Berejiklian's claims on council mergers should be tested

Premier Berejiklian says she "listens to the people" but on Tuesday she showed how little she cares for them ("Berejiklian braces for byelection backlash", February 15).

Her solution for the council merger issue was that she had "overwhelming feedback" to continue the process.

The "overwhelming feedback" from Strathfield residents is stop our merger. The Liberal Party lost the seat of Strathfield last time because of council mergers and they are not getting it back for a long time because they just do not care.

Neither is there "overwhelming feedback" from amalgamated Pittwater, Holroyd, Leichhardt and country towns like Tumbarumba, Gundagai, Bombala, Dubbo, Gloucester Shire and Harden.

Their administrators brag about financial savings of millions of dollars to save their jobs. How many services have been slashed?

Let's have independent or performance audits by the Auditor General of these administrators' claims.

The government has already spent $373 million on council reforms – how come they could afford that? They could have saved all that cost by leaving mergers well alone and abandoning council mergers and dedicated part of that money to disaster relief in the bush.

Nella Hall Strathfield
The NSW Premier is using completely flawed arguments to justify forcing council mergers in Sydney.

It is apparent that this is being done to facilitate the imposition of high-density policies unwanted by the broader community (but wanted by developers). Contrary to "addressing the city’s housing affordability crisis" the imposition will exacerbate it.

As high-density policies were implemented over two decades so did previously stable house prices increase. This also happened in other parts of the world.

There is no credible evidence that financial benefits will result from merging the councils currently fighting the proposals in the courts. The KPMG report (partially withheld) advocating amalgamations did not reveal the full extent of assumptions and did not take into account the highly variable conditions applicable to individual councils.

The new Premier's announcement does not augur well for the post-Baird era.

Tony Recsei Warrawee

What have local government amalgamations got to do with addressing the "housing affordability" crisis in Sydney?

Seeking to blame local government for decades of failure by state and federal government to make sure there is enough public and private housing available to meet the needs of a growing population is simply dishonest.

While the decision to forcibly amalgamate local government in Sydney may not be about Premier Berejiklian "personally", it is most certainly about the property developers who still run government in NSW, and their desire to roll over the top of local residents who should have a big say in the suburbs in which they live, and certainly that their communities have the schools, parks, public transport, health facilities and jobs that ensure a decent quality of life.

Colin Hesse Marrickville

Gladys Berejiklian has proved that "democracy" is really just another form of corruption. Moreover, her claims that amalgamated councils have claimed to be happy is mischievous as they are all run by Liberal Party administrators.

The NSW Liberal Party has just shown how transparent their total disdain for honest public discussion is.

Gladys is in for a huge fight!

Suzie Gold Castlecrag
Before suggesting that council amalgamations are not going ahead in the bush whilst proceeding in the city, I suggest your correspondents (Letters, February 15) take a drive to Gundagai or Tumbarumba and have a quiet chat with the "country folk" there. Actually, it won't be quiet.

Bob Guy Cootamundra

Our Premier has said that council mergers in the Sydney area are necessary to address the city's housing affordability crisis and improve development approval times. This is nothing but political spin.

Approvals are running at close to double actual dwelling construction levels, so the merging of councils will have little or no effect on housing supply.

Housing demand, on the other hand, is being increased by national and international investors who, in many cases, deliberately leave their new apartments empty – the apartments are simply a place for investors to park their money and watch their investment appreciate.

If our Premier is serious about the housing affordability crisis she should support affordable housing.

Marie Clifton-Bassett Castlecrag

What a delight to have a strong, intelligent woman as Premier who is prepared to risk her position by standing up for her council amalgamation plan to assist infrastructure and affordable housing for the future.

Am I the only resident in Hunters Hill that is prepared to agree with amalgamation?

Christine Flannery Hunters Hill

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Going it alone with Gladys

Christine Flannery (Letters, February 16th) ponders whether she's the only resident in Hunters Hill who is prepared to agree with amalgamation?

Christine, after reading all the other correspondence on the Letters page, I suspect you might be the only resident in NSW who agrees with amalgamation and Gladys Berejiklian.

Rose Panidis Graceville Qld