

High Court decision on forced mergers welcomed

The Weekly Times May 17, 2017 |

BY OUR CIVIC ROUNDSMAN

The High Court decision to hear Woollahra Council's appeal against a forced merger with Waverley and Randwick was welcomed at a media conference held by Deputy Opposition leader Michael Daley outside the Ryde Civic Centre on Friday morning.



The Civic Centre is the heart of democracy in Ryde and hosted a media conference on Friday with (from left) Clr Jerome Laxale, Deputy Opposition Leader Michael Daley, Opposition Local Government spokesman Peter Primrose, Campbelltown MP Greg Warren and Ernest Wong MLC. TWT on-the-spot PHOTO

Mr Daley said the High Court decision and the recent Court of Appeal's verdict in favour of Ku-ring-gai Council's case against the process used to justify a forced merger with Hornsby vindicates legal and other actions taken by our local councils.

Friday's High Court announcement in the Woollahra case also saw Randwick Council go ahead with a legal appeal against the proposed forced merger with Waverley.

Mr Daley said the Berejiklian government only has itself to blame for the mess its in.

"This is what happens when cheats get caught out," he said.

“These forced mergers were never designed for efficiency as the Liberal government claims but have always been about consolidating power in its own hands, it has all been a gerrymander!

“Where there have been mega councils it has been a disaster for local communities and community services because the government appointed administrators are not connected with communities, but with this totalitarian regime.”

Shadow Local Government Minister Peter Primrose described the forced mergers as “the biggest dog’s breakfast the State has ever seen” and he said he is not surprised the Berejiklian government has a legal fight on its hands.

“The government has failed its own laws, it has not even released the KPMG (financial) report it used to support these forced mergers,” he said.

“Whole communities are now fighting against forced mergers and still this Berejiklian government can’t get it through their heads that it is up to local communities to decide how they want to be represented and why they want local issues decided by local people.”

Campbelltown MP Greg Warren said he is appalled the Berejiklian government will not hold a “fair dinkum” parliamentary debate on forced mergers.

“All we’ve seen are the jackboots and the ideology,” he said.

Ryde Labor candidate Cllr Jerome Laxale said ratepayers in Ryde have suffered in the year since the forced mergers were announced.

“We’ve seen a significant loss of staff in Ryde and it now takes around 100 days to get a Development Application approved in Ryde.

“Nor can we spend money on any important project because the government has capped spending for councils under the threat of administration.

“All we’ve done is waste ratepayer’s money on a failed publicity campaign against forced mergers when that money could have been better spent on parks, playgrounds and the Top Ryder bus service.”

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