

Mayors deny gang of six media report on merger

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Two local Mayors named in the media as being part of a gang of six to serve on a northern Sydney forced merger mega council have blasted the report as false and baffling.



Hunters Hill Mayor Richard Quinn



Lane Cove Mayor Deborah Hutchens

Hunters Hill Mayor Richard Quinn and Lane Cove Mayor Deborah Hutchens were named in last week's edition of The Northern District Times as chosen interim members of the Baird Government's proposed mega council.

The report of the alleged appointment of the six councillors – all with Liberal Party links – did not quote a source but drew the ire of Ryde Labor Clr George Simon who said he hoped this isn't going to be an exercise in political favouritism.

On Thursday the two Mayors blasted the reports and told The Weekly Times they have neither applied for the interim jobs or have been approached with offers.

“It is all rumour and innuendo and nobody has approached me about it,” Mayor Hutchens said.

“I haven't heard a thing and quite frankly it is not factual unless it comes from the Minister's Office or it comes from me.”

Mayor Quinn said he wholeheartedly agreed with Mayor Hutchens and stressed he would never sell out Hunters Hill for personal political gain.

“Don't believe everything you read in the newspaper,” he said.

“I did not put in an Expression of Interest form seeking an appointment, I will not nor have I received a request to serve.

“In fact, I made my position very clear in a recent press release.

“I believe we fight this battle to save Hunters Hill from forced amalgamation to the very end and that you don't change sides in the second half.”

Other councillors named are Ryde Liberals Artin Etmekdjian and Bill Pickering alongside Clr Zac Miles from Hunters Hill and Scott Bennison from Lane Cove.

Of these councillors only Zac Miles has publicly confirmed a willingness to serve on an interim mega council while Clr Scott Bennison described the mention of his name in the report as bizarre.

“I’m the one who wants to refer this whole forced merger process to the ICAC and if they want to appoint someone who wants to take them to ICAC then no one will be more surprised than me!” he said.

Councillor Bennison said he would only be prepared to sit on an interim council if it was to protect the interests of the Cammeraygal Aboriginal people, whom he has served as a trusted and committed advocate.

City of Ryde Mayor Jerome Laxale and Deputy Mayor and Liberal councillor Roy Maggio were not named among the so-called chosen six.



Ryde Council Deputy Mayor Roy Maggio



Ryde Council Mayor Jerome Laxale

“There are factions within the Liberal Party playing games and Hunters Hill, Lane Cove and Ryde are being bluffed,” Deputy Mayor Maggio told The Weekly Times.

“I should be the stand out candidate but no one’s approached me, maybe because I stand up for the community first and for what I believe in.”

Councillor Maggio said that while he has often voted with his Liberal colleagues he has also supported a recent campaign of industrial action by fire fighters as well as motions from independent councillors.

Always outspoken, he has also been threatened with Council Code of Conduct charges which he insists are related to his passionate community commitment.

Also at last week’s Council Meeting, Independent City of Ryde Councillor Denise Pendleton told Premier Baird to back off his attempts to kill local democracy.

“Ryde’s community didn’t elect a Liberal council, it elected a democratic council,” she said.

<http://www.weeklytimes.com.au/mayors-deny-gang-of-six-media-report-on-merger/>