

Stuff ups and failures continue to dog Baird's forced amalgamation agenda

DAVID SHOEBRIDGE · TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2016



In an embarrassing outcome for the Baird Government, the Land and Environment Court has identified multiple legal defects in the amalgamation process for 6 Sydney Councils of Strathfield, Burwood and Canada Bay, and North Sydney, Mosman and Willoughby councils.

The Court's finding means the Baird government cannot rely on the delegates reports to force mergers of these councils.

While 6 councils are protected from immediate amalgamation by this court finding the cases regarding the forced amalgamation of three councils, Hunters Hill, Lane Cove and Ryde, were not successful.

It is highly likely that the majority of these matters will now proceed to the Court of Appeal where the legal challenge by Woollahra Council remains outstanding.

Greens MP and Local Government Spokesperson David Shoebridge said:

“This is an embarrassing blow for the Baird Government with the Land and Environment Court finding there were serious defects in reports relied upon by the Baird government to try and force the amalgamation of six Sydney councils.

“When a government tries to do a job on local communities and cut legal corners and rush through an undemocratic process it is no wonder they trip up.

“This means that the amalgamation of Strathfield, Burwood and Canada Bay, as well as North Sydney, Mosman and Willoughby councils can’t proceed until the delegates have rewritten their reports. After that the entire mess has to be reconsidered by the Boundaries Commission and the Minister.

“While a number of councils have also had their cases dismissed, it is by no means the end of the road for these councils and we are likely to see the majority of cases play out in the Court of Appeal.

“These councils should be congratulated for standing up for local democracy, and recognising that their residents and ratepayers deserve fare more than Baird’s undemocratic forced amalgamations

“Communities will not just give up on their local councils and they will continue to fight to keep their councils independent and genuinely local regardless of the pressure from Mike Baird.

“The Greens are committed to ensuring that residents, not Mike Baird, have the final say on the make-up of their local council through a binding plebiscite.” Mr Shoebridge said.

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