfranchise citizens.

B. ALTERNATIVE PROPOSALS FOR MERGER OF BURWOOD COUNCIL

I would be supportive of an appropriate consolidation involving Burwood Council.

It is my experience that Burwood Council delivers extremely poor level of services to its ratepayers. It does as little as it can possibly get away with, and only does so after complaints and pressure are applied for it to act. It delivers very few of the innovative community programs that neighbouring councils appear to offer.

Burwood is a small council area with a costly administration, and opportunities for synergies and efficiencies, and improved services, ought to be available.

1. Merger of Burwood and Strathfield

In my opinion, a merger between Burwood and Strathfield Councils is a "no brainer" .

The two councils are amongst the smallest in Sydney, and the town centres are so close that they are within sight of each other and are already on the verge of merging geographically. The areas have strong community similarities and a shared history. They should be managed together.

Whilst I understand that Strathfield does not wish to merge with anyone, and I am generally opposed to forced mergers, the reasons for merging these two councils are compelling enough for the Government to mandate a merger of these councils.

I would also recommend that in the event of this merger, the opportunity should be taken to adjust boundaries in some places to unite business districts. In particular, Croydon and Croydon Park to name just two business districts each straddle two local government areas. They should be united within the merged Burwood /Strathfield LGA to simplify urban design and planning.

2. Merger of Burwood, Strathfield and Canada Bay Councils

My preference would be to limit present mergers to the Burwood/ Strathfield merger in 1 above, to simplify what might prove to be a complicated process.

I do not support over-complicating the process, but if there is to be an additional LGA in any merger, then the logical one would be Canada Bay. There are some geographic and community similarities shared with this LGA, and a merger could be made to work.

C. NO MERGERS BEYOND B. ABOVE

The question of community representation and access to decision making is an important one for me, and I believe for the community generally.

People want to retain access to their representatives and a genuine ability to speak to those who make decisions that affect them. Local Government areas should not be so large as to rob people of this.

The considerations that go into determining the size and boundaries of Local Government areas should not just be just limited to economic rationalism. Citizens are happy carry the cost of a Local Council that satisfies their needs, and does not result in their further alienation from the political process, which increasingly happening at other levels of Government.

Any mergers should be carried out in small steps, rather than mega-mergers all at once, so that it does not happen at a pace that is faster than the community is comfortable with. It is easier to merge more areas in future if the process does point to successes, rather than de-merge mistakes.

I would be happy to provide any further comment that may be sought, on the contact details provided separately to this submission.

Yours sincerely,

Croydon Resident (anon.)