

From Denise and David Phillips

City of Sydney council residents

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Having lived in Newtown at our above address for the last 30 years at our above address, previously under the council of South Sydney and since 2004 under the current City of Sydney council, we wish to express very strong objections to the proposed amalgamation of the current City of Sydney council with those councils of Botany, Randwick, Waverley and Woollahra.

Our reasons are as follows:

The Sydney City Council as it exists is a very good council to live within...

- We are pensioners and do not have to pay rates, which helps us.
- It is very accessible by phone and responds promptly to requests for assistance, for information for action, eg, collection of rubbish, for repairs such as shade cloth in children's playground, for park lights.
- The mayor, Clover Moore, is a very good communicator; we get regular notices and bulletins.
- We face Hollis Park, which has been beautifully upgraded and is regularly maintained becoming a real family centre especially at weekends.
- The children's' playground is extraordinarily well used each day and at weekends.
- The Jack Haynes Reserve, corner of Burren and Wilson St, has been recently upgraded and is now a real local asset.
- Footpaths and roads across the local area are being upgraded or work is planned and of this work we are informed.
- It is a council that has a vision and a plan. It generates extensive economic activity and makes a lot of revenue for the state government. It has a very impressive infrastructure funding plan and what is planned we see emerging eg Green Square, Waterloo, Chippendale, pools, parks, food outlets, cultural events, sustainable buildings, increased childcare places.

We live in a well resourced, safe, thriving council-supported community across a 25km area where it is obvious the needs of different groups within it are

recognised and attended to, eg, aged, mothers/children, families, business, workers, and in which it is easier now to move around on foot, on bus and on trains.

Given the increase in the number of young families who now choose to stay in this council area and are so increasingly visible in their numbers with two to three children at least per household, it is very hard to understand why the state government and the department of education has been so slow to heed this expansion and to plan, fund and build new primary and secondary schools. What are their demographers doing and we have to ask is this incapacity to plan, look ahead and respond endemic across all state government departments.

Our strong objections to the proposed amalgamations are:

- We are unsure of the state government's capacity to implement council amalgamations of this size.
- What will happen to the current Council of Sydney's money in investment and infrastructure planning? Will the public projects planned be implemented or put at risk, or left on the shelf? What we currently see with an inability to plan schools to the community's satisfaction in the city and inner west, and with the threats to the farms and to the livelihoods of those farmers on the Liverpool Plains, will it be those with the loudest voices and the greatest sources of wealth, eg, coal miners, coal seam gas frackers, that get what they want. Will community opinion and involvement be downgraded? Larger councils will require larger bureaucracies. It does not necessarily follow that better management and better use of available funds follow, or that costs are lower and services, which are stretched over much larger areas, are better. More the reverse we would argue.

In conclusion,

We are not convinced that adequate evidence exists, here or overseas, that demonstrates council amalgamations of this size are successful. In terms of better management or lower costs the Council of the City of Sydney is big enough, successfully organised, managed, inclusive of its members, with numerous examples of its successful planning, growth and development. There is a lot to be lost by many residents, businesses, and cultural groups.

Finally, there is no indication of how this proposal will proceed if supported by community reaction. Will implementation be gradual? How will it be phased in, when and how? How will it be resourced? We believe that any major reorganisation of the third level of government should be seen only as party of the overhaul of the total federal structure of Australian government.

Local government is where residents, business groups, institutions, have the most direct involvement and the most direct contribution. With such a large amalgamation proposed this capacity to be directly involved will be significantly diminished and resources stretched.

There is too much of the unknown left to the imagination. City of Sydney Council is a benchmark for other councils to compare them against. Let those councils who wish to amalgamate share their arguments and develop plans/proposals to implement such a move.

There does not exist a solid basis for comparison to seriously consider the NSW state government's proposed changes to the City of Sydney's boundaries. Also their experience and expertise in planning and implementing something of this size is non-existent.

David and Denise Phillips