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Submission: Five quotes from the Morrison Low Consultant report (attachment 6)

1.1 'there is little information about the benefits and dis-benefits of the proposed merger nor any ready information about whether and why a large scale merger is the best option.'

3.2 'While it is entirely possible for a council to make what would be in our view a valid argument that they can meet the scale and capacity tests, councils need to do so recognising the stated government position which runs contrary to that.'

3.36 'Perhaps the single biggest negative impact from the merger of the inner west is on representation. ...the government has not set out in detail any proposal that the community could consider.'

3.3.7 'Ultimately the question is whether a merged council could adequately represent the different communities of interest in the inner west and at this time the question needs to be considered alongside the significant reduction in representation.'

3.3.9 'There are significant potential risks arising from the merger both in a financial and non-financial sense. The obvious financial risks are that the transitional costs may be more significant than set out in the business case or that the efficiencies projected in the business case are not delivered. The business case is high level and implementation costs and attaining the benefits will be difficult to achieve.'

The quotes confirm my view that Ashfield Council, small as it is, does very well. To burden Councillors with much bigger wards would weaken our democracy.

There's strong community engagement through Ashfield's wide range of services as Appendix D pp86-8 indicates. I'm glad of the capital expenditure on council offices and library. Residents have shown their appreciation by supporting rate increases.

The council submission prefers no merger. I also want Ashfield to remain as it is and absolutely don't want my neighbourhood to become part of any Ashfield-Canada Bay combination.

I'm in the Cooks River catchment and my postcode is Canterbury's. I gravitate to Cooks valley areas socially. Being in the Ashfield municipality the RPA my local hospital but I go to Canterbury outpatients.

If there were to be changes to local government boundaries, they should follow river catchments and subcatchments. Even in our highly built-up areas I really believe our natural environment matters to our sense of belonging. We'd connect with it more strongly if our local government was defined by it.

The most likely meaning of Fit for the Future, to my mind, is preparedness for The Trade in Services Agreement (TISA). It's to maximise the attractiveness of local government services to multinational service contractors. They'd be undervalued if sold off piecemeal.

Australia is participating in secret TISA negotiations. The first quote above alarms me. The second quote sounds threatening. The third and fourth quotes regarding reduced representation makes sense in TISA terms. Once services are privatised under TISA they can't be taken back. We need a no-holes-barred debate about the purpose of Fit for the Future.