

MM-1 MAYORAL MINUTE: COUNCILS AGAINST AMALGAMATIONS

Department Executive Services

Author Initials: AT

REPORT

On 24 April 2013 the Local Government Independent Review Panel released its final discussion paper "Future Directions for NSW Local Government: Twenty Essential Steps".

The paper includes a number of findings originated from recent studies undertaken by T-Corp and other entities, and outlines a series of recommendations to be implemented in order to maintain Local Government's long term sustainability, the most prominent one being the possible amalgamation of Local Councils into regional clusters.

While the Independent Review Panel mentions mergers as a possible option for the sector, the Minister for Local Government has reiterated the State Government's view of "no forced amalgamations", opening the door, however, to voluntary amalgamations.

I, together with my fellow Councillors, and with us many other Councillors and Mayors across the State, have welcomed the Minister's confirmation that there will be no forced amalgamations, but at the same time, I do not believe voluntary mergers will be a positive option for the City of Canada Bay and many other Local Government areas.

Recently I had the opportunity to meet with the Mayors and General Managers of Burwood, Ashfield and Strathfield and we have confirmed that we are opposed to voluntary amalgamations as they do not serve our communities of interest and offer no real advantages to the local areas.

At that meeting we agreed all four Mayors will be preparing a joint submission to the Independent Review Panel, containing shared views, as well as particular issues relevant to each individual Council.

In summary, all four Councils have expressed the willingness to investigate opportunities for increased and improved resource sharing, either through SSROC or other co-ordinated frameworks.

I also feel our community needs to be aware of the proposed reforms for Local Government and should be encouraged to participate in the final round of consultation by the Independent Review Panel on 13 June 2013 at Ashfield Council.

RECOMMENDATION

1. THAT Council's position against amalgamations of any form is included in a joint submission to the Local Government Independent Review Panel, together with Ashfield, Burwood and Strathfield Councils.
2. THAT Council inform the community through the Mayor's column, newsletters and Council's website, of the discussion paper released by the Independent Review Panel and encourage residents and stakeholders to submit comments and feedback to the Panel.

3. THAT Council inform the community through the Mayor's column, newsletters and Council's website, of the upcoming community consultation session scheduled by the Independent Review Panel for 13 June 2013, 6pm-8pm, at Ashfield Council and encourage residents to participate in the session.
4. THAT Council create a common website known as saveourlocalarea.com and share all written, electronic and other media for use by all four Councils.