

Liberal MP blasts Baird's dishonest forced mergers for election loss!

THE WEEKLY TIMES July 20, 2016

BY OUR CIVIC ROUNDSMAN

A Sydney Liberal MP who was defeated at the Federal Election has taken a huge swipe at Baird's forced mergers which he described as dishonest and crude and resulted in his defeat.

MP Nick Varvaris was beaten by Labor's indigenous female MP and former NSW Deputy Labor Leader Linda Burney in the Southern Sydney Seat of Barton with a three per cent swing.



Nick Varvaris former Federal MP



State Premier Mike Baird

Varvaris's huge personal popularity in his St George area based seat kept the swing lower than it might have been but he angrily admits Baird's forced merger of local Kogarah, Hurstville and Botany councils into a Georges River mega council was crude, dishonest, political arrogance.

"After four years of what the State Government dishonestly portrayed as consultation, Mike Baird has crudely rammed through amalgamations that will provide nothing but personal political benefit to a small cabal," he said.

"The contempt that Mike Baird and the NSW Government have shown towards the electorate is nothing short of breathtaking and displays how out of touch they collectively are."

The loss of Barton is a personal indictment of Baird who knocked back a voluntary merger alternative proposed by neighbouring Kogarah, Hurstville and Rockdale; largely based on the traditional St George County Council model.

In contrast, Botany is traditionally linked with neighbouring Maroubra and Mascot and has little in common with the St George District – ask any Dragons fan!

Baird's St George forced merger appears as mad as forcing the North Sydney Electorate friendly neighbours – Hunters Hill and Lane Cove – to merge against their will with distant Ryde.

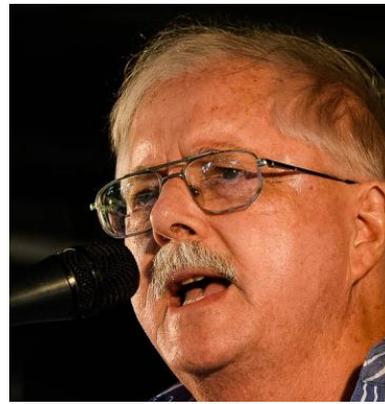
But Opposition Leader Luke Foley sees method in the madness.

“In the St George area, the three councils of Rockdale, Kogarah and Hurstville were actually prepared to merge but Baird, who pretends that the mergers are about economies of scale and efficiency, rejected that reform proposal,” Mr Foley said.

“Why? Simply because there are too many Labor voters in Rockdale.



Labor Opposition Leader Luke Foley



Save Hunters Hill Municipality Phil Jenkyn

“To gerrymander the district the Liberals had to exclude Rockdale and merge it with Botany even though these two communities are separated by the airport.

“The outcome is what Baird wanted ... a Liberal gerrymander in the new Georges River Council.”

Hunters Hill’s Independent Councillors have argued the gerrymander case for months with Clr Peter Astridge warning Council meetings our local forced merger is about establishing a mega council dominated by hand picked Liberals from Ryde, possibly financed by donations to the Liberal Party from property developers.

Even Ryde Council has debated how the large size of potential new mega council wards will make it tough for all but the most cashed up Independent to campaign across and virtually impossible for Independents with small power bases in Hunters Hill or Lane Cove.

“Mike Baird’s forced council mergers are a rort and their motivation is political,” Ryde Mayor Jerome Laxale told a recent meeting at the West Ryde Hotel.

Save Hunters Hill Municipality spokesman Phil Jenkyn believes – ironically – that it will be Luke Foley and Labor which could save his blue ribbon municipality.

He draws comparisons with the way left wing radicals led by Jack Munday joined with the Hunters Hill community to save Kelly’s Bush in the era of Sir Robert Askin.

“Luke Foley recently pledged to allow plebiscites so that communities can determine their own future and demerge if Labor wins the next election in 2019,” Mr Jenkyn said.

“It is clear that the undemocratic and disreputable Baird Government won’t survive the 2019 State Election.”

“Baird should stop wasting our taxpayers money now in this futile attempt to destroy local democracy in this State.” “Local democracy will survive but Mike Baird will not.”

<http://www.weeklytimes.com.au/liberal-mp-blasts-bairds-dishonest-forced-mergers-for-election-loss/>