

Pittwater Residents Present Demerger Proposal To Minister's Office



The colours of Pittwater in Macquarie street on Tuesday 15 May - photo by Michael Mannington, Volunteer Photography

In February 2018, on 'Valentine's Day', Tumbarumba residents presented a proposal to the office of the NSW Minister for Local Government Gabrielle Upton, to reinstate the former Tumbarumba Shire Council along its original boundaries.

Some 660 signatures had been gathered from the forcibly merged Tumbarumba Shire Council area, where the 2016 census showed the population of the town and surrounding area to be 1,862 people.

In late April Tumbarumba residents received a response that they had not gathered enough signatures, at close to 60% of their former area, as now it was said they had been merged into an area with a population of approximately 14,953.

Tumbarumba are at present collecting more signatures, after which they will head back into town.

On Tuesday May 15th, a similar tide of residents flowed out of Pittwater and into Macquarie street to present their own proposal on the same grounds - with 3,000 signatures. The merged Northern Beaches Council has over 266,000 residents.

As the chants of 'not going away and not backing down' are clearly discernible there too you may run into them at next weekend's Eat Manly Festival.... or in the once greened avenues of Dee Why, as much as throughout Pittwater.

Politicians not currently incumbent, in [promising a binding referendum of the former Pittwater Local Government Area on its demerger](#), may have a sense of boundaries that apply, if the coin flips over in March 2019.

However, it was standing room only when the Pittwater "people's bus" took the trip to

Parliament House on Tuesday for the residents to let the NSW government know that they want their council back.



John Illingsworth's VIDEO Part 1 of Pittwater Rally outside Parliament House – politicians from all parties except Liberal/National Party addressed the Rally.

The passengers, wearing turquoise T-shirts printed with the word “Splittwater”, carrying placards, singing and chanting, rallied on Macquarie Street, joined by others who had travelled to the city under their own steam.

Protect Pittwater Association president Bob Grace said the group had organised the trip and protest outside Parliament House to mark the second anniversary of council amalgamations on May 12.



John Illingsworth's VIDEO Part 2 features speakers from Pittwater, Manly and Save Our Councils Coalition demanding the return of local democracy.

Mr Grace said the group had decided to present its proposal to bring back Pittwater Council, initiated under the Local Government Act, to the NSW government after the rally.

Supporters had gathered more than 3,000 signatures to accompany the proposal, which was 10 times greater than the number required, he said.

“We had no problem collecting signatures from the people of Pittwater for the proposal which we took to Local Government Minister Gabrielle Upton’s office after the rally,” Mr Grace said.

“The only way forward for the people of Pittwater is to regain our council – and this proposal represents one pathway.

“The proposal should trigger a Boundaries Commission inquiry into the merger and Pittwater will again become a council in its own right.”

The group handed over the proposal - with its hundreds of sheets of signatures - in a turquoise box, which contained a map of the former Pittwater Council area and a copy of its original Proclamation describing the boundaries of the local government area.

Protect Pittwater members also presented a statement to one of Premier Gladys Berejiklian’s senior staffers with a motion, carried unanimously at the Protect Pittwater community forum on May 3, calling for a demerger.

Following what’s become an established pattern at council merger protests, MPs from all parties except the Coalition came outside the House to support and address the crowd.

NSW Labor Local Government spokesman Peter Primrose said that all political parties except the Liberals and National Coalition had consistently supported binding plebiscites for demergers since the forced amalgamations.

“I can say on behalf of the Labor Party that if we form government next year, along with our colleagues here from other parties, within the first 100 days we will move to introduce legislation to allow communities to voluntarily demerge if that’s what they wish to do, throughout NSW,” Mr Primrose told the rally.

“That’s a promise to Pittwater and it’s a promise to every other forcibly merged council in NSW.”

Mr Primrose’s NSW Greens counterpart, David Shoebridge, congratulated the crowd on the campaign and promised the Greens support for a binding plebiscite.

“And if this government plays silly buggers with your proposal I reckon you take them to court,” he said. “If you win in court terrific.

“But either way come March next year, we all guarantee if we hold a majority in both houses between us, and we don’t normally agree on stuff, you’ll have legislation as

first order of business that gives you a ... plebiscite and (Pittwater residents) can decide for themselves if they get their council back.”

Shooters, Fishers and Farmers MP Philip Donato emphasised the power of the ballot box, saying he had been elected to parliament due to anger over amalgamations in his electorate of Orange.

“We fought that on the election front back in November 2016 and we succeeded and as a result I was elected,” Mr Donato told the rally.

“The government then cancelled the amalgamation of those councils (Cabonne, Blayney and Orange).

“So keep together, keep fighting and I guarantee we’ll do everything we can.”

Also at the rally was Christian Democratic MLC Rev Fred Nile who said his party had always been opposed to forced amalgamations.

“We’ve always said that the people should decide what happens to their councils, not big government, not the big parties, but the people,” he said outside Parliament House.

“We support de-amalgamation, where Pittwater can become again a standalone council.”

VIDEO Part 1 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3WMm58H3318&t=4s>

VIDEO Part II <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ptr1HSUDM1A&t=7s>

Pittwater Online News <http://www.pittwateronlinenews.com/>

Protect Pittwater Association <http://www.pittwateronlinenews.com/Pittwater-Demerger-Proposal-Handed-to-NSW-Govt.php>

Edited by Save Our Councils

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