

Huge rally on forced mergers anniversary

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Premier Gladys Berejiklian was warned to back off or be thrown out, at one of the biggest protest rallies against the State Government's forced council mergers outside NSW Parliament on Friday.

The rally marked the first anniversary of when the forced mergers were announced and was attended by angry ratepayers from Hunters Hill and Lane Cove whose councils are under the threat of a forced merger with Ryde.

It heard that forced merged mega councils are falling dramatically short of cost savings touted by the government and that there is growing opposition to forced mergers in all threatened Sydney and regional areas.

"This is becoming a successful people's revolution so I say; Up The People and Keep Fighting," Christian Democrats Leader The Reverend Fred Nile told the rally.

Rev Nile's fighting spirit was cheered by people at the rally who warned Premier Berejiklian to call off the forced mergers or be thrown out of power at the March election.

The Greens leader David Shoebridge took up their rallying cry.

"Today the High Court, in its decision to hear Woollahra's case against a forced merger has delivered a first birthday present to the Berejiklian government for a con job," he said.

“We are now seeing more and more people standing up to this bullying Premier and right across politics we are in this together and in this to win .. and that’s everyone but Berejiklian and her shaky coalition.”

Orange MP Phil Donato from the Shooters and Farmers Party was at the rally and told *The Weekly Times* that his extraordinary success in a blue ribbon coalition seat can be repeated across Sydney.

“There are many reasons why the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party are against forced mergers but one reason I’d like to emphasise is that this is about local jobs and local services,” he said.

“Your local council is not only your largest local employer but it also employs local people with local expertise and creates services that specifically meet local needs.

“We can’t afford to lose these jobs and services and this is why this is such a big issue in the bush.”

The rally heard the Premier Berejiklian marked the first anniversary with a defiant vow to push through the forced amalgamations but Save Hunters Hill Municipality Coalition spokesman Phil Jenkyn was equally defiant.

“Frankly I don’t care what Gladys Berejiklian says, if she wants to destroy the Liberal Party and bring her own State MPs down with her, then let her go ahead and do it.”

<http://www.weeklytimes.com.au/huge-rally-on-forced-mergers-anniversary/>