

# Demerger groups merge in lead-up to state election

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**Save Tumburumba Shire, pictured taking their demerger case to Premier Gladys Berejiklian, has joined forces with Gundagai Council in Exile.**

Gundagai Council in Exile met last Wednesday night to discuss their ongoing campaign to see the Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council demerged.

Discussed at the meeting was the recommendation in the Council's draft Operational Plan, currently on public exhibition, that a 5.5 per cent rate rise be implemented, four years in a row, from 2020/21. This equates to a rate rise over that period of time of at least 25 per cent.

Under government policy, newly-merged councils had their rate paths frozen for four years from the date of merger. This period will end in 2020.

"From my personal point of view, I have considerable concern about where the financial position of the council is, and what the rates in the future will be for Gundagai people," said Gundagai Council in Exile chair, Dr Paul Mara.

"This merger is not working. Three directors at the council have resigned in the last six weeks – this must tell us something is not right. A host of consultants have been employed since amalgamation – so much for improved efficiency and cost savings. "The ratepayers clearly want

transparency about the financial management and the financial situation at the council, and they're not getting clarity on that."

Gundagai Council in Exile has joined forces with fellow anti-merger group Save Tumbarumba Shire. In their fight to have their respective Councils demerged, the two groups say they are set to target marginal seats in the lead up to the next state election. High on their target list is the seat of Monaro, held by Deputy Premier John Barilaro. Voters will go to the polls on Saturday, March 23, 2019.

Representatives from the two committees recently met at Tumbarumba to share and co-ordinate activities. The groups agreed to draw in other city, rural and regional groups fighting for demerger, in a coordinated and targeted campaign.

President of Save Tumbarumba Shire Lucy Henderson said marginal seats will be targeted with letter drops. "These letter drops will be highlighting the many failings of the current government," Ms Henderson said. "We had a massive swing in Tumbarumba against the Federal Liberal/National government at the last election. Then the slogan was 'Liberals Last'.

The NSW State election options are preferential, so the slogan may well be 'Liberals/Nationals Not At All'." She said both groups reported many ongoing problems with their respective merged councils, two years after the sacking of their elected council representatives. "High among these issues was that of the deteriorating financial situation in both the Cootamundra and Tumut dominated councils," Ms Henderson said.

"It was also noted that all political parties, with the exception of the Liberals and Nationals, had agreed, in many cases in writing, to organise local plebiscites when the Berejiklian government is removed from office, and, if desired, a demerger would be facilitated. "We know there are a number of instances in other states where demerging has successfully occurred."

<http://twintowntimes.com.au/2018/06/ttt-free-online-demerger-groups-merge-in-lead-up-to-state-election/>