

# Local Democracy May Be Denied for up to Three Years

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**The Baird Government's council amalgamation process has become even more shambolic, with concerns some communities may not see a return of local democracy before 2020.**

Local Government NSW President Keith Rhoades said the councils most likely to be impacted were outraged over the latest circular issued by the Office of Local Government (OLG).

“OLG's circular states that councils with mergers still pending – essentially those who challenged their amalgamation in court – are required by the *Local Government Act* to hold an election, probably in September 2017.



*Cr Keith Rhoades*

“But they go on to say that if these councils have not been amalgamated by the end of this month, they can't hold an election before March 2018.

“And if a forced amalgamation occurs after August 2017, the election can't be held before September 2019.

“That means these particular councils could be denied local democracy for up to two years.”

Cr Rhoades said the circular sought to justify the delay by blaming it on the need to avoid any conflict with the State Government election, scheduled for March 2019.

“But wait – it gets even more shambolic,” he said.

“The OLG then says that elections for these particular councils might be better held in September **2020** – a **three-year** denial of voter's right to elect their own council.

“They say the delay will ‘reduce the potential for voter confusion and additional cost’, but I wouldn’t be worrying too much about voter confusion,” Clr Rhoades said.

“As we’ve just seen in the Orange by-election, voters are anything **but** confused about this Government and council amalgamations,” he said.

“Perhaps it’s more a case of extending the timeframe past the 2019 State election in the hope that voters in the council areas don’t take their anger out on the Liberal/National Government the same way they did on the National Party in Orange.”

Clr Rhoades said the circular was conveniently released by the Government as the sun went down on Friday afternoon.

“It isn’t the first time they’ve done this sort of thing, with the Government’s merger announcement in December last year made just hours before the government shutdown for two weeks over Christmas,” he said.

”It’s another clumsy attempt to slip this further denial of democracy through quietly, but the people of NSW are awake to the Government’s tricks.”

<http://www.lgnsw.org.au/news/media-release/media-release-local-democracy-may-be-denied-three-years>