

Letters to The Weekly Times Editor 1 June 2016

MPs protest forced Council mergers

Dear Sir,

On Tuesday May 24, 2016 a peaceful protest was held at the former Marrickville Council Chambers where the state government-appointed Administrator was to conduct the first meeting of the Inner West Council.

The right to peaceful protest is an essential part of our democratic process. We support the residents who attended the meeting to peacefully voice their concerns about the sacking of their elected councils.

We attended the meeting as local Members of Parliament to stand with the communities we represent.

Also present were former local Councillors and former Mayors.

Hundreds of local residents attended the meeting and, while their opposition to the sacking of their elected councils was vocal, the vast majority acted reasonably and respectfully.

Of course, we do not condone in any way spitting or aggressive behaviour. Those types of actions have no place in peaceful protest.

It is disappointing that some media has focused on the behaviour of two people, rather than the undemocratic actions of this government which has deprived over one million people throughout New South Wales of their democratically elected representatives.

There had been an overwhelmingly response from residents in our electorates since the government announced on May 12 that it had sacked the elected councillors and forced the merger of Leichhardt, Marrickville and Ashfield councils.

For the next 16 months, when 185,000 inner west residents will be without elected local government representation, the state government will push ahead with major projects like WestConnex, Parramatta Road Urban Transformation and Bays Precinct – each of which have significant impact on our inner west communities.

It is important to note that in the government's own report, Leichhardt, Marrickville and Ashfield councils were each shown to be economically sound and 'Fit for the Future'.

Nevertheless, Premier Baird sacked the councils, imposed an unelected Administrator, and delayed democratic elections for 16 months.

We also strongly support council staff and recognise the important work that they continue to carry out for our local communities.

After Tuesday's meeting was adjourned the residents warmly acknowledged the work of the staff, thanked them for their service and gave them a round of applause.

JAMIE PARKER MP

Member for Balmain

JENNY LEONG MP

Member for Newtown

Premier broke a clear promise

Dear Sir,

Like many others I could not attend the rally on Friday but am really concerned about forced mergers.

The Premier broke a clear promise on no forced mergers, knew the Parliament would not support it so went through a bureaucratic backdoor to get what he wanted, will not release documents on the merger, failed to consider alternate models put forward by Ryde, Lane Cove and Hunters Hill to achieve economies of scale without taking the local (and heart) out of local government, has used supposed Ryde Council dysfunction as an excuse, undermined the concept of democracy itself by those in power unilaterally deciding what is best.

And all with absolutely no proof of there being a better result financially.

And the reasoning is that it is all OK.

They are all too busy to notice. We'll do it now with a lot of spin and they will all forget about it by the next election.

Really? Liberal State MPs Anthony Roberts and Victor Dominello of course knew about this. The Premier would not have proceeded without their support. That is why they are silent.

This represents a watershed for the Liberal party in this State.

What is the Liberal party going to stand for? I saw in Ryde Council some excellent Liberal Councillors, but also with some woeful one-eyed leadership.

The same is true at State level.

Will it be a party of true people—first Liberals like Charlie Lin who spoke out against over-close developer links and corrupted party processes?

Or will it be the arrogance of a party of the big-end of town and political career opportunists?

GRAEME CORDINER

Gladesville