

Council merger of Hunters Hill, Lane Cove and Ryde called off

Northern District Times July 27, 2017
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PREMIER Gladys Berejiklian has abandoned the amalgamation of councils, including Ryde, Hunters Hill and Lane Councils.

She and Local Government Minister Gabrielle Upton announced at noon that the NSW government will not proceed with the forced mergers of those councils currently battling the decree in the courts.

Ms Upton said: “Due to the protracted nature of current legal challenges and the uncertainty this is causing taxpayers, those council amalgamations currently before the courts will not proceed.



Ms Berejiklian said: “the Government’s merger policy has always been about putting ratepayers first and it has become increasingly clear that certain councils are happy to continue lengthy and costly legal proceedings.

“We want to see councils focusing on delivering the best possible services and local infrastructure to their residents. That is why we are drawing a line under this issue today and ending the uncertainty.

“We are proud of what we have already achieved for local communities in the 20 merged councils, where significant savings and improvements to services and infrastructure have been delivered.”

The decision affects more than a dozen councils including Waverley, Randwick, Woollahra, Ku-ring-gai, Hornsby, Mosman, Hunters Hill, Lane Cove, Ryde, North Sydney, Willoughby, Canada Bay, Strathfield and Burwood.

Hunters Hill Mayor Richard Quinn said: “I’m feeling hopefully jubilant but I’m not jumping for joy just yet until the government advises us on how it plans to proceed legally with regard to awarding costs and that sort of stuff. The government announces a lot of things.



People at Hunters Hill were particularly strident in their campaign against mergers.

“We also call on the government to satisfy the polls and plebiscites legislation that has already passed the Upper House.”

This would give communities a say in any future forced mergers.

Save Hunters Hill Municipality Coalition co-convenor Ross Williams said: “We’re ecstatic. It’s a great victory for local communities all over the state. It’s a wonderful vindication of what we’ve been fighting for.

“However, we do have to ask is this really over? The government needs to provide details on covering court costs as well as compensation for time council staff have put into this. They need to guarantee this is the end of the matter and the issue will not return.

“It shows the government has no credibility and they’ve put the community through heartache over the last five years for no real reason.”

Ryde Mayor Bill Pickering was happy to hear the news.

“Ryde has strongly held the position — unanimously among councillors — that we’re opposed to forced amalgamations,” he said.

“I’m pleased to see our city will remain as is.



Lane Cove Council deputy mayor David Brooks-Horn, Hunters Hill mayor Richard Quinn and Ryde Mayor Bill Pickering were all opposed to a joint merger.

“We’re kicking goals in Ryde and it will be good to see that continue.”

The decision ends a merger saga that has dragged on since former Local Government Minister Don Page appointed an Independent Local Government Review Panel in March 2012.

The government effected 20 council mergers in May last year, and vowed to merge those councils fighting its proposals in the courts.

<http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/newslocal/northern-district-times/council-merger-of-hunters-hill-lane-cove-and-ryde-called-off/news-story/59d47289c8dc0354e7306ee8e21c63ef>