

Hunter's Hill's crucial week for survival

BY OUR CIVIC ROUNDSMAN

This week could be the most significant week in the history of Hunters Hill, says the Save Hunters Hill Municipality Coalition.

Hunters Hill Council is currently putting its case against a forced merger with Ryde and Lane Cove to the Court of Appeal, against a previous Land and Environment Court ruling.

Buoyed by last week's decision by the Court of Appeal to uphold Kuring-gai Council's appeal, Coalition spokesman Phil Jenkyn OAM said the Kuring-gai case should set a precedent in Hunters Hill's favour.

"Our case is the same as Kuring-gai's and more, these are crucial days for Hunters Hill, Lane Cove and Ryde, there's no doubt about that," Mr Jenkyn said.

"Like Kuring-gai we are saying there has been a lack of fairness in the forced merger process and that proper process has not been followed, particularly in relation to the State Government not releasing the KPMG report it used to justify forced mergers on cost saving grounds.

"We also believe we've got stronger legal arguments."

These arguments include a lack of

a clear and common geographical area for a proposed mega council, as the three councils areas are disconnected by waterways.

Hunters Hill and Ryde are further divided by heritage, environmental and cultural differences as defined by Hunters Hill's Development Control Plan and Local Environment Plan.

The Weekly Times has published the results of Independent surveys which show that more than 80 per cent of ratepayers oppose a forced merger and this newspaper extensively reported on the Boundary Commission hearing at the Hunters Hill Sailing Club where more than eight out of every ten speakers opposed the forced merger.

A Court of Appeal ruling by a panel of judges is not expected this week and Mr Jenkyn has called on Premier Gladys Berejiklian to call the forced merger off - on democratic grounds - prior to the Court ruling.

"The court will only hear a legal case and it is up to the Premier to acknowledge that the great major-



TWT-on-the-spot-photo

ity of ratepayers do not want a merger and if she wants to do the right thing she should back off now."

Woollahra Council's case before the High Court in Canberra is scheduled for April 12.