

Mayor Quinn calls it a day

BY OUR CIVIC ROUNDSMAN

Hunters Hill Mayor Richard Quinn will not contest the September 9 Local Government elections.

Mayor Quinn announced his decision on Monday afternoon, only hours after long serving councillor Meredith Sheil announced she would not be an election candidate and Cllr Peter Astridge said he is unlikely to be.



And then there were two! Of these five councillors who have fought against Premier Gladys Berejiklian's proposed forced merger of the heritage municipality with Ryde and Lane Cove only Cllr Justine McLaughlin (left) and Deputy Mayor Mark Bennett (second from right) have confirmed they will contest the September 9 Council Election. The Weekly Times congratulates Mayor Richard Quinn, Cllr Dr Meredith Sheil and Cllr Peter Astridge for standing up for our community. TWT on-the-spot PHOTO

Independent Mayor Quinn told The Weekly Times he is throwing his support behind Independent Deputy Mayor and Mayoral candidate Cllr Mark Bennett in North Ward and Cllr Justine McLaughlin (Ind) in South Ward.

"Both Mark and Justine are firmly committed to community representation and not to party political representation," Mayor Quinn told The Weekly Times.

“They will be a strong independent voice for Hunters Hill without any allegiance to Macquarie Street.”

Mayor Quinn said his work commitments at St Joseph’s Catholic College in Hunters Hill along with planned overseas travel next year are the reasons he will not re-contest the Mayoralty.

He said his greatest achievement has been to fight against the State government’s proposed forced merger of Hunters Hill with Ryde and Lane Cove. “That we’re actually having an election for Hunters Hill is a huge achievement.

“But to get this far has taken up an enormous amount of time and effort that could have otherwise been spent doing great things for community.”

Richard Quinn was first elected to Hunters Hill Council in 1999 and has been Mayor since 2012. He did not rule out standing for Mayor again at a future election.

Councillor Dr Meredith Sheil (Ind) announced her decision not to run on Sunday and Cllr Peter Astridge broke the news of a serious illness that has left him bed ridden in Royal North Shore hospital for the last month.

“It doesn’t look as if I’ll be well enough to stand as a candidate although I would love to stand because I’m really concerned about Hunters Hill with the threat of a forced merger with Ryde and Lane Cove,” Cllr Astridge said.

“I’m sure there’s going to be a massive battle in Hunters Hill at the election which will need independent councillors who can give 100 per cent in the fight.”

He said he’s been avidly reading *The Weekly Times* while in hospital and stressed his gratitude to readers who’ve stood by him in a difficult time.

“I’ve had more than one hundred get well cards,” he said.

Councillor Astridge has served for more than two decades as a councillor and is proud to have represented the Municipality, the Hunters Hill Village shopping precinct and people on the peninsula fighting to protect heritage.

Councillor Dr Sheil said a once in a lifetime opportunity to travel the world is the reason she will not run this September.

“I’ve had a huge job offer, a once in a lifetime opportunity which means I’ll be overseas a lot and will not have the time to serve on Hunters Hill Council,” she said.

“I know a lot of people will be disappointed I’m not running but I’m working hard to find a replacement, someone who is not interested in a career in party politics and will put the community first.

“It’s been a tough nine years for me, especially since the forced mergers issue threatened our council’s survival but I’ll continue to support the Save Hunters Hill Municipality Coalition.”

The Liberal Party in Hunters Hill has not confirmed or denied it will run Party endorsed candidates although a Liberal Party source told *The Weekly Times* to “watch this space” for an imminent announcement.

Councillor Zac Miles and Clr Gary Bird have not yet confirmed or declined candidacy.

Save Hunters Hill Municipality Coalition spokesman Phil Jenkyn OAM fears the Liberals will run “career candidates” willing to support Premier Gladys Berejiklian and her forced merger agenda.

“To actually run party endorsed candidates in Hunters Hill who are committed to Gladys Berejiklian’s destruction of Hunters Hill would be, quite frankly, appalling,” he said.

In neighbouring Lane Cove, *The Weekly Times* has learned that only Liberal Mayor Deborah Hutchens and senior Liberal David Brooks-Horn have been endorsed to run so far.

Liberal Scott Bennison – who has led the fight against forced mergers – said he will make an announcement on his candidacy later this month and may quit the Liberals to run as a conservative independent.

“I’ve not been endorsed at this stage and I’ll know if I’ve been endorsed on the 26th of this month, when I’ll announce my decision,” he said.

Like Mayor Hutchens and Clr Bennison, Independent Councillors Pam Palmer, Daniel Strassberg and Karola Brent have also opposed the proposed forced merger of Lane Cove with Hunters Hill and Ryde alongside Liberal David Karpin AM and all four are expected to make announcements later this week.

“Lane Cove is my home, my community and I would like my children, when they grow up, to have Lane Cove as their community too,” Clr Strassberg said.

In Hunters Hill, Dr Meredith Sheil said she is proud to have stood up to fight to protect the municipality’s heritage and environment for more than a decade.

This has seen her personally front former Premier Mike Baird on forced mergers, alongside Mayor Quinn.

“It really worries me what will happen to Hunters Hill in a forced merger, particularly with the much larger and dominant City of Ryde,” Clr Sheil said.

“I’ve spent a lot of time serving on the Hunters Hill Conservation Advisory Committee and I’m proud to have fought for issues such as the inappropriate development of the Hunters Hill overpass and protecting the character of Hunters Hill from over development, especially the view of Hunters Hill from the foreshore.

“I’ve protected Hunters Hill from wall to wall development and I regard that as my major contribution.”

Mayor Quinn said his one regret in not standing is that he will not be Mayor when the forced merger proposal is defeated and Hunters Hill’s independence is assured.

“I’ve enjoyed representing our local community and what I found to be most rewarding are the citizenship ceremonies and seeing the joy on the faces of our new citizens.”

Mayor Quinn, Clr Sheil and Clr Astridge have been strong patrons of Hunters Hill's arts and festivals.

The Weekly Times 19 July 2017