

Council amalgamations: Woollahra heading to High Court in bid to stay separate from Randwick, Waverley

ABC News 6 January 2017
Riley Stuart

Woollahra Council, in Sydney's affluent eastern suburbs, has stepped up its fight against forced amalgamations by lodging a High Court appeal.



PHOTO: [Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull's Point Piper mansion is in Woollahra local government area.](#) (AAP: David Moir)

[A Court of Appeal judgement on December 22 ruled against Woollahra Council,](#) paving the way for a merger with the neighbouring municipalities of Waverley and Randwick.

But Woollahra Council, which takes in the leafy areas of Paddington, Vaucluse and Point Piper amongst others, today lodged an application to appeal to the High Court.

The Council has already spent about \$850,000 challenging the Baird Government's forced amalgamations.

RELATED STORY: [Woollahra Council loses legal challenge over forced merger](#)

RELATED STORY: [Win for NSW councils after two forced mergers set aside](#)

Key points:

- Several councils in NSW are challenging forced amalgamations
- Woollahra is the first to take the fight to the High Court
- The Baird Government policy has been a hot-button issue in the state

'Good grounds' for appeal

"After consulting with our legal team, we believe there are good grounds for a High Court appeal," Mayor of Woollahra Toni Zeltzer said.

"We are extremely disappointed that we have to continue to spend public money on legal bills, but we want to be absolutely sure we've done everything within our power to protect the Woollahra community against this merger.

"There are no discernible benefits for the Woollahra community under the proposed merger — only costs — so we are not prepared to give up the fight on behalf of our community.

"We hope the minister will refrain from making any proclamation regarding Woollahra before the matter can be considered by the High Court."

More appeals to follow

The move is the first of its kind from any council in the state.

Woollahra Council had been appealing [a July decision by the Land and Environment Court](#) in challenging the legality of the amalgamations.

Some other councils are appealing against the amalgamations in the Land and Environment Court next month.

New South Wales Greens MP David Shoebridge said others could follow.

"It's about the future of local governments and whether or not the State Government can really in a very cursory and scant way go through the motions

or whether or not they genuinely have to engage before they have to merge councils and that's the kind of thing we have high courts for," he said.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-01-06/fight-to-stop-forced-council-amalgamations-heads-to-high-court/8166534>