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Submission: The proposal to amalgamate various councils, including the City of Sydney, into a mega-council is an attempt to reduce the efficiency of local government in providing local government services. It is no doubt being motivated in part by a faddish belief in the principle of "centralisation" (a favourite of the worst governments in human history). It also seems to be politically motivated rather than seeking to serve the best interests of the people. Specifically, it involves redrawing political boundaries with the obvious intent to produce a different electoral outcome. In the United States, they call this "gerrymandering". It is an ugly and cynical form of politics.

The provision of some public goods, such as national defense, makes sense to be done centrally. But the provision of local public goods that require direct and easy contact between citizens and government, such as provision of governance over development applications, is only effective and responsible if it is done by truly local governments. This proposed amalgamation works against this principle and so also works against the promotion of the best forms of democracy in Australian society.

It is already somewhat of an international embarrassment that some Australian states, such as New South Wales, allow business owners who do not reside in a locality to vote in local elections. This is not how democracy operates in most civilized nations, where the principle of voting for local government based on residency (and often citizenship) is paramount. This proposed amalgamation would replace representation by a functional and local government to a distant and less responsive regime that does not listen to the wishes of local citizens. The so-called "Bridge to Nowhere" in Moore Park is a perfect example of an less local government steamrolling over the wishes of local residents. I would hope the State government would have learned some humility from their mismanagement of that project and recognize that local citizens (rather than radio commentators) know best what is in their interests.

Why do some politicians resent city dwellers so much and want to impose their will on us? If a politician is truly "liberal", he or she should learn to "live and let live". The City of Sydney is in a financial situation where its citizens can support their own local government. So please leave us alone to govern ourselves in terms of local issues rather than imposing unfortunate projects like the Moore Park "Bridge to Nowhere" on us.

To summarize, this proposed amalgamation is flawed i) because "centralisation" is the wrong principle to guide *local* governance, ii) because there is no current problem with the City of Sydney governing itself financially and otherwise, and iii) because it goes against the liberal democratic notion of letting people govern themselves in issues that most affect themselves. Instead, it appears to be a cynical attempt to manipulate electoral outcomes and would be an embarrassment for what is and should continue to be a great democratic nation.