

# NSW ALP leader Luke Foley pledges to ‘de-merge’ councils after government’s amalgamations backflip

The Daily Telegraph July 29, 2017

Linda Silmalis



- [Council merger backflip splits Liberals](#)

LABOR leader Luke Foley has used his keynote address at the NSW ALP State conference to pledge to “de-merge” councils in a bold bid to win back disaffected voters.

The pledge came two days after [an about-face by Premier Gladys Berejiklian](#) who declared an end to planned mergers for a raft of Sydney councils engaged in legal action, including Mosman, Willoughby, Woollahra and Waverley.

Mr Foley wants the State government to conduct a plebiscite with voters participating in the upcoming local government elections to vote whether they want their council to remain merged.

Should the government fail to do so, Mr Foley said a Labor government would seek a local vote to do so.

“Two days ago, the premier flew the white flag on forced council mergers,” he said.



*NSW Labor Party Leader Luke Foley with wife Edel and children at the NSW State Labor Conference*

“We’ve won a big battle, but the war is not over.

“Hundreds of thousands of people live in council areas forced into mergers - there is a better way. Labor will allow local votes, plebiscites, on demerging these councils”.

Delivering a rousing keynote address to the party faithful gathered at Sydney Town Hall today, Mr Foley set out his plan to win back voters who left the party six year ago, while unveiling a five-point plan to protect vulnerable workers.

Employers found guilty of deliberately ripping off workers will face jail terms under the plan, while a licensing scheme would be established for labour hire companies.

Mr Foley said he would also legislate to protect Sunday penalty rates.

The [move follows claims of underpayment by workers at businesses such as 7-Eleven, Dominos and Pizza Hut.](#)

In a clear sign Labor plans to fight the Coalition on cost-of-living issues, Mr Foley said the plan was in addition to a ban on developers from becoming councillors, launching an “unprecedented” school building program and ensuring children have a minimum of 15 hours of “affordable” pre-school education per week.

Mr Foley also used the conference to mock a Coalition government pledge that

“prices would not go up” after the privatisation of electricity, while also pledging to “re-regulate” electricity companies to ensure a better deal for consumers.

Earlier, NSW ALP general secretary Kaila Murnain received rousing applause as she declared the party in “campaign mode” with head office unlocking funds for every seat in its fight to retain power at both State and Federal level.



*Mr Foley gave a rousing keynote address to the party faithful today.*

“The campaign begins today for a Shorten Labor government and a Foley Labor government in NSW,” she said.

“Labor in NSW is to immediately go on campaign footing.

“There is one thing that these two awful, rotten to the core governments have in common - they are in disarray. Mark my works - we will see them off.”

Ms Murnian received strong applause after noting female representation in the party had grown to 43 percent.

Debate began early on the move to allow former Labor right-wing powerbroker Graham Richardson to deliver a key address at the conference, with the Left calling for the party not to move back to the “pre-2011 culture” that led to the party’s election losses.

“Graham Richardson was an old warrior of the Cold War Labor Party,” a left delegate said.

“Back when you did whatever it took.

“We do not want to go back to the culture of pre-2011.”

<http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/nsw/nsw-alp-leader-luke-foley-pledges-to-demerge-councils-after-governments-amalgamations-backflip/news-story/beb6f0d4d0a03e2cac0200fae41f0b7a>