

# Hunters Hill Council approves July 31 as a day to celebrate staying independent

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Hunters Hill Council has been slammed for “pandering” to a vocal minority in agreeing to mark July 31 as “independence day” after repelling the State Government’s amalgamation plans in 2017.

Councillors voted this week to adopt a Hunters Hill Day, which will celebrate the state’s smallest council area dodging a forced merger with Ryde and Lane Cove.

However, critics say it is “unnecessary gloating” by a council which has been hijacked by special interest groups.

Gladesville community activist Russell Young said the council’s decision reflected the “unbalanced” local debate during the merger process.

“It’s an insult to those who aren’t staunch anti-amalgamation supporters for Hunters Hill Council to have adopted July 31 as a day to gloat over the State Government,” he said.



*Hunters Hill avoided merger with Ryde Council.*

*Phil Jenkyn led anti-amalgamation fight for Hunters Hill.*

“This is unnecessary gloating and a victory lap that was only supported by a small number of people.”

Council received just 28 submissions on the proposal, most of which were in support of it. However, under questioning from Deputy Mayor Ben Collins at a council meeting this week, anti-amalgamation campaigner Phil Jenkyn conceded he lobbied residents to provide feedback to council.

But he then took a swipe at the Liberal councillor, saying “I don’t remember seeing you at anything to do with saving this municipality”.

“I don’t think you played any role in fighting for this community,” he added.

Mr Jenkyn said July 31 “should be recognised” by council as a way to celebrate the independence fight.

“It’s not divisive. The only people who think it might be divisive are people driven by party politics,” he said.

Cr Collins later hit back: “This kind of pandering to special interest groups (by holding a Hunters Hill Day) alienates a large swath of the community.

“And quite frankly, it’s just ridiculous. Council needs to listen to all residents, not just the noisy ones.”

A council report said there would be “no financial impact” in holding the independence celebration.



*Phil Jenkyn and Russell Young at a heritage listing of property in Gladesville three years ago.*

“Hunters Hill has a strong sense of community and pride in the local area,” it said.

“There is a need to preserve and protect this, while at the same time welcoming new residents and providing an inclusive community.”

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