

Think mergers won't affect you? You can think again

The Border Mail 6 October 2017



WAKE-UP CALL: *A reader says voters need to send a clear message to the government of Gladys Berejiklian when it comes to ignoring the wishes of rural communities.*

As your readers would be aware the upcoming by-elections in both Cootamundra and Murray electorates are scheduled to be held on October 14.

This is an opportunity for rural NSW to send a strong message to the NSW government that the forced amalgamation of rural councils is not acceptable and the bush deserves better.

The merger process has been a farce from the beginning and has only succeeded in ripping the heart out of local communities throughout the state. In our case, the amalgamation of Gundagai and Cootamundra councils has been an expensive blunder and has not produced any positive outcomes. The mooted cost savings that amalgamation was supposed to generate have been shown to be a myth and indeed the financial

mismanagement will result in our communities paying more for many years to come.

And there's more to come – it now appears that your local Police Local Area Commands will be subject to amalgamation thanks to Minister Troy Grant. Some of you reading this have as yet been unaffected by the amalgamation process, but let me assure you they haven't finished yet.

Minister for Local Government Gabrielle Upton refused to rule out further amalgamations when appearing before a Senate Committee a few weeks ago. This is the same Liberal MP who stood before her electorate prior to the last election and promised there would be no forced amalgamations.

This comment was repeated by both Liberal and Nationals statewide: a lie that has resulted in rural communities being devastated.

With this by-election, residents have the opportunity to register a risk-free protest vote. We would urge a strong message to the Berejiklian government that the wishes of rural communities cannot be taken for granted. We want more effective representation from the Nationals in this coalition.

Our group will continue the fight for a de-merger for as long as it takes. We want to retain the identity of small rural communities, have transparent and strong local governance and effective service delivery.

Dr Paul Mara, chair Gundagai Council in Exile

<http://www.bordermail.com.au/story/4965185/you-say-think-mergers-wont-affect-you-you-can-think-again/>