

Barilaro meets with council merger opponents

Forbes Advocate 25 Nov 2016

Danielle Cetinski

COUNCIL amalgamation opponents have welcomed meetings with NSW Deputy Premier John Barilaro on Friday, saying they feel they have finally been heard and alternatives could be available.



BALLOT BOX BID: Anti-amalgamation campaigners Marj Bollinger, Derek Johnson and Ros Chapman at Molong during the byelection. Photo: LYNN PINKERTON

Mr Barilaro met with Amalgamation No Thank You (ANTY) first on Friday morning, followed by Orange and Cabonne councils.

ANTY spokeswoman Marj Bollinger said he did not confirm whether Cabonne would be forced to amalgamate pending further court action, but he appreciated the information.

“We said most councils have a central town and Cabonne’s not like that – Molong and Canowindra are roughly the same size and he wasn’t aware of that,” she said.

“He said he was happy to look at alternate options if there are options out there – one might be to exclude Cabonne from the merger.”

After repeated refusals from Premier Mike Baird, former deputy premier Troy Grant and Local Government Minister Paul Toole for meetings in the past year, Mrs Bollinger said Mr Barilaro had assured the group he would speak with them again.

“People made their voices heard through the ballot box and that has to be a big wake-up call,” she said.

Mrs Bollinger said Mr Barilaro told ANTY the matter would have to come to him first.

“From that, we concluded from he’s the one to stop it going ahead,” she said.

“He said he was happy to look at alternate options if there are options out there”- ANTY spokeswoman Marj Bollinger

Cabonne mayor Ian Gosper said he, deputy mayor Lachie MacSmith and acting general manager Stephen Harding also met with Mr Barilaro, which he described as a productive meeting.

“He’s meeting with quite a few other people around the Cabonne region and we can only hope he’s listening,” he said.

Orange mayor John Davis and general manager Garry Styles met with the deputy premier and while the council has agreed to be part of a merger, Cr Davis interpreted the meeting as mending bridges after the Orange byelection.

“I’ve got to congratulate him on doing it so quickly and facing the people,” he said.

“It hasn’t been a recent phenomenon, but there’s been five, six, or seven years of gradual disconnection with the community.”

He said the discussion centered on growth and how to do things better.

<http://www.forbesadvocate.com.au/story/4318022/better-late-than-never/>