

Fit for the futureor fit for....?

I am concerned by the proposed council amalgamations. My content is not intended to be a personal attack on any one person but to express a real concern I perceive for the welfare of local communities.

Amalgamations are generally initiated by power players who have an agenda arguably not always in the best interests of those they are espousing to serve or represent.

Seemingly by-products of Amalgamations include an erosion of peoples choices, often a decline in both the quality and diversity of services, an homogenisation of culture and environment, less competition....a dissatisfying, unsettling feeling by communities and stakeholders that freedom of expression and often community entitlement and human rights has been diluted.

Things may perhaps have been manipulated for ill-gotten gains.

Council Amalgamations are very personal – they directly impact on peoples’ most personal spaces – their homes, their communities, their financial investments, where they have generally chosen to live and often work.

A primary concern with “Fit For The Future” is that it may also be known as “One Size Fits All” and the diversity and culture of suburbs will be bulldozed for more of the same and less of diversity, character and stimulus. Soul less dehumanising ghetto developments are not for everyone. Green spaces, backyards and gardens are not yet extinct.

I have resided in Bellevue Hill for 28 years, so my home council is Woollahra Council.

The City of Sydney I include in my submission as I see it as the benchmark council for others.

Woollahra Council has control of debatably some of the most beautiful city suburbs in the southern hemisphere. Its harbour location, proximity to city, nearby beaches and not too densely populated streets and hilly and coastal geography, set it aside from many other suburbs. It is a beautiful area. Residents live here because we like it and we can and our right of choice to live in a place of difference should be a basic human right whether it is here or any other suburb.

Residents don’t invest large parts of their lives and love of an area so we can be told it is to look like other suburbs which will transpire under an amalgamated council proposal.

The City of Sydney helmed thankfully by the eternally visionary and respected Leader and Lord Mayor Clover Moore has led the way arguably nationally with a sustainable plan – SUSTAINABLE SYDNEY 2030, contemporary, progressive, futuristic in its planning. Sound infrastructure proposals, strong development growth and fiscal responsibility and stability – yes an ongoing surplus budget – responsible and sustainable planning, design quality, respect of heritage, expanded arts and cultural diversity making the city and its events a more engaging and dynamic environment for people to be.

Under Lord Mayor Clover Moore we have Australia’s first Carbon Neutral Government. In addition to Installation of Solar Panels and Low Carbon LED Street Lights, The City of Sydney has built the Largest Urban Water Recycling Programme in Australia.

Independent, open minded and a custodian of the people and visitors of Sydney – citizens’ rights are not for sale.

The fruits of the City of Sydney labours are all achieved under an existing scale and model, a high performance machine if you like. An amalgamation with other councils does not make sense. The City of Sydney model would lose momentum and focus and effectiveness, disrupting a well-oiled, high performance government.

What would make more sense is for other NON AMALGAMATED Local governments to continue to look up to what the City of Sydney has achieved, take further inspiration and further exchange ideas. If communities become too big they also can lose the neighbourhood feel, the sense of pride and often belonging, associated with a smaller local community with better access to local government.

The proposed Amalgamations are seen as a dumbing down of communities and centralising control by parties with vested interests and ulterior motives.

The rumour on the streets is that the catalyst for the 'fit for the future' is a last ditch attempt for state political parties to wrest control of Sydney town hall.

Should those pushing for amalgamation and if they do return for a second term of office -

What will their legacy be? –

The sale of public state assets reportedly already in excess of \$1 billion, including the sale of the historic and National Trust listed Bidura in Glebe to Chinese investors; then there are the further 293 historic properties in Millers Point on the block.

Up for sale in near virgin bushlands on the scenic and soon to be disrupted natural beauty of the Hawkesbury River is Peat Island and adjacent foreshore land at Mooney Mooney - let's turn it into more concrete wrapped in bitumen.

Farmlands, water supplies, real estate has been sold and continues to be all up for sale to the highest foreign investor.

A silent stance on coal seam gas and fracking, silence on human impact on the environment and uncomfortable looks when the word "sustainable" is used in press conferences.

The circa 1950's WestConnex roadway gig as the great vision to keep Sydney moving and infrastructure saviour! For \$15 billion in 2015 with global awareness on progressive sustainable infrastructure options including light rail, cycle ways and trains in keeping with the City of Sydney plan. Why are we investing in roads for cars funnelling into a congested CBD, negatively impacting on suburban communities aesthetically, with mental and physical health impacts and the obvious environmental impact? The transition away from fossil fuels is discussed progressively in all western and developing countries as is healthy discussion on renewable energies.

Surely a compromise could be to keep the gig with the Bankers but make it sustainable and make it BestConnex.

So in addition to the downside of amalgamations, why would one feel secure in supporting any local government amalgamations made by proponents spruiking and actioning the above state initiatives?

Thanks but NO THANKS to any Amalgamation affecting either The City Of Sydney or Woollahra Councils....

My full support to Leader and Lord Mayor Of Sydney Clover Moore and The City Of Sydney submission to IPART that the City Of Sydney should NOT be amalgamated with any other Council.

My full support also to The Mayor of Woollahra Toni Zeltzer with her and Woollahra Councils stance and submissions that Woollahra Council should NOT amalgamate with any other Council also.

Christopher Pryor

