[redacted]

30 July 2015

RE: CITY OF CANADA BAY COUNCIL FIT FOR THE FUTURE SUBMISSION

I wish to voice my strong opposition to City of Canada Bay Council's decision to amalgamate with Auburn and Burwood Councils.

My opinion is based on careful analysis of Fit for the Future documentation, comparison of community profiles, SEIFA data for each of the proposed Councils and extensive first-hand community engagement with Council.

Review and reform of the City of Canada Bay Council is needed, however the proposed amalgamation does not address core issue of a lack of this Council's responsiveness to important community concerns. The City of Canada Bay is the result of a local government merger in 2000, and as a long term resident my observation is that this has simply served to weaken local representation.

The reform agenda should include mandatory ward representation.

I am a founding member of Friends of Cabarita Park and Wharf, a local community organisation that has met regularly with Council staff including the General Manager since 2010. This first-hand experience has reinforced my belief that the Council (and Councillors) are insensitive to localised community issues. Council is not accountable for implementing their own endorsed policies and Plan of Management for Cabarita Park. For example, many of the short term or urgent actions identified in the 2007 Plan of Management remain incomplete, despite repeated community advocacy. A lack of funding is not the issue, and the immediate area (including Breakfast Point) has had very significant redevelopment of former industrial sites with high density housing, and is continuing with further re-development in Mortlake. Council has extracted significant income from associated Section 94 contributions, but has demonstrably not spent these funds in the local area.

After reluctantly replacing a 28 year old playground in Cabarita Park, Council failed to install shade sails and synthetic softfall – both items identified as essential infrastructure in their own endorsed policies (Let's Play Strategy, Accessibility Action Plan). These items had also been clearly flagged as necessary in the extensive community consultation process in the lead up the playground's installation. Shade was only retro-fitted after a community outcry and petition, with still no action on softfall.

I would now like to outline in summary some of the more technical reasons why Council's proposed amalgamation with Auburn and Burwood Councils should not proceed, with the better option being for City of Canada Bay to stand alone:

- City of Canada Bay Council has previously stated, *"given that the City of Canada Bay Council merged only recently, the community has borne the burden of costs of transition and disruption to services already. It would be unfair for the community to experience this burden again within such a short timeframe."* I agree strongly with this statement.
- Consultation with the community on the Fit for the Future proposed mergers indicated 70% of CCBC residents were supportive or completely supportive of retaining the status quo and standing alone. After understanding the options, 75% were supportive of standing alone. (Micromex Research 2015).

- 86% of CCBC residents indicated that they were 'not very' or 'not at all' supportive of a proposed merger with Auburn, Burwood and Strathfield. Rejection of this outcome was largely consistent across the community.
- Only 7% of CCBC residents completely supported a merge with Auburn, Burwood and Strathfield.
- The most common justification for Canada Bay residents rejecting outright a merger with Auburn, Burwood and Strathfield was a sense of incompatibility with Auburn specifically, cited by 21% of all respondents. Council's identity, values and demographics were not seen as compatible.
- Comparison of 2011 community profile (Australian Bureau of Statistics data) shows a vast discrepancy between cultural and socio economic markers between City of Canada Bay residents and Auburn residents.
- Auburn City SEIFA data indicates that it is the second most disadvantaged Local Government Area in the entire Sydney statistical division.
- Auburn Council's community profile states, "*Very high levels of population growth are expected to continue in the next ten years. This will result in increased demand for services and will exert more pressure on Council's limited resources."*
- Councillors of the City of Canada Bay have previously stated a view that, "*the current size of the Council is adequate and services provided to our residents and ratepayers are outstanding. The Council has demonstrated that it can satisfy the sustainability ratios and is on target to meet all seven benchmarks."*
- Research and analysis undertaken by Morrison Low regarding amalgamation with other councils indicated *"this combination did achieve a population threshold of 434,300 by 2031, however did not deliver on the Government's required benchmarks."*
- The Inner West Council's Fit for the Future - Shared Modelling Report (February 2015) prepared by Morrison Low, indicated that a combined inner west council would have an immediate funding shortfall of $60M, and take up to ten years to break even and will cost more than $96M in transition costs.
- Furthermore, the Morris Low report revealed, *"that the Panel's recommended inner west council would only meet three to four of the seven benchmarks required to be Fit for the Future."*
- The report also highlighted, *"City of Canada Bay is fit for the future. Council meets the key elements of the strategic capacity outlined in Box 8 of the Panel's report. In addition, Council will meet all seven fit for the future benchmarks by 2020."*

BACKGROUND:

- City of Canada Bay Council made a decision to stand alone at 9 June Council meeting. It was resolved, *"that Council submit an Improvement Proposal (Template2), that is, to retain the status quo and stand alone in relation to the Fit for the Future reform agenda."*
- At the 9 June Council meeting, it was resolved, *"that Council indicate willingness to be part of a strong regional Joint Organisation of councils to compliment the stand alone option."*
- At the 9 June Council meeting, the recommendation was that, *"Canada Bay Council presents any draft submission for consideration in a public meeting before it is adopted."* To my knowledge this did not take place.
- Minutes of 9 June Council meeting: http://www.canadabay.nsw.gov.au/2015-06-09.html
- At 16 June Council meeting, [redacted] was successful in moving an urgent motion for Canada Bay Council to merge with Auburn and Burwood Councils.
- Mayor Tsirekas used his casting vote to pass the motion which overturned Council's previous position to stand alone.

- At the meeting, [redacted] in order to avoid the democratic majority on Council returning to a stand-alone position.
- Minutes of 16 June Council Meeting: http://www.canadabay.nsw.gov.au/verve/_resources/2015Jun16_ClMtg_Minutes.pdf

Thank you for the opportunity to put forward my view on this very important matter.