

Individual Submission to FIT FOR THE FUTURE : IPART NSW

From : Steven Warren 28<sup>th</sup> July 2015



Amalgamations outside of the City of Sydney :

I can see value in some Councils outside of the City of Sydney CBD area amalgamating, where such Councils are favourably considering amalgamation, in particular where such Council areas overlap with existing suburbs and communities and where there are clear economic savings and service advantages. However some Council areas may not need amalgamation, but merely a sorting of boundaries so that all their suburbs fall under one Council area.

For example the Parramatta area in NSW is divided between various Councils although suburbs such as Guildford and Westmead relate as one suburb, one community but they belong to two Councils where one side of the street or railway line is under Parramatta City Council and the other side isn't. Some of Parramatta's suburbs fall under Parramatta City Council, Holroyd Council and the Hills Shire Council which makes no sense as the residents in these divided suburbs relate as one community. This also occurs in other areas with similarities such as Hurstville, Kogarah & Rockdale and Hurstville & Cantebrury. For example the suburb of Riverwood is not under one Council even though the suburb's residents relate to each other as one community. Surely wherever suburbs are divided between Councils then they should fall under one Council that has a similarity to that community. It makes no sense to have streets and suburbs divided between Councils and therefore providing separate Council services. As having lived in some of those outer Sydney suburbs divided by two or more Councils I can tell you as a resident it made no sense at all. This is even more evident when neighbouring Council's argue over whose responsibility it is to address needs in a divided suburb. Suburbs shouldn't be divided by ever changing electoral boundary needs but on how we relate to each other as a single social community & often as a single postcode. This is where cost savings may occur and where common sense should prevail as to which Council serves you.

City of Sydney Amalgamation :

In the case of the City of Sydney there seems no real sense in amalgamating Sydney into a much larger area to make it the size of Tasmania with suburbs that do not directly relate to the city. It is also important not to create a local government area so large as to inhibit community input into decision making. A larger city population can greatly diminish the ability of the community to have meaningful input into the decision making on our surrounds. This is a key factor in the World Health Organisation's Ottawa Charter on Primary Health Care which it emphasizes "At the heart of this process is the empowerment of communities - their ownership and control of their own endeavours and destinies" therefore community input at the grass roots level into your city is of the utmost importance. Sydney City Council has managed this community consultation well, particularly in meetings with communities in

the various suburbs under Sydney City Council. We have also been served well with Community Centres that enhance the community.

Again if some suburbs are divided between Councils and which identify as a community with the City of Sydney then they should fall under just one Council.

The City of Sydney already delivers high quality services and infrastructure while keeping rates and charges low. It already has a considerable residential population around the 200,000 mark. Over a million people visit the city area each day. It is my understanding that the City of Sydney generates approx. \$108 billion worth of economic activity per year which is approx 30 per cent of metropolitan Sydney's economic activity and almost a quarter of the NSW State gross domestic product. The City has already completed over 250 major projects including parks, playgrounds, childcare, pools, libraries, theatres, community and cultural spaces – more than any other NSW council. The City also has a strong environmental programme for both sustainable management and pollution reduction. To add further projects and services to the existing City of Sydney through an amalgamation with other existing Council areas could risk the ability to adequately successfully manage the services as a single Local Government authority.

The City of Sydney in its current size has already shown effective governance, a strong budget & financial management and skilled staffing & resource structure is already successfully managing the City and setting it on the path to a continued vibrant future. It is my understanding that the City has been shown through audit assessment to have very strong and responsible financial management and asset development. Again this should not be risked by expanding the City by amalgamating with other unlike Council areas that could jeopardise this successful management by making it an unwieldy size that requires much more resources to manage effectively. A much larger City after amalgamation would require considerably large resources just to change everything over and bring in one financial and human resources system and the many requirements that would be needed in an amalgamation of different Councils into one large super Council. This overwhelming process can also disrupt and set back many projects as the City transforms into a new super structure. Without clear tangible benefits of such an amalgamation it would simply put too much at risk for an important City as Sydney which has both a State and International presence.

The financial benefit of an amalgamation is marginal compared to the risks of a loss of community, business and development confidence due to an uncertain investment climate and disruption to city operations and critical infrastructure projects. It is my understanding that a decline in construction activity of just one per cent over the next decade due to disruption or delays could have a negative economic impact in excess of \$300 million. It also seems that any financial or service benefits from an amalgamation are very unclear and the benefits may likely be marginal. The City of Sydney has undertaken and presented to the community detailed information on the amalgamation issue and that analysis doesn't support a beneficial amalgamation. I support the City of Sydney Council's submission to IPART.

In the case of the City of Sydney, as a resident, I do not feel that there has been sufficient credible economic, service provision, social and development benefits put forward as to

why Sydney should amalgamate with neighbouring Council areas that do not share similar communities or relate together as one community. The City of Sydney is unique in that it does relate as one larger community by its relation to the Central Business District of Sydney. There seems to be no wise benefit in expanding the City of Sydney to other areas that geographically and as a community relate to a different set of needs.

I would humbly implore IPART not to recommend an amalgamation of the City of Sydney with other neighbouring Councils as this would not bring tangible benefits to our city.

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I have read and accept IPART's Submission Policy & my submission is not Confidential

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S.R. M. Warren 28/07/15

Sent to : IPART NSW <[localgovernment@ipart.nsw.gov.au](mailto:localgovernment@ipart.nsw.gov.au)>