

Mike Baird's amalgamations will make voters think twice about Malcolm Turnbull

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COMMENT



Illustration: Glen Le Lievre

I suspect Malcolm Turnbull's re-election campaign will be disrupted more broadly than in the key marginal seats, thanks to Mike Baird's undemocratic council amalgamations ("Baird plan threatens PM", May 14-15). Voters now will surely wonder what a post-election Turnbull might do. I suggest that if Turnbull is re-elected he will do a "Baird" and ride roughshod over us.

Graham Lum North Rocks

The people of NSW are now reaping the benefits of voting for an oh-so-wonderful Mr Nice Guy with a winning smile, bountiful promises and comforting reassurances. So on July 2, before you answer the knocking on the door of your non-harbour-side non-mansion, consider very carefully the flash of blue tie and cold sharp steel beneath the sheep's clothing.

"Please dear voter, please vote me in?" Not by the hair on this chinny-chin-chin!

Stephen Darwen North Sydney

Tumbarumba Council was deemed fit for the future, is the winner of the Bluett Award for excellence in council administration, has a community fully behind no amalgamation, and was recommended not to be merged by the consultant, and yet will be forced to amalgamate with a council over 80 kilometres away. Totally absurd.

Oh wait. Tumbarumba is not in a marginal electorate. Mike Baird, beware of the folk from the mountains. We will not be moved.

Noelene Haslett Tumbarumba Shire councillor 2003-2008, Tumbarumba

A cornerstone of democracy is that we vote for those who spend our taxes. With the Liberals' sacking and merging of local governments this cornerstone is removed. Many are angry – but what can we do?

We wait for Mike Baird's administrators to green-light over-development. We wait for Luke Foley's promised plebiscite. But we forget that ratepayers vote for local democracy every three months. It would take only 10 per cent of ratepayers to forget to pay. A rate strike would be an administrative nightmare for the administrators. A real revenue problem. Revolutions have been fought – and won – on this principle. No taxation without representation.

Peter Greenland Summer Hill

Mike Baird advocates for increased refugee intake and in the same breath impoverishes the existing migrant suburbs of the newly announced Cumberland Council (Lidcombe, Auburn, Granville, Merrylands, Guildford), ironically targeted for refugee settlement.

The proposed merger report for Cumberland Council, while acknowledging the new council's socio-economic profile scores below the NSW and metropolitan averages, relies on KPMG's flawed brushstroke analysis that these areas match the likes of Epping.

Instead of heeding the concerns of residents and councillors, boundaries as proposed were accepted without change and revenue-raising commercial, industrial and high-rise residential hubs have been deliberately cleaved from Cumberland in order to supercharge the new Parramatta Council, a Turnbull-anointed Global City.

Taking advantage of residents' general lack of awareness to push for a legal fight, it seems the Premier has accepted inequity over inclusion and sustainability.

Inara Molinari Granville

Yes, Caroline Kades (Letters, May 14-15), Mike Baird has form when it comes to disregarding democracy. In February 2015, this government specifically amended the City of Sydney Act as part of its plot to unseat democratically elected Clover Moore.

The amendment audaciously challenges Lincoln's idea of government of the people, by the people, for the people. It does this by making corporations eligible to vote in the City of Sydney Council election. That's right, non-human, legal fiction, limited liability, for-profit entities, including those with non-Australian ownership, get to vote. And what's even more distorting and perverse, is that those businesses can get two votes via nominees, whereas actual human citizens get only one vote. This serves democracy how?

Ian Waters Surry Hills

Mike Baird's council amalgamations have something in common with his approach to biodiversity; a resolute refusal to acknowledge the importance of locality and context. The forced amalgamations seek to impose a one-size-fits-all model across the entire state and the biodiversity legislation seeks to make unique ecological communities in disparate parts of the state equivalent with its dubious environmental offset schemes.

Baird would be best to remember that there are many of us who love variety. Oh, and democracy, too.

Chris Burns Forestville

<http://www.smh.com.au/comment/smh-letters/mike-bairds-amalgamations-will-make-voters-think-twice-about-malcolm-turnbull-20160515-govgb8.html>