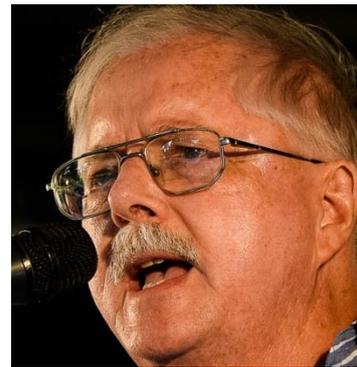


Council elections in September but axe hangs over candidates heads

The Weekly Times April 18, 2017

Local Government elections will be held in Hunters Hill, Lane Cove and Ryde on Saturday September 9 but the Berejiklian Government could sack our democratically elected councillors within weeks of the vote.



Hunters Hill Mayor Richard Quinn Former Ryde Mayor Jerome Laxale Save Hunters Hill Phil Jenkyn

Hunters Hill Mayor Richard Quinn raised the spectre of a sham election followed by the forced merger of the three councils, should Hunters Hill lose its legal case before the Court of Appeal.

“You could have a scenario where a month after being elected we are no longer councillors, absolutely, if our court case is lost or unresolved,” he said.

“The State Government has not ruled out a forced merger and even if we win our case the government can start the whole forced amalgamation process again within weeks.

“So why spend time and money on an election campaign if you’re a candidate and you are only going to get shafted at the end of it?”

“This has been an unholy mess from day one and it tells you about the government’s motivation and about its attitude to democracy.”

Former Ryde Mayor Jerome Laxale has called on Premier Berejiklian to call off the forced merger before the council election.

“It costs half a million dollars to pay for an election in Ryde alone and it makes no sense to spend this huge amount of ratepayers money and then sack us when the whole idea behind forced mergers is to save ratepayers money,” he said.

“I can see why a candidate wouldn’t want to spend money on a campaign if they are going to be sacked a month later and I don’t think the government will do it, but I nonetheless encourage as many candidates as possible to run because we’ve got to stand up and fight to stop it.

“More than that, I want the community to punish the Liberals at the ballot box and elect an anti-merger council.”

The election news comes amid a move from the Hunters Hill Branch of the Liberal Party to run endorsed Liberal candidates for the first time.

Mayor Quinn – who was elected as an independent – said he didn’t want to buy into local politics.

“To be frank, I’ve got more important and immediate issues to consider, such as the urgent remediation of radioactive waste in Nelson Parade and more important outcomes to achieve for the people of Hunters Hill,” he said.

He did give his support to a referendum to be held in Hunters Hill on polling day to ask voters if they want Hunters Hill to be forcibly merged with Lane Cove and Ryde.

“The government could, of course, ignore the result of a referendum because there’s nothing binding in a referendum but what it would do is give us a popular mandate against a forced merger.

“All of us would accept the outcome and I believe that if the government was genuine about giving people a voice, it would fund it.”

Former Mayor Laxale rubbished rumours that the government would be less likely to abolish our councils if compliant Liberals were elected in September with a pro-government agenda.

“They already have a Liberal majority in Ryde and Lane Cove and that hasn’t stopped the government and I really don’t think you’re going to get Liberals in Ryde going out saying elect us to prevent a merger.”

Save Hunters Hill Municipality Coalition spokesman Phil Jenkyn OAM said the Liberals would be fools to run candidates in Hunters Hill.

“If the Liberal Party thinks it is a good idea to expose people who ratted on our community then fine, we will expose them,” he said.

“It would be the kiss of death for any candidate who would want to run under a Liberal logo in Hunters Hill.”

<http://www.weeklytimes.com.au/council-elections-in-september-but-axe-hangs-over-candidates-heads/>