

Plucky Woollahra Council loses Court of Appeal case but the campaign for local democracy continues

DAVID SHOEBRIDGE · THURSDAY, DECEMBER 22, 2016

Media Release 22 December 2016

Woollahra Council's case to fight the Baird Government's forced amalgamation was unsuccessful today in the NSW Court of Appeal, setting the scene for a potential High Court challenge to make a final determination on the matter. Whatever the final legal outcome this has been, and continues to be, a plucky Council standing strong in favour of its residents and against the Baird government's undemocratic forced amalgamation plans.

This reasoning in this case will require close reading by advocates to see what potential appeal points are available. In the meantime the NSW government has given an undertaking to not force the amalgamation of Woollahra with Waverley and Randwick until 10 January 2017 to allow any appeal to be properly considered.

Greens MP and Local Government Spokesperson David Shoebridge said:

“Clearly it is disappointing to those thousands of residents supporting their local councils and the concept of truly local democracy to see this case go down today, but this is not the end of the road.

“When these cases started it was always likely the final legal decision would have to come from the High Court.

“The Baird government is in a world of political pain as a result of their push to destroy local democracies.

“Residents know full well that bigger councils mean less personal service, more privatisations and a bigger role for developers.

“This is a struggle that will continue in local shopping strips, peoples’ homes and around the water cooler in offices well after this decision, and in that struggle the Baird government is certain to lose.

“No one seriously believes Premier Baird when he says forced amalgamations are about saving money, this is a pretty blatant political takeover of local councils and I applaud Woollahra for standing strong.

“The Greens will continue to stand shoulder to shoulder with local residents who oppose the government’s forced amalgamations agenda.

“We stand by our longstanding commitment to support legislation in any new Parliament to allow residents a binding plebiscite to unwind Baird’s forced mergers in 2019. That’s a democratic commitment we will never back away from,” Mr Shoebridge said.

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