

# Hunters Hill ratepayers to vote on Ryde forced merger

The Weekly Times 21 June 2017

**An opinion poll on Hunters Hill's proposed forced merger with Ryde and Lane Cove will be put to ratepayers at this September's local government election.**



*Mayor Richard Quinn*



*Councillor Dr Meredith Sheil*

The Weekly Times can exclusively reveal that Hunters Hill Council is ready to endorse the opinion poll at this Monday night's Council meeting after it received advice on the poll question from the Office of Local Government last week.

The poll question is expected to be:

"Do you support the amalgamation of Hunters Hill Council with the City of Ryde Council and Lane Cove Council as proposed by the New South Wales Government?"

The Weekly Times can also reveal that councillors are expected to ask Mayor Richard Quinn and General Manager Barry Smith to prepare the case for the YES and NO vote.

The referendum question was debated at last week's Council meeting but a motion by Clr Dr Meredith Sheil to adopt the foreshadowed question was withdrawn over concerns by Clr Zac Miles, Clr Gary Bird and Clr Mark Bennett the Office of Local Government hadn't supplied advice on the question.

Mayor Quinn will now seek a unanimous vote on the question at the upcoming meeting.

"We sought advice from the Electoral Commission which referred us to the Office of Local Government and the advice we received is that all four possible questions we drafted are acceptable," he said.

"We've sought advice on this because we are following due process and because we can hardly be critical of the government (in court) for not following due process if we don't follow due process ourselves.

“I do want to make it clear that we voted on May 8, unanimously, to hold an opinion poll and that this is our initiative to take advice.”

An independent opinion poll recently conducted by the Council found that more than 80 per cent of ratepayers oppose the proposed forced merger.



*Save Hunters Hill Phil Jenkyn*



*Former Mayor Ross Williams*

The local community has also held a number of protest meetings over what it regards as the destruction of the historic council, its heritage protection plans and the community services it provides.

There are also significant concerns about the loss of local democracy if the council is forcibly merged with Ryde whose overwhelming population would reduce Hunters Hill's representation to only one councillor on a mega bureaucracy.

Arising concerns about “push polling” Hunters Hill's opposition to the proposed forced mergers as well as “government propaganda” in favour of it have also been discussed at Hunters Hill Council meetings.

Save Hunters Hill Municipality spokesman Phil Jenkyn said it was appropriate to have the YES and NO case delegated to the Mayor and the General Manager to put to councillors.

“That's the way it should be and it should contain no lies, which is what the State Government has been doing in our communities, based on spin and deceit.”

Former Mayor Ross Williams said the government would be hard pressed to put an acceptable YES case.

“It can't find any evidence to support its assertion we'd be better off by this,” he said.

“In fact I think Liberal Party members in Hunters Hill should do what Emeritus Mayor Sue Hoopmann did and that's resign from the Party.

<http://www.weeklytimes.com.au/hunters-hill-ratepayers-to-vote-on-ryde-forced-merger/>