

Mayor Quinn blasts move to stop Council taking Baird to court

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Legal action of up to \$150,000 to challenge the Baird Government's process to forcibly merge Hunters Hill, Lane Cove and Ryde was approved by Hunters Hill Council after a heated debate last Monday night.



Mayor Richard Quinn



Premier Mike Baird

The decision to fund the legal challenge was approved by five votes to one and saw angry words exchanged between Mayor Richard Quinn and Clr Zac Miles, who threatened to publically expose the Mayor for squandering ratepayer's money on action with no guarantee of success.

"For three years we've worked to bring down our deficit and in one stroke we're spending \$150,000 in unbudgeted funds on a fifty per cent chance of not winning," Clr Miles said.

"It is \$150,000 being spent on a whim.

"How many roads could be repaired with this money and how much infrastructure backlog could be tackled at a time when we find it difficult to get \$5,000 funding for an art show?

"To throw good money after bad is just ridiculous."

Mayor Quinn reprimanded Clr Miles and said that he was among councillors who had previously voted to authorise legal action.

"We had a council meeting that authorised the General Manager to pursue all legal proceedings deemed necessary and that resolution was passed unanimously by councillors, you being among them," he told Clr Miles.

"Why did you not move an amendment to limit the amount when you had an opportunity?

"This resolution has now been enacted by the General Manager, with my approval.'

The Mayor stressed that while the cost of legal action could rise to \$150,000 it was currently around \$20,000 and that councillors would be informed of any blow out in legal fees.

Other councillors were just as scathing in response to Clr Miles, who has indicated his willingness to become an advisor to a new mega council.

Councillor Dr Meredith Sheil warned that potential losses to Hunters Hill in a forced merger could be as high as \$33 million over eight years and that it is better to spend the money on court costs than on roads and infrastructure.

‘There is no reason to spend \$150,000 on improvements to your house when there is a bulldozer coming to pull it down,’ Dr Sheil said.

“What cost is this and what price do we put on this when we face a dissolution of Hunters Hill and the things we value most?”

Councillor Peter Astridge was just as scathing and said the Council had a duty to go to court to expose the sham process being used by Premier Mike Baird to forcibly merge the three neighbouring councils.

“I for one do not intend to roll over and endorse a government plan of deceit behind this greasy proposal,” he said.

“The community is not happy at all and \$150,000 is nothing, it does not even buy a playground.”

Councillor Mark Bennett said he would have accepted the forced merger if the Baird Government had been honest about its intentions and the benefits of a merger, if any.

“Treasurer Gladys Berejiklian first came out and said this will give us greater control of councils and since then this government has lied to us,” he said.

Councillor Bennett also had a shot at Lane Cove MP Anthony Roberts (a practicing Catholic) in the words of Saint Mary McKillop!

“Bad things happen when good people stay silent and I haven’t seen Lane Cove MP Anthony Roberts fighting for us since he said there would be no forced amalgamations,” Clr Bennett said.

“The whole process has been a sham.”

Former Mayor Ross Williams addressed the council meeting and said the lunacy of the government’s process has been breathtaking.

“Spending \$150,000 is a small per cent to make sure the community’s wish is followed through .. it is pursuing justice,” he said.

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