

NSW Government's forced amalgamation policy continues

To The POINT
with PHIL JENKYN



TONIGHT is a night of celebration for Hunters Hill.

But, this battle is not over yet – not over yet.

What has happened is this.

The merger proposal between Ryde, Hunters Hill and Lane Cove has been won – that is what we are celebrating, it can't happen.

Unless the law is changed – the Lane Cove River divides Hunters Hill from Lane Cove and Lane Cove from Ryde.

Under existing law, and I don't see it being changed for a whole lot of very good reasons – that battle has been won.

But can I alert everybody to the fact and that is this, the Liberal/National Party Government has not withdrawn its forced amalgamations policy and agenda, it is still there.

It was off the table because they were running into local government elections and they had painted themselves into a corner which they couldn't get out of, so the city councils fighting in court – their proposals were withdrawn.

Some of the country ones in court were withdrawn in February and they were withdrawn because of National Party pressure on the Government, but the agenda is still there.

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PEOPLE have been asking me – Phil, what could happen with Ryde and Hunters Hill in the future, could they come back with another proposal? – yes legally they could, they could.

We could be facing another proposal in two months, three months or if they win the next election – so the battle is not over.

You may ask me the question, oh are they really going to come back and go through the pain again – well all I can say is their behaviour in the last two years has not been rational and I have said in public, and as a lawyer I very rarely ever say this, they have been deceitful and dishonest in the public domain and that is unpardonable from my point of view – totally unpardonable.

So, the policy still exists.

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SECONDLY, what is happening just if I can cut right to the chase, the Liberal Party for the first time has endorsed candidates in Hunters Hill's 156-year history. They were selected by head office not by the local Liberal Party – by head office. You had to put your nomination into the head office.

The fact is this – that if the Liberal Party wins the local government election in Hunters Hill and gets control of Hunters Hill Council, and if they get control of Ryde Council because they have endorsed candidates in Ryde, then you will have a situation where those councillors might all happily get together one day and say 'Do we all think bigger is better, why don't we voluntarily amalgamate'. Nothing is stopping them from doing that.

What is happening now is this – you have got a local government election. It is a very important election, probably the most important one I think that there has been in our history.

If it goes the wrong way, and the community loses control over our council and it becomes dominated by a political party, then we could lose all our efforts from the last five years – must not happen.

However today is a day of celebration – I just thought I would let you know what the realities of life are – but today we are entitled to celebrate our greatest victory.

PHIL JENKYN OAM is Co-convenor of Save Hunters Hill Municipality Coalition

(Ed: Extract of a speech delivered to a function at the Deckhouse on August 28, 2017 celebrating Hunters Hill's victory over forced amalgamation and its successful court case.

In the September election the Liberal Party only had two of its endorsed candidates elected to Hunters Hill Council. The other five elected councillors are all independents.)



Phil Jenkyn OAM at the Deckhouse 28 Aug 2017

<http://www.weeklytimes.com.au/nsw-governments-forced-amalgamation-policy-continues/>