

From: Clr Ross Grove [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 31 July 2015 8:29 PM
To: Local Government Mailbox
Subject: Fit for the Future submission

Dr Peter Boxall AO
Chair
Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal
Via email to localgovernment@ipart.nsw.gov.au

Dear Mr Boxall,

I write to put forward an individual submission to IPART's Fit for the Future assessments regarding the proposals lodged by Parramatta and Holroyd City Councils. I do so as a resident of Holroyd City Council, a current councillor of two terms and former mayor serving through the period of the Final Report of the Independent Local Government Review Panel (the Sansom Report).

This submission will briefly comment on the two proposals, where Holroyd is putting forward a standalone proposal and Parramatta is seeking an expanded city, including an involuntary merger with Holroyd and boundary changes extending into adjoining LGAs.

Holroyd City Council

Holroyd is pursuing a standalone proposal and has identified through a Morrison Low report the adverse impact the merger option would have on local ratepayers.

Most notably the report contrasts council infrastructure backlogs and each council's capacity to address their backlog into the future. It is clear that Holroyd ratepayer funds would effectively be used to "bail out" the ailing infrastructure of other councils, namely Parramatta, with very little benefit to Holroyd's ratepayers in return.

On this basis, a merger does not represent value for money for ratepayers in Holroyd, and ought not be supported.

Parramatta City Council

Parramatta has lodged an improvement proposal, with an alternate submission included by way of attachment. Parramatta's proposal (via their attachment) pursues a merged entity of Parramatta and Holroyd; incorporating portions of Auburn, The Hills, Ryde and Hornsby.

This proposal effectively seeks to resolve a number of Parramatta's existing challenges by bolting on the additional revenues generated by presently neighbouring areas where the condition of public infrastructure in (sourced from each council's Special Schedule 7) is less adverse than presently within Parramatta. To this extent, Parramatta's proposal does not represent the interests of the expanded resident catchment outlined within their proposal.

Going forward

The future direction for local government in this region revolves around individual councils taking responsibility for the liabilities they incur; and the objective of enhanced strategic capacity must extend beyond forced amalgamations and into the broader governance issues identified within the Sansom Report.

I would encourage the adoption of the Joint Regional Authority model proposed by the Ryde, Lane Cove and Hunters Hill Councils as an intelligent solution that secures fiscal responsibility in local government, while ensuring an enhanced level of strategic regional governance and planning.

This option, which is recommended as one of the two alternate recommendations of the Sansom Report, will protect local ratepayers while looking beyond insular interests to the benefit of the region as a whole. The present situation, where Parramatta City Council is leading opposition to regional infrastructure initiatives, such as the state government's proposed light rail connection across strategic growth precincts at Silverwater and Camelia, needs to change.

If I can be of further assistance, please feel free to get in touch.

Yours sincerely,

Ross Grove

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of Ross Grove.