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Submission: At the recent public hearing staff from the Office of Local Government in response to a question from the Hon Ernest Wong attempted to define and clarify 'scale and capacity' in the context of local government and the current discussion around amalgamation.

Clearly from the response provided, no one, including the community is any the wiser as to why 'scale and capacity' should be the determining factor as to whether a Council is financially sustainable if it is 'bigger'.

The Hon. ERNEST WONG: I just have one question. If all those financial situations or options are being reviewed and all the other councils who now want to choose to stand alone are able to prove economic sustainability, do you still think that amalgamation and bigger councils will serve the purpose that you are now focusing on—scale and capacity?

Ms DOHENY: The idea of bigger councils was not a core element of the panel's report. The panel was really talking about increasing strategic capacity for councils. It did acknowledge that large councils can bring about increased scale and that can bring about efficiencies, but its focus was not on that element of large councils. It was really saying that for councils to deliver optimally for the communities they need to have strategic capacity and that includes elements such as the capacity to attract skilled staff to deliver large projects to partner with State and Federal governments. That was the focus of the panel's work when it was talking about scale and capacity.

Northern Council and indeed the other two northern beaches already have the 'capacity to attract skilled staff to deliver large projects to partner with State and Federal Governments' if and when such a project is proposed and approved. To date no such projects are envisaged.

However, the problem does not lie with the individual councils as to the success of such partnerships, but with the State and Federal Governments and their ability to agree to and fund such projects.

The NSW Government has so far failed to deliver the BRT and improve transport in the region that the three councils have advocated for via the existing ROC. The Northern Beaches Hospital is being delivered despite the existence of three Councils, amalgamation will not assist this project.

Perhaps amalgamation and the creation of a mega council will accelerate the redevelopment of the Brookvale Oval as a 'large project' requiring strategic capacity. But again, funding from the State or Federal governments must be forthcoming irrespective of which council, existing or mega, carries out the project. So again how does 'strategic capacity and the ability to attract skilled staff' improve or not the delivery of such a project

A mega council area will not improve the 'strategic capacity' or bring about efficiencies on the Northern Beaches. Increasing rates after agreeing to amalgamation will not be welcomed by residents and is unlikely to improve the delivery of infrastructure or services beyond what is already happening.