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Submission: I am extremely concerned about the proposal to amalgamate the Council of the City of Sydney with other nearby councils, on the following three bases:

1. Cost of amalgamation does not appear to be quantified

I understand that there is a long-term proposal that the savings are anticipated to be in the order of 54c per resident per week, however I have not seen costings estimated for the amalgamation process including disruption to business, and possible loss of development proposals are priorities are reassessed. (Two potential areas of risk are Green Square and the Light Rail.) My experience in substantial organisation change over many years is that significant changes of this nature are very, very expensive, and while people are going through the change, they are less able to focus on providing services, which consequently suffer. Apparently 5 years was needed to bed-down the amalgamation of South Sydney Council with City of Sydney Council. While I have not seen an estimate of the costs for the proposed amalgamation, further amalgamation, particularly where the needs of residents and businesses in the council areas differ so greatly is likely to be extraordinarily expensive. How is amalgamation justified taking all the costs into account?

2. Current level of service in City of Sydney and approach to financial operations is very good

Again, based on experience with large bureaucracies in 5 countries, typically, the larger the bureaucracy above a certain level the less effective and less responsive it is. The current level of service and responsiveness from City of Sydney is very good - better than I have experienced elsewhere. It is not apparent that a larger bureaucracy would necessarily be more efficient or effective, particularly in areas where City of Sydney has shown leadership, as in environmental sustainability. Where is the evidence? Where are the plans that demonstrate how greater efficiency and effectiveness can be achieved? Moreover, City of Sydney operates in the black and its financial sustainability is rated as strong with a positive outlook. This cannot be said of all councils. City of Sydney Council is to be commended. There is not reason to endanger financial performance and a visionary approach to development by amalgamation where all of the costs have not been taken into account.

3. City of Sydney has special expertise as a flagship area for tourism and employment, together with expertise in providing services to low-income, inner-city houses

The Council already covers a wide and diverse area, with special needs for low income residents, which Council manages. Also, because of the status of Sydney internationally, City of Sydney Council must develop and manage tourist and recreational and business facilities. Why endanger the focus on these special needs by joining City of Sydney with other councils that focus on more suburban living and do not have the expertise currently held by City of Sydney?