



MEDIA RELEASE

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Mayors team up to reject Local Government ‘super Sydney’ proposal

Mayors of six council areas which the Independent Local Government Review Panel proposes to group together into a single “super Sydney council area” have put forward a joint submission calling for sensible, practical reform to local government in NSW, not simply mergers for the sake of mergers.

The six councils – Botany Bay, City of Sydney, Leichhardt, Randwick, Waverley and Woollahra presented the submission to Professor Graham Sansom at a recent meeting where he admitted the Panel had not done any cost-benefit analysis of the proposed mergers.

“We share a strong conviction that local government best serves its communities when it is truly “local” in character,” the Mayors say in their submission.

“We believe that the proposed super Sydney Council would lose this “local” character and would not deliver any meaningful benefits to the communities we serve.

“We do not believe that the Panel has put forward a compelling, evidence-based case for change and we have no interest in the voluntary merger it proposes.

“We have significant concerns about the proposal, outlined in our joint submission along with alternatives to council amalgamations which include strengthening Regional Organisations of Council's.

“Local Councils have a fundamental role to play in the leadership and governance for their area.

“Local Government must have the authority and capacity to identify community needs and aspirations; set strategic priorities, and develop effective plans to implement them.

“With this proposal, decision-making will become more remote from residents and ratepayers, opportunities for direct contact with political leaders and senior staff will be reduced; and the sense of common interest with fellow residents will be diminished.

“Our submission includes worrying information about the effects of the recent creation of Auckland as a super Council. As a result of Council mergers, Auckland could be facing a debt as large as \$12.6 billion by 2021-2022, and the NZ Auditor General has warned that this debt could be increased further if some of the assumptions the Council has made in its long term plan are incorrect.

“Amalgamations into large local government areas of up to 800,000 residents will inevitably lead to a reduced sense of local control. The Panel’s proposal for Local Boards within enlarged councils presents an inevitable dilemma.

“If Boards have little power or responsibility and no resources to take action on behalf of their communities - they will be little more than lip service local representation.

“But giving Local Boards real authority and resources would create a fourth tier of government and an additional layer of bureaucracy.

“We are united in our view that any major reform of local government structures and boundaries should be done democratically.

“The views of residents and ratepayers must be considered and taken into account.

“We encourage residents to provide their feedback on the panel's proposal at www.localgovernmentreview.nsw.gov.au before the end of the exhibition period on 28 June 2013.”

ENDS

For interviews with Mayors and more information:

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