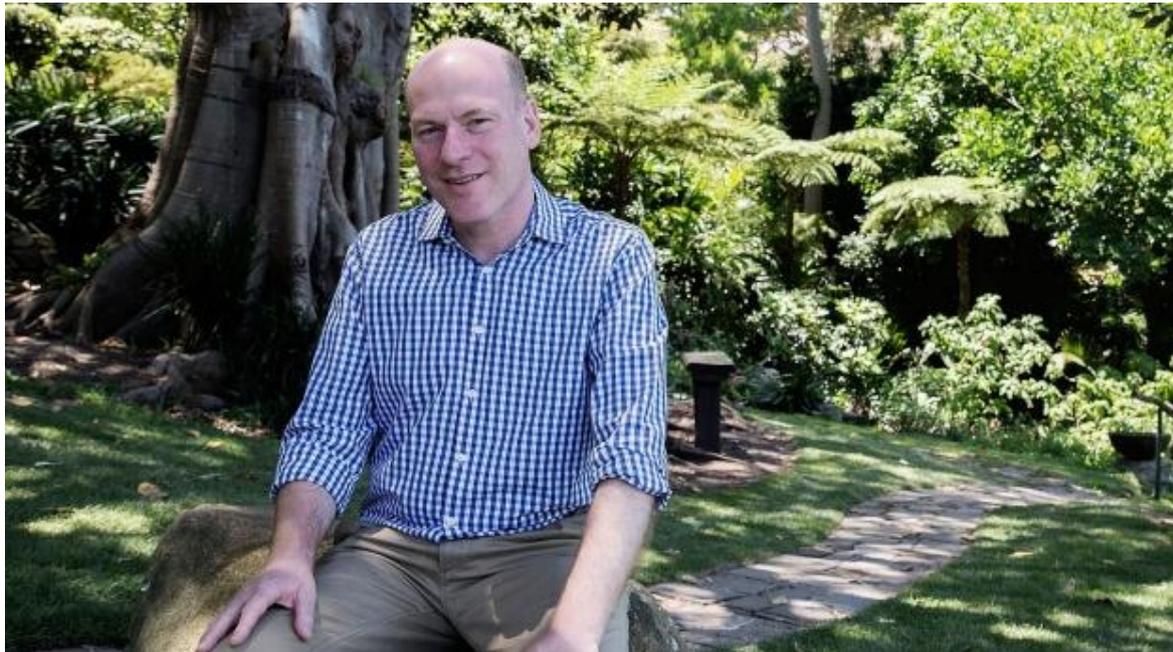


Victorious Trent Zimmerman concedes council mergers a difficulty in North Sydney

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Jacob Saulwick

City Editor



Trent Zimmerman the new member for North Sydney after winning the seat vacated by former treasurer Joe Hockey. Photo: Michele Mossop

The incoming member for North Sydney, Trent Zimmerman, has conceded the prospect of forced council amalgamations contributed to the swing against the Liberal Party on Saturday.

Mr Zimmerman claimed the seat on Saturday night, which was vacated by former treasurer Joe Hockey, but suffered a swing of over 13 per cent against him on primary votes.

"On amalgamations, I suspect there was some impact," said Mr Zimmerman, a former North Sydney councillor and current deputy chief executive of industry group the Tourism & Transport Forum.

Mr Zimmerman, who said there was some angst among locals when a sitting member retired, noted the largest swings against the Liberals were in Hunters Hill, where views about council mergers were particularly strong.

The swing will have to be assessed by the NSW government, which is poised to announce how it plans to merge councils across Sydney and NSW.

Premier Mike Baird has not ruled out forced amalgamations. He has said he would detail the government's plan to reduce council numbers by the end of the year.



Incoming North Sydney MP Trent Zimmerman. He says he is opposed to forced amalgamations of councils. Photo: James Brickwood

But Mr Zimmerman, the party's acting state president, is opposed to forced amalgamations of councils. "It is the closest level of government to the community and I would hate to see that taken away through a forced amalgamation process," he said.

Greens MP David Shoebridge, who has been campaigning against council mergers, also highlighted the swing against the Liberals in Hunters Hill.

"The smaller the council the larger the swing – that's because those councils are very close to the local residents," he said.

Separately, Mr Zimmerman said he wanted to use his time in Parliament to help develop North Sydney as a technology hub, and help improve access to public space and Sydney harbour.

He also foreshadowed further expansion of Sydney's new metro line, which will include new stations at North Sydney and Crows Nest. The new line is said to have the capacity for a train every two minutes, meaning there would be the possibility of another branch line north of the harbour.

"I have to say that in the medium term I'm very keen to see Sydney Metro extended under Military Road to Cremorne and Neutral Bay," said Mr Zimmerman, who added that Military Road was reaching its limit in terms of bus capacity.

The potential for council mergers to influence voting in North Sydney was foreshadowed in pre-polling.

<http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/victorious-trent-zimmerman-concedes-council-mergers-a-difficulty-in-north-sydney-20151206-glgkqu.html>



Liberal Candidate Trent Zimmerman at Saint Aloysius College polling booth. He was successful in taking the North Sydney seat vacated by Joe Hockey. Photo: James Brickwood