



Friday, May 22, 2015

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The IPART Panel,

Submissions are about to close on the proposal to amalgamate Councils and the Panel will determine whether Councils are “Fit for the Future”. An Independent Study undertaken has revealed reassuring results about the ability of Leichhardt Council to meet set criteria and, therefore, be determined “Fit” without the need to amalgamate. Underlying assumptions related to scale and capacity do not seem to be validated by evidence and raise serious questions.

1. Scale should not be used to assess a Council’s ability to serve its community. The notion that “bigger is better” cannot be demonstrated. Despite promises to the contrary, amalgamated Councils in Adelaide & Melbourne have increased rates and reduced services for their constituents. In Queensland, there is an active program of reversing amalgamations because they have not achieved expected outcomes. The criterion of a minimum population size should not be applied to decision making.
2. There should be no link between scale and strategic capacity. Evidence is scant that relative population size determines capacity to perform. This criterion should be assessed separately from judgements about scale.
3. A target for the number of anticipated Councils after this review suggests a foregone conclusion in deliberations.
4. Criterion that links a Council’s co-operation with State Government initiatives rather than representation and support for residents is prejudicial and should be abandoned.

Such criteria need to be abandoned in the interests of perceivable, open, independent and just decision making.

For these reasons, IPART needs to reconsider criteria set down for plans to amalgamate local Councils.

Yours sincerely,

Kath Hacking

