

Lane Cove Council to poll residents on continuing amalgamation fight

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RESIDENTS will be polled for their opinion on amalgamations at Lane Cove Council's elections in September.



Cr Scott Bennison wants to poll Lane Cove residents about amalgamations

In a motion put up at Monday's meeting, the council resolved to poll residents on two questions: whether they want Lane Cove to amalgamate with Hunters Hill and Ryde councils; and should the amalgamation proceed, would they support the de-amalgamation of Lane Cove if this choice was available?

Mover Cr Scott Bennison said the whole merger proposal "has been a bit of a dog's breakfast".

"Given that the party I'm a member of at the state level is pushing this and I'm not supporting them on this issue, the decision becomes then as a councillor ... you either accept what the government wants to do, back away from it because it's all too hard, or you fight," he said.

"I want to fight because I think it's worth fighting for."



Lane Cove Council is proposed to merge with Hunters Hill and Ryde

Cr Bennison said he had received a letter from shadow minister for local government Peter Primrose indicating that when Labor return to power in the State Government, they would put in place a “transparent mechanism to enable the voluntary de-amalgamation of councils” if they could show 20 per cent support from residents and the council’s financial sustainability.

The poll would be conducted by the NSW Electoral Commission during the September 9 council elections, with residents given an additional ballot asking them to write yes or no in response to the questions.

The poll is not compulsory or binding, but would provide guidance to the council.

If a majority of residents support the merger, the council resolved to withdraw from any legal actions against the proposal.

Meanwhile, the council has also committed to continuing its opposition, voting to seek special leave to appeal to the High Court, should their current Supreme Court appeal be unsuccessful.

The vote was supported by all councillors except Mayor Deborah Hutchens, deputy mayor Mark Gold and Cr David Brooks-Horn, who voted against it, and Cr Soo-Tee Cheong, who was away.

Cr Hutchens said she chose not to support the motion as she was “concerned about the cost to ratepayers who have not been consulted on whether to proceed with further legal action”.



Lane Cove Mayor Deborah Hutchens did not vote in support of continuing the fight against amalgamation.

“The State Government has had numerous opportunities to reconsider their position on forced mergers and they have made no attempt to back down,” she said.

<http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/newslocal/north-shore/lane-cove-council-to-poll-residents-on-continuing-amalgamation-fight/news-story/618f90969d6768a36f9ba4a8009e3e97>