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Submission: This submission is concerned with Mosman Council's approach to public consultation and policy formulation in relation to council amalgamations.

Mosman Council has a long history of disingenuous consultations with its citizens. In 2012 the Council conducted a poll about amalgamations in association with the council elections. The information provided was the bare minimum and the arguments for and against were not cogent. The information was available on the Council website, accessed by few people. The Council also failed to provide us with a comprehensive discussion paper on council amalgamations commissioned by fellow SHOROC member, Warringah Council. This paper had been provided to Mosman Council at that time.

The 2012 poll result was 80/20 against amalgamation. This became the justification for the Council to establish a community consultation committee, an official committee of Council, called the 'Committee for an Independent Mosman'. The Committee's terms of reference were limited to maintaining Mosman's independence. The Committee composition was limited to residents that supported the independence policy. The poll result was also used to justify the Council adopting a narrow 'independent Mosman' policy which excluded any consideration of merger options and outlawed discussion of merger options with other councils. North Sydney Council reports that Mosman Council did not take up its offer to discuss merger options.

Council's attempts in 2015 to communicate widely with the community resulted in a very small proportion of residents responding. Of Mosman's 29,000 residents, approximately 70 (0.2%) residents attended a single town hall meeting. Even with additional intercept polling, less than 4% of residents responded to the survey.

The polling consisted of four options (Mega Merger, Stand Alone, North Sydney Merger, Manly Merger). The North Sydney and Manly merger options were doomed to fail, as there had been no discussions with these councils and there was no proposal to consider. The 'Mega Merger' was condemned by the information provided.

It was simply a disingenuous process from beginning to end, there was no attempt to explore policy options, no discussions with other councils, no genuine options put to residents and a polling process designed to achieve a predetermined result.

As Associate Professor Ryan, Director of the Australian Centre of Excellence for Local Government and UTS Centre for Local Government, recently said in the SMH, "A poll in Randwick and a poll in Botany Bay had different results even though they are similar communities. These polls don't pass the face value test. They are not robust, they are not meant to be. It's about how councils put the issues. This is put as evidence but it's a furphy"

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Charter - Community Consultative Committee - Independent Mosman
http://mosman.nsw.gov.au/index.php?s=file_download&id=2955

Independent Mosman Committee Minutes 19 January 15
http://mosman.nsw.gov.au/index.php?s=file_download&id=3593