

NSW council amalgamation: Only a fifth say Premier is listening to pleas

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Mr Baird's amalgamation plan involves 152 councils being merged to make 112, with 43 Sydney councils turned into 25.

- [Baird facing council amalgamation mutiny](#)
- [Local council merger threats to MPs](#)

JUST one in five people believe the NSW government is listening to community concern about its council amalgamations policy.

A Galaxy Saturday Telegraph poll on the council mergers also shows that a majority of people are opposed to forced council amalgamations, but the numbers are tight — there is 41 per cent support, 44 per cent opposed and 15 per cent uncommitted.

The poll of 524 voters taken between March 31 and April 3 showed that of those in favour of amalgamations, support was stronger among Coalition voters (52 per cent) than Labor voters (35 per cent). Support for mergers was stronger in regional and rural NSW (45 per cent for, 41 per cent against) than in Sydney (39-45).

But it was the findings on how the policy is being sold that should cause the government most concern.

Asked if they believed the government was listening to community concern about the mergers, 22 per cent said yes and 60 per cent said no.

Even among Coalition voters only 30 per cent believed the government was listening, compared to 48 per cent saying it was not. Several MPs have already expressed to Premier Mike Baird their displeasure at unpopular local amalgamations.

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The Saturday Telegraph has been told some ministers are backing away from amalgamation plans in their local areas — with concerns held by Skills Minister John Barilaro, Energy Minister Anthony Roberts and Health Minister Jillian Skinner.

Mr Barilaro and Ms Skinner declined to comment, while Mr Roberts denied any shift away from the government position.

One mayor in Mr Roberts' electorate, Hunters Hill's Richard Quinn, whose council is subject to a proposal to merge with Ryde and Lane Cove, even claimed yesterday that the mergers would lead to an increase in rates, which are already \$1300 in Hunters Hill because of the area's large homes.

"All we can rely on is the experience in Queensland and Victoria, where mergers have happened (and) rates have gone up," he added.

Mr Quinn said Hunters Hill had investigated the possibility of launching legal action, like Woollahra Council, to prevent itself being merged with other councils.

Comments

Jason

A politician not listening to the community that would never happen.

Karyn

The gloss has sure gone off Baird for me. Not just because of this but for quite a few other decisions he has made, like challenging the drop in consumer electricity prices in court. Big mistake.

Ian

The problem in Australian politics is that the only time politicians actually care about the Australian people is when there is an election looming. Most politicians are no better than used car salesmen and in ordinary circumstances would be totally unemployable. Mike Baird is just another one of these "professional politicians" who otherwise are useless (so very similar to Turnbull & Shorten).

Michael & Deirdre

It looks fairly evident from local polls and letters to the local press, if Great Lakes Council is forced into ANY amalgamation, the Coalition will experience a backlash from the usually Conservative electorate.

Denise

Golden boy is becoming tarnished.

Danny

Just waiting for the election so I can show "Mike Bad" what I think of him and his minders. "Mike Bad" is making Luke Fooley look very electable". Sorry Luke Fooley is the invisible opposition leader.

Glenn

Baird is becoming unpopular and he has himself to blame as it seems Baird knows better. The people do not matter anymore with this State Government and it is quite obvious!

Saile

Amalgamation is good when the people have voice and Choice rather than forced up on them. And this will show up in Federal Election with too many invalid votes.

Jon

This is always the great danger when a political party comes to power with too many seats, arrogance, over inflated ego's develop & they very quickly forget your name. Once they've sucked up to you to get your vote it instantly becomes a case of; Who is it....nah tell him / her I'm away on business....Better start listening Mike or next time it'll be hooray, even if Labor are not the greatest option available. They'll come into power by default simply because of yours & your teams over inflated ego's.

Peter

Politicians who don't listen, usually don't last too long in the job. keep on doing it, and we may be lucky enough to get rid of you and your mate Toole.

Jon

@Peter Don't forget the ego driven Stuart Ayres!

Terry

Mr Baird just does not care what the voters think or want it is only him and what he wants.

Ken D

No matter what arm of the Liberal Party you look at the party has changed and no longer represents it's voter base. This forced council amalgamation policy is one which Mike Baird dared not take to the last State election in fear of losing, well his and his governments dismissal has only been deferred but by the next election Mike Baird would have chosen to move on leaving the State Liberal Party in disarray.

Jon

@Ken D Absolutely spot on Ken D. As a long time Liberal voter, next time no way. One thing you don't do when you come to Government is don't block your ears, don't set your electorate office phone on "Unfortunately we're not here to take your call etc" Mike Baird thinks now he's teflon coated, we'll see!