

MEDIA RELEASE



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Local Government Review Panel ignores eastern suburbs council model

A 'super Sydney council' of seven inner city councils from the inner west to the eastern suburbs will not strengthen local government or enhance Sydney's global status, Randwick Mayor Tony Bowen said today.

Mayor Bowen was responding to the Local Government Review Panel's release of their third discussion paper today titled "Future Directions for NSW Local Government" which proposes massive changes to local government including amalgamating Botany Bay, Randwick, Sydney, Waverley, Woollahra, Leichhardt and Marrickville councils into one.

"There are some positives in the report – and nobody will deny that there can be improvements in local government. This report makes many sensible suggestions which unfortunately are likely to be overshadowed by the Panel's desire to create super councils.

"Randwick Council acknowledges that like any sector local government has to be open to reform. The previous Council even commissioned an independent financial analysis that found an economic case for an eastern suburbs council of Randwick, Waverley, Woollahra and Botany.

"The SGS Economics and Planning report found combining these four councils could deliver a surplus over 10 years of \$517M even after repaying all debt and bringing all assets up to a satisfactory standard.

"I find it extraordinary this investigation has not been mentioned by the Panel which has instead opted for a mega Sydney council model even though the report contains no modelling whatsoever.

"I believe most local residents want local government to provide high quality local services like garbage pickup, good roads and footpaths, parks and playgrounds rather than aspiring to be part of the lofty ideals of international icons and global cities to make the case for amalgamations.

"The residents of Waverley, Woollahra and Randwick identify strongly with the character of the eastern suburbs and beaches – not the inner west.

“For such a significant change, you would expect the Panel to provide extensive research and justification – but their main consideration seems to be to ‘anchor Sydney’s ongoing development as Australia’s premier global city’. But Sydney already is one of the world’s leading global cities and is capably managed by the City of Sydney.

“Piling 780,000 residents into a mega council by 2036 does not increase Sydney’s global status – it simply makes a bigger council.

“Residents across Sydney will be asking themselves how they would benefit from a super Sydney council with a population bigger than Tasmania. This report is taking the local out of local government and again it’s the community that will suffer as a consequence.

“The report released today talks about strategic capacity – but Randwick City has already demonstrated this strongly by working with the State Government and other partners to deliver light rail to Randwick.

“What this shows is that we do not need a mega Sydney council model to generate economic efficiencies. We need well-run and professional councils delivering high quality services in response to local community needs,” Mayor Bowen said.

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Media Enquiries:

Josh Hay 0402 351 459

joshua.hay@randwick.nsw.gov.au