

Federal Election 2016: Anti-merger protest at Turnbull's Edgecliff office before ruling on Woollahra's case

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Nick Hansen and Sean Thompson



A small but vocal crowd gathers outside Malcolm Turnbull's electorate office, campaigning against council mergers.

Protesters have again tried to draw Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull into the debate over council amalgamations just days before a critical court decision decides the future of Mr Turnbull's own council, Woollahra.

The Save Our Councils Coalition held a demonstration outside Mr Turnbull's Edgecliff electorate office this morning.

Coalition committee member Phil Jenkyn said the Prime Minister risked giving away a massive swing in the seat of Wentworth on July 2, unless he backed Woollahra Council's bid to stand alone and pressured Premier Mike Baird to back down.

"The Liberal Party will tell you it's a state issue, it's not, Mike Baird has made this a federal issue because it was done by the Liberal Party," Mr Jenkyn said.



Malcolm Turnbull will not comment on council mergers while Woollahra's case is before the court.

“There's only one Liberal Party.”

Mr Baird sacked more than 40 councils last week, merging them into 19.

But the three-way amalgamation of Woollahra, Waverley and Randwick was shelved temporarily while the government waits for a ruling on Woollahra's Land and Environment Court fight for independence — that decision is due Monday.

A number of other councils across the state with their own legal challenges will be watching the Woollahra decision closely.

Mr Turnbull's office said it was unable to comment on the issue while the case was before the court.

North Sydney Liberal MP Trent Zimmerman admitted amalgamations were an issue when he gave away a 12.84 per cent primary swing in a December by-election for the conservative seat.

“What happened to Zimmerman will happen again here,” Mr Jenkyn said.

“This is a very angry community.”

He added both Mr Turnbull's Greens and Labor opponents in Wentworth had signed a “commitment” to oppose forced council mergers.

Meanwhile, Waverley Council voted on Tuesday night to hold a formal poll on the merger.



Mr Turnbull is on the campaign trail across the country while a local council debate continues in Wentworth.

According to the Labor motion brought to council, the poll would ask residents “Do you want Waverley Municipal Council to amalgamate with another Council?”

The poll was voted through 6-5 after Liberal councillor Joy Clayton crossed the floor to side with Labor and minority councillors.

At the meeting, Labor Cr John Wakefield thanked Woollahra Council for taking the merger to court.

“Some might think this is too late and the merger is a foregone conclusion,” he said.

“This is about taking the issue of the merger to the public. We believe they have a right to have a say.”

However Waverley Mayor Sally Betts is expected to move a rescission motion opposing the poll at an extraordinary council meeting next Tuesday.

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