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The Weekly Times 31 August 2016

Letters to the Editor

## Mayors Open Letter to Premier Mike Baird



*Four of the Mayors who signed the letter to the Premier - Cr Richard Quinn Mayor of Hunters Hill, Cr Kathy Sajowitz Mayor of Oberon, Cr Cheryl Szatow Mayor of Ku-ring-gai and Cr Peter Abelson Mayor of Mosman*

**Dear Premier,**

**We are writing to you to request reconsideration of the forced amalgamations proposed for our councils.**

We understand your Government's objectives to promote jobs, housing affordability and strategic capacity.

However, we believe that these objectives can be achieved in many ways other than by undemocratic forced council amalgamations.

As the democratically elected leaders of over a quarter of a million residents and dozens of communities in both rural and urban New South Wales, we are disturbed by the processes adopted in the recent inquiries into the proposals to forcibly amalgamate councils.

These inquiries undertook no polling of local communities and the Delegate reports largely ignored the overwhelming majority of articulate and deeply felt submissions opposed to the proposals.

In our view this process was not democratic or fair. And we councils were given no opportunity to respond to the reports of the Delegates.

We hold the strong democratic position that government should be as close to the people as is practical.

Local councils deal with the daily practical and social concerns of local residents and we believe that the view of local residents are paramount in determining how local services should be delivered.

We understand that local councils must also work with the State Government for the greater good of both Sydney and the state of NSW.

We would welcome a dialogue with your Government to work for this greater good. We believe that consultation and cooperation are the best way to achieve the outcomes that we all want for our communities.

Specifically, we request that you respond to the wishes of our communities and your citizens by:

- Suspending the threat of forced amalgamations for all councils in NSW for the immediate future;
- Meeting with us, the undersigned, to hear our concerns first hand that the process to date has been undemocratic and, importantly, to discuss alternative ways of meeting your Government's strategic objectives such as through joint organisations; and
- Agreeing that residents and rate payers be polled regarding any current or further amalgamation proposals and that amalgamation be adopted only with majority support from this polling.

We ask that you respond to these requests within a week care of Cr Peter Abelson, Mayor of Mosman, 9978 4061 or email [mayor@mosman.nsw.gov.au](mailto:mayor@mosman.nsw.gov.au)

We stress that we seek a cooperative outcome and hope that you, as Leader of the Government, will feel able to respond to these requests positively and with good will.

**Signed by:**

**Clr Peter Abelson - Mayor of Mosman**

**Clr Richard Quinn - Mayor of Hunter's Hill**

**Clr Cheryl Szatow - Mayor of Ku-ring-gai**

**Clr Kathy Sajowitz - Mayor of Oberon**

**Clr Ian Gosper - Mayor of Cabonne**

**Clr Marianne Saliba - Mayor of Shellharbour**

**Clr Andrew Soulos - Deputy Mayor Strathfield**

**23 August 2016**

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