

-----Original Message-----

Sent: Thursday, 30 July 2015 10:10 PM

To: Local Government Mailbox

Subject: Fit for the Future proposals. Submission by Marina Garlick, 73 College St, Balmain , NSW 2041

NB. I DO WANT MY DETAILS MADE PUBLIC.

I strongly support the retention of Leichhardt Council as an autonomous entity and oppose its amalgamation with any other council. Leichhardt Council meets all the so-called 'Fit for the Future' financial criteria except for population size for which there is no empirical evidence that 'big is better'. Indeed, on recently published statistics from the Office of Local Government itself, big is actually worse with larger councils such as Blacktown, Sutherland, Bankstown and Liverpool ranking near the bottom in the table of core financial sustainability. Leichhardt Council per contra is among the six best performing councils on this measure. The other measures set out in the 'Fit for the Future' requirements are subjective and cannot be measured.

Leichhardt Council also provides a range of valuable and valued services in addition to those basic to local government. It is effective in its programmes, an important measure omitted from the current considerations. It has a culture of consultation which is very important for the community. Again, this is not part of the current discussion.

The State government has also quite wrongly excluded the alternative of resource sharing co-operative arrangements between councils from consideration. Leichhardt Council participates in SSROC and these arrangements could be strengthened and extended without losing autonomy.

It must also be recognised that local government in NSW suffers under the constraints of rate-pegging and cost shifting from both State and Federal governments. It is remarkable that Leichhardt Council is so successful in spite of these.

There is an opportunity cost in amalgamations of any sort as resources are directed from worthwhile projects to meet the administrative cost of mergers. No evidence has been provided that amalgamations are actually beneficial let alone cost effective.

Indeed the 'Fit for the Future' proposals are not based on the Sansom Panel's recommendations at all, rather on the State government's not so hidden agenda to force amalgamations against the will of residents. Expert opinion considers that such amalgamations do not work.

These proposals do nothing to deal with the very real issues facing local government and will make councils, including Leichhardt 'unfit for the Future'. Leichhardt Council should be retained as a stand alone council.

