



Elizabeth Elenius, Convenor  
9C/2 Bowman Street  
PYRMONT NSW 2009  
Tel: 9571 9727; 0409 552 117  
Email: eelenius@bigpond.net.au

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Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal,  
Local Government Division,  
Review of Local Council Fit for the Future Proposals,  
PO Box K35,  
HAYMARKET Post Shop NSW 1240

Submission on Council Amalgamation – City of Sydney

We note the desire of the Government to create larger councils across NSW using a one-size-fits-all formula, with no other rationale than "bigger is better". Our views are as follows:

The City of Sydney is now "fit for the future", being administered as efficiently and effectively as is permitted under the Local Government Act. We currently have access to both the elected Councillors and Council officers, can make direct appeals in support of, or against resolutions at Council meetings, and submissions on the various policies and proposals that are developed, with some community input. A larger Council would necessarily reduce the direct communication between Councillors, officers and the community.

Most of the issues we have with operations and planning within the City of Sydney arise because the council does not have direct control of such matters as traffic, roads, transport and planning. In particular, we deplore the impact of large-scale developments at Barangaroo and Darling Harbour, over which the City of Sydney had absolutely no control.

Another problem faced by ratepayers is the multiplicity of ownership of public land, especially in Pyrmont. We have parks variously owned by SHFA, the Department of Planning, the City of Sydney, RMS, the Ports Authority, the Department of Finance, Services and Property, much of it unkempt and neglected. Decades have now passed and the land which should have been transferred to the City as part of the Ultimo/Pyrmont Agreement, still remains in the hands of government



agencies which have no interest in improving, or even maintaining it for public use. There are now also a multiplicity of agencies, reporting to separate Ministers, charged with planning for the future of this land, much of it on the foreshores of Sydney Harbour, including Urban Growth and the Foreshores Committee. This land must be placed under the ownership and control of the City of Sydney. The current situation is inefficient and does not serve the ratepayers of Pyrmont and Ultimo.

Several of our members have lived in the Brisbane local government area which covers much of the metropolitan area. The Brisbane City Council has been responsible for much of the city's modernisation, including the introduction of the Rivercat public transport system, efficient and separate bus lanes, with electronic notification of times of arrival of services, boardwalks, and many other features which make the city a pleasure to move around in. The Gold Coast Council has, similarly, introduced a light rail system which has transformed the areas it serves.

We can see no point in creating a larger local government area unless that increase comes with the transfer of powers to this larger entity over such matters as

- planning, including large-scale developments within a larger Council area
- ownership of public lands, including that zoned for Public Recreation which should transfer to the City of Sydney
- installation and placement of pedestrian crossings and cycleways
- installation, placement and operation of traffic lights
- power to run fare-paying bus services, especially to cover areas not covered by NSW Government or private bus services

Unless such major changes in the power relations between local and state governments accompany an increase in the size of local government area, we reject the current proposals to amalgamate the City of Sydney with councils to the south and east.

  
  
Elizabeth Elenius  
Convenor

