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## **LOCAL GOVT CONFERENCE SUPPORTS LOCAL COMMUNITIES TO DEMERGE**

In a major rebuff to the Berejiklian State Government's 2016 policy of forced council mergers, the annual conference of Local Government NSW has today thrown its support behind local communities forced to merge who want their councils back.

In a show of strength following major political upheaval for the Liberal Party in the State Wagga by-election and the Federal Wentworth by-election, the Conference in Albury passed a binding resolution that "Gives solidarity with the people of Tumbarumba and Gundagai as they seek to demerge from their forcibly amalgamated councils and similarly supports any other communities that seek to demerge from a forcibly amalgamated council."

It also resolved to "lobby for a change to the Local Government Act to prevent the forced amalgamation of councils or significant boundary alteration without the support of a plebiscite."

In what will be seen as a pre-March 2019 State elections issue other communities that have been fighting for demergers will take heart from this support and renew their attempts to demerge from their forced bigger councils.

With attendance at the Conference by leading members of Save Our Councils Coalition (SOCC) and a large number of demerger activists from Tumbarumba and Gundagai who were invited into the auditorium, the resolution was overwhelmingly passed by delegates who recognised this as an issue burning at the heart of many local communities.

"What this shows is that local communities that were forcibly merged throughout NSW recognise their strength in the lead up to the March 2019 State election. This conference resolution together with huge by-election swings against the Government in NSW seats where council mergers were widely condemned, shows local communities that demergers will be a critical issue in the 2019 election," says SOCC President Brian Halstead.

"We congratulate Local Government NSW and its delegates for their support on this issue, and the extraordinary level of political activism by the communities of Tumbarumba, Gundagai, Pittwater, Guyra and many others that continue to fight for their independence," Halstead said.

**SOCC CONTACTS:** Brian Halstead President: Phil Jenkyn spokesman