

# Hunters Hill Guest Column

## Baird Government's Greatest Betrayal in NSW History!

The Baird Government's gutless act of releasing its proposal to forcibly merge many NSW councils just days before Christmas and the holiday season must go down as the greatest betrayal of local communities in NSW history.

If allowed to succeed it will destroy local democracy in NSW, and create mega councils operating on a corporatised level captured by party politics.

The NSW Government's decision to merge Hunters Hill, Lane Cove and Ryde councils is an outrageous and disgraceful act.

It flies in the face of all the facts, the vast majority of community views and beliefs and their own previous election campaign promises.

Good government policy is developed on a strong evidence base delivering positive benefits for the public good.

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**THE BAIRD** Government over the last four years has disregarded all the evidence from many reports (the most recent tabled by the Upper House Committee Inquiring into Local Government), many prominent academic researchers and the lesson learnt from failed attempts to merge councils in Queensland and Western Australia.

There has been no credible detailed analysis or modelling of what these new councils will deliver in terms of financial, infrastructure and community services to justify the Government's actions.

How will their performance be measured?

In fact, the Government's

### To The POINT With ROSS WILLIAMS\*



own "Fit for the Future" process found during the IPART review that the majority of City Councils met all the essential criteria to be responsive, effective, efficient and sustainable into the future.

So what Government has now done is yet again change the goal posts by introducing an arbitrary "Scale and Capacity" requirement of 150,000 residents as the minimum size for councils.

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**MANY COUNCILS** including Hunters Hill obviously cannot meet this whimsical one size fits all approach to local governance.

This is twice the size of Mr Robert's Lane Cove State electorate so this begs the question as to why we need so many State politicians?

During the last months the Hunters Hill municipality community has spoken out loudly through the joint campaign run by Hunters Hill Council and Save Hunters Hill Municipality Coalition (SHHMC) to save our local democratic process, historic area and sense of community.

The area has been a sea of colourful ribbons, posters and banners with many residents attending the massive Save Our Councils rally in Martin Place.

You might well ask where our local member has been during all this farce and unspeakable treachery by his

government?

He has refused to meet with SHHMC co-convenors or even respond to correspondence.

In a letter sent to Mr Roberts, SHHMC asked him to support, on the floor of Parliament, constituents in retaining their local councils.

Alternatively, it asked him to resign his State seat so that the community can elect a strong independent candidate who will stand up for the electorate and who will pursue the public interest and the public good.

He has failed to adopt either course of action and has not supported the local community.

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**THE NSW** Government believes it has the power to do as it wishes but the community has the ultimate power and will vote it out of office at the next election.

In the meantime, we will maintain the rage and make cogent representations to the next stage of this process through the NSW Boundaries Commission in early 2016.

This is an ongoing battle that our local communities must and will win.

**\*ROSS WILLIAMS, Emeritus Mayor, is a former Mayor of Hunters Hill and Co-convenor of Save Hunters Hill Municipality Coalition (SHHMC) [www.facebook.com/savehuntershill](http://www.facebook.com/savehuntershill)**