

# Woollahra Council starts spending spree to fight off amalgamation plans

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ALICIA WOOD



- **WOOLLAHRA COUNCIL LOSES MERGER FIGHT**

A SYDNEY council is spending millions in ratepayer funds to protect its perks and fight off Premier Mike Baird's council amalgamation plan.

Documents released under freedom of information show Woollahra Council, in Sydney's wealthy eastern suburbs, has already started a spending spree to fight off the state government's biggest shake-up of local government in 100 years.

The council has allocated more than \$1 million in ratepayer funds for lawyers, consultants and ad campaigns.

Woollahra has spent more than \$700,000 on lawyers alone, more than \$115,000 on consultants and more than \$270,000 on advertising, campaigns and surveys designed to block council amalgamations.



Woollahra council chambers at Double Bay. Picture: Justin Lloyd

In the documents, obtained by NSW Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer Matt Kean, it was revealed that since 2012 council has spent more than \$48,000 on alcohol and more than \$1.6 million on travel for councillors and staff.

Mr Kean said the costs proved councils need to be cleaned up: “Here we have an example of politicians more interested in protecting their perks than delivering better services and infrastructure and lower rates.”

A spokeswoman for the council defended the expenditure saying the cost of legal advice “will be far outweighed by the \$7 million to \$17 million in increased rates our residents will be left with if the amalgamation is pushed through.”

<http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/nsw/woollahra-council-starts-spending-spree-to-fight-off-amalgamation-plans/news-story/c2b2b671ca39ad5a9c8935289a0790c5>