

## Mayoral Minute No. MM99/12



**Subject:** The Case for Change Report  
**Folder No:** F2012/06574  
**Author:** Councillor Bowen, Mayor

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### Introduction

The New South Wales State Government had previously indicated there would be no forced amalgamations of Councils. It is disturbing that the recent announcement from the Minister for Local Government has indicated that position is no longer the case. In addition, the Independent Local Government Review Panel has presented the report, "A Case for Sustainable Change".

### Issues

There has been various media speculation and comments as to how the local government boundaries may change, to the extent that proposed new Council boundary maps were outlined in a metropolitan newspaper. However, it is worthwhile to examine some of the aspects identified in the "A Case for Sustainable Change" report.

I note Page 11 of the "A Case for Sustainable Change" report identifies the elements of an effective system of local government. These include the 17 model elements for an effective local government structure. In my view, Randwick City Council more than satisfies each of these elements identified for an effective system of local government. Further, with our long term financial plan, asset management and strategic land use planning, Randwick City Council is sustainable and can cater for the growth over the 25 year horizon that is being considered by the Independent Review Panel.

It is noted that Stage 3 "Models and Options: Future Directions" paper will be prepared in March 2013. It is anticipated it will include specific proposals for amalgamations and new sub-regional groupings.

Randwick City Council has been in existence since 1859. A long historical journey is not reason by itself that an organisation would not be open to change, however, that long history also means that it has played the unique role in shaping the area and having the area reflect the interests of its residents who have been given voice through the Council for 153 years.

If we take a moment to consider the state of the Council after being in stewardship of its local representatives for 153 years, the result is quite remarkable. The Council is debt-free and its community assets are at or better than satisfactory condition levels. It provides a broad range of support over a host of community sporting and cultural activities. The Council has scored high, above benchmark levels in community satisfaction surveys. The operations of the Council on a daily basis involve a significant logistic exercise of maintaining community infrastructure, creating new capital infrastructure and providing the services of maintaining the city as well as efficient, hygienic, regular and environmentally sustainable garbage disposal.

On any measure, Randwick City Council is a sustainable council. It has a population of approximately 130,000 people far exceeding any of the neighbouring Councils. It is a socially diverse city with sections of public housing, an indigenous community as well as non-English speaking and a large percentage of the community born

overseas. In addition, Randwick has large areas of open space of recreational, indeed 30% of our city consists of open space, major educational institutions such as University of New South Wales and Randwick TAFE, regional hospital complex, Randwick Racecourse, Port Botany, and a sporting heritage that is attractive for long-term residents and families to make their home.

I am concerned that the discussion in relation to amalgamations was initiated without extensive public input from our residents. Randwick City Council is recognised for its commitment to community consultation and engagement. Our residents have an expectation that the Council will consult with them on significant strategic issues that affect their city now and into the future. I propose to meet this expectation and seek Council's agreement to call for a plebiscite at the appropriate time, should the need arise in the event of proposed boundary changes for Randwick City Council.

### **Conclusion**

As Randwick is financially sustainable, in a strategic long term position to accommodate the challenges and opportunities over the next 25 years and is able to fund and improve its capital infrastructure, I am of the view that Randwick City Council should not be amalgamated.

### **Recommendation**

Accordingly, I make the following recommendation that:

- a) Council affirm the position that Randwick Council not be amalgamated.
- b) Council undertake a plebiscite of the residents of Randwick at an appropriate time to obtain guidance from the residents on the issue of possible amalgamation.

### **Attachment/s:**

Nil