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Submission: Within the three tiers of government in Australia, local government has the role to represent the close interests of the local community and to collaborate among the three tiers in planning, development, setting public policy for their communities and delivering the needed services within their boundaries.

With council elections scheduled for September 2016, the Baird government is now under fire to set their new Local government boundaries drawn before that date to create their grand, mega councils or force local council mergers to appease their friends in the business and development lobby groups by seizing total control of local government with their own people running it.

Some council amalgamations will effectively be a takeover which could see annual rate rises of 20 to 50 per cent because of the higher property land values in neighbouring, more expensive suburbs in both retail, commercial and residential.

The most efficient councils in the world are based on staying small to ensure local needs are properly met. There is no evidence that centralising all local council activities in a single mega-council produces cost efficiency or any savings of any kind. The efficient way is to share and outsource commodity activities and keep councils small or downsize them for activities to keep local issues, activities and identities local.

State governments do have a function but usually do not do it well and that does not make it right for them to interfere with their junior partner, local government.

For six years the WA Liberal Government was trying to cut the number of metropolitan councils from 30 to 16 as part of a policy to overhaul in the Local Government sector. It has now been dismantled due to the pressure from the community who did not want amalgamations and the power has returned to the people. The cost of this debacle was pushed onto the tax payer.

Councils have raised their concerns about the timeline, criteria and methodology imposed by IPART and the Baird government and there is still no information as to whether there is a population target to be met for councils. Research will show that, on average, the population of Sydney metropolitan councils is already almost four times larger than the average council size overseas according to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)

We need a referendum to let people express an opinion and not to be dictated to by the Baird/Toole government who have their own agenda to appease their donors.