

Council amalgamation: Councils fighting NSW Government against forced amalgamation join forces for open letter to Premier Mike Baird

The Daily Telegraph 25 August 2016
Hornsby Advocate Jake McCallum



Mayors and councillors from seven local government areas around NSW facing forced amalgamations have called upon Premier Baird to suspend his ‘undemocratic’ merger program.

COUNCILS being forced into amalgamation had no sympathy for Premier Mike Baird after breaking his back — demanding an urgent meeting on forced mergers.

- [Price of Ku-ring-gai Council’s legal battle revealed](#)
- [Liberal Mayor Cheryl Szatow describes Premier Mike Baird as a ‘teenage vandal’ over mergers](#)
- [Ku-ring-gai and Hornsby Councillors keep jobs for now as legal proceedings hold up forced merge](#)

Last Wednesday, Mayors fighting forced mergers across the state joined forces in an attempt to convince the premier to reconsider the decision, as they prepare for decisions to be handed down in the Land and Environment Court.

Elected officials from Ku-ring-gai, Mosman, Hunters Hill and Strathfield along with regional counterparts from Cabonne, Oberon and Shellharbour councils worked together to develop an open letter to the Premier urging him to reconsider what councils have described as the ‘undemocratic’ merger program.



Councils requested Mike Baird to respond to the open letter in a week. (AAP Image/Joel Carrett)

“As the democratically elected leaders of over a quarter of a million residents and dozens of communities in both rural and urban New South Wales, we are disturbed by the processes adopted in the recent inquiries into the proposals to forcibly amalgamate councils,” the collective mayors said in the letter.

“We request that you respond to the wishes of our communities and your citizens by suspending the threat of forced amalgamations for all councils in NSW for the immediate future.

“These inquiries undertook no polling of local communities and the Delegate reports largely ignored the overwhelming majority of articulate and deeply felt submissions opposed to the proposals. In our view this process was not democratic or fair.”



Mayors and councillors fighting the amalgamation.

The mayors also requested a meeting with the Premier and Cabinet to “hear our concerns first hand that the process to date has been undemocratic and, importantly, to discuss alternative ways of meeting your Government’s strategic objectives”.

Ku-ring-gai Mayor Cheryl Szatow showed her support in the open letter to Mr Baird.

“Ku-ring-gai Council is firmly opposed to the forced amalgamation of councils and we welcome the initiative of Mosman Council that brings our concerns directly to the Premier,” Cr Szatow said.



Ku-ring-gai Mayor Cheryl Szatow at an anti-amalgamation forum.

Hunters Hill Mayor Richard Quinn said the think tank session was a positive step forward in requesting talks with the NSW Government.

“Reports and evidence being released from New Zealand have questioned the decision for their government to forcibly amalgamate councils, after a review was conducted over the past 12 months,” Cr Quinn said.

“Auckland Council amalgamations were a figurehead for research conducted by KPMG to show the positive impacts of amalgamation — but new reports suggest it was not the right move.”

<http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/newslocal/hornsby-advocate/council-amalgamation-councils-fighting-the-nsw-government-against-forced-amalgamation-join-forces-for-open-letter-to-premier-mike-baird/news-story/82d22229da4fefdb9b14c7ec16848900>