

Government defeats Bill that would stop forced mergers

The Berejiklian Government has refused to rule out the forced mergers of our local councils, despite Premier Gladys Berejiklian calling them off before the recent local government elections.



Labor's Local Government spokesman Peter Primrose is pictured outside NSW Parliament last Friday where he said Labor will call off the forced mergers in Epping and the Inner West if communities reject them. TWT on-the-spot PHOTO

A Bill put before NSW Parliament this week would have ruled out forced mergers with approval by local communities, but it was defeated by the Berejiklian Government in the Legislative Assembly by 47 votes to 37 votes.

Hunters Hill's Phil Jenkyn – who is the spokesperson for the Save Our Councils Coalition – was in NSW Parliament for the vote this week and is furious with the outcome.

“This government has made it clear that their policy of forced council mergers continues,” he said.

“We've tried to reason with this government, but it continues to launch an all-out attack on communities, so we've decided to launch an all-out attack on this government, until it is thrown out at the next election.”

The Labor Party and the Shooters and Fishers Party had supported the Local Government Amendment (Amalgamation Referendums) Bill and Labor's Local Government spokesman Peter Primrose MLC on Friday promised to de-amalgamate our forcibly merged councils where local communities oppose the forced merger.

This would mean that parts of Epping forced to merge with Parramatta would leave Parramatta, and Leichhardt Council would regain its independence after being forcibly merged with Ashfield and Marrickville.



Phil Jenkyn Save Our Councils Coalition at the media conference outside NSW Parliament.

Mr Jenkyn said forcibly merged councils have a right to be angry.

“The Government has refused to allow communities forcibly amalgamated to have a say on whether they want their council back.”

“You would think that the Liberals might have learnt something from the recent by-elections in the city and country where there have been massive swings against them in areas where forced mergers were a major issue, such as the 24 per cent swing in Manly and the 15 per cent swing in North Shore.”

Save Our Councils Coalition President Brian Halstead thanked the politicians who stood up for their communities in Parliament.

“All political parties and independents, except the Liberal/National Party, supported the Bill,” he said.

“They also support SOCCs principles of no forced amalgamations, keeping local government truly local and fair and proper referendums.”

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