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Submission: I support Kogarah City Council's conclusion that it has the ability to stand alone. It performs well against the benchmarks set by the government and it is the overwhelming wish of the community to remain a stand-alone council.

The ILGRP, when it presented its merger proposals for Kogarah, Hurstville, Rockdale and Canterbury councils, did not provide any evidence about how the amalgamation would benefit or disadvantage these councils. Kogarah has performed its own assessment of how the proposals would affect the community, and has demonstrated that any amalgamation would disadvantage the ratepayers of Kogarah.

Those are the factual reasons why Kogarah should stand alone; now for the anecdotal. As a resident of Kogarah City Council, I am generally proud of its standards of governance. In my opinion and in the opinion of many other St George residents, it is the only half-decent council out of the four mentioned above.

I echo the thoughts of many people when I say that the prospect of amalgamating with either Hurstville or Rockdale has me worried. Hurstville is run by a bullying property developer mayor who has let the town centre become a city of shadows and wind tunnels. His redeeming feature is that he keeps journalists at the St George and Sutherland Shire Leader entertained and in a job. As for the other councillors, their infamous junkets to conferences and training (complete with ridiculous meal allowances) have not endeared them to the residents. They have ended the practice of recording meetings. The sooner ICAC investigates this council the better. As for Rockdale, its councillors have been mysteriously not showing up to meetings for political reasons since the ABC's 7:30 program began airing. At the moment the airport is behind in its courtesy payments to the council, which is leaving a dent in its financial situation. Canterbury is just too big already. I was at a community meeting in Canterbury the other day that was attended by the mayor and residents were shouting about how their council has treated them with just as much respect as the Fit for the Future process has treated the councils. I didn't leave with a favourable impression of the mayor either; he tried to shut down the discussion and clearly wasn't a great listener, although with upwards of 130,000 people under his purview, it's hard to see how he could be.

Kogarah has a tendency towards overdevelopment and has turned a deaf ear to its ratepayers' objections on their latest LEP, but at least it keeps its nose clean, which is more than can be said for the surrounding councils which we are being pushed to merge with. I don't want to see a mega-council with the combined attributes of Hurstville and Rockdale (although the journalists probably do). Please don't let it happen to us, IPART. The residents of Kogarah will suffer if it does.