

Six Gundagai residents meet with Premier Gladys Berejiklian

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UP IN ARMS: Gundagai residents rallying prior to the merger announcement almost 12 months ago, are preparing an anniversary rally next Friday, May 12 from 12noon until 1pm in Carberry Park. Picture: Contributed

A 40-minute face-to-face meeting with Premier Gladys Berejiklian and Minister for Local Government Gabrielle Upton has fuelled the determination of Gundagai's Council in Exile to fight the merger with Cootamundra.

Almost 12 months on from the proclamation turning Cootamundra and Gundagai Shire Councils into the combined Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council, angst at the decision has not let up.

Gundagai residents were convinced prior to the proclamation they wanted to stand alone and former mayor Abb McAlister said nothing in the past 12 months has convinced him that stance should change.

At the meeting with Ms Berejiklian, the six representatives from Gundagai told her they were not seeing any of the promised benefits and efficiencies of amalgamating.

They also reiterated what they believe will be a lack of local representation for Gundagai come council election time on September 9.

“We will be lucky to get a third on the council,” Mr McAlister told the *Cootamundra Herald*.

He was heartened by the premier and minister’s readiness to listen to their cause.

“She certainly heard us out,” Mr McAlister said.

He is laying the blame for the fact the councils are still merged at the feet of former administrator Christine Ferguson.

Mr McAlister said had she not cancelled funding for a court case, Cootamundra and Gundagai would have been in the same basket as other councils conducting legal action who were told by the premier their respective mergers would not proceed.

“She (Ms Berejiklian) knows what we want and we are sure she will consider it,” Mr McAlister said.

Meanwhile, he said this week’s announcement Interim General Manager Ken Trethewey will be replaced next month, on the back of Ms Ferguson’s resignation last month does not appease detractors of the merger.

“Changing the general manager or the administrator won’t fix our problems,” Mr McAlister said.

Next Friday, May 12, Gundagai residents will again take their message to the street holding an ‘anniversary rally’ to mark 12 months since the amalgamation.

A number of politicians, including Ms Upton have been invited to speak at the rally and while Mr McAlister is not holding out a lot of hope the minister will be there, he is confident of a good showing from Gundagai residents still unhappy with the merger and determined to have their point heard.

<http://www.cootamundraherald.com.au/story/4642458/gundagai-committed-to-de-merger/>