

I support the Council Improvement Proposal (Existing Structure) submitted by Leichhardt Council to IPART as part of the "Fit for the Future" review of local government structures.

I strongly endorse Leichhardt Council's view that ratepayers of the Leichhardt municipality are best served by **retaining the Council in its current form** and **rejecting the proposal for amalgamation** with councils in Marrickville, Ashfield, Burwood, Canada Bay and Strathfield.

The Council has made a compelling case to remain as a stand-alone entity based on the following evidence :

1. In regard to the quantitative "Fit for the Future" indices defined by State Government, Leichhardt Council meets 5 of the 7 indices now, and will meet all of the indices by 2018/19. The amalgamated entity would not meet these indices even after 10 years of operation.
2. In regard to the qualitative "Fit for the Future" indices related to capacity and scale, Leichhardt Council already meets all the elements of strategic capacity and therefore there is no requirement to increase the scale of its constituency to achieve these targets.
3. The "Fit for the Future" indices defined by State Government do not address issues of great importance to the community, including the following matters
  - Local representation – which would be greatly diluted by the proposed merger of 6 councils
  - Rates – which may have to increase substantially to cover the costs of the amalgamation process (seemingly under-estimated and therefore under-provisioned by State Government) and to improve the performance of the merged entity
  - Local facilities – such as libraries, pools, gym, playing fields, which may be lost to the Leichhardt area under any rationalisation program in the merged entity
  - Consultation – which would become more onerous by increasing the constituency from 56,307 to 342,000 individuals.
4. There are means other than amalgamation to ensure the on-going cost-effectiveness of council services e.g. the Joint Organisation model, the principles of which have already been applied successfully in the operations of the Southern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils

On the basis of the evidence presented in Leichhardt Council's submission, I unequivocally oppose this Council being pressed into any forced amalgamation, particularly when the outcome penalises its existing good performance and reduces the future representation and service level for the Leichhardt municipality.