

Robert Baker

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Re: Proposed City of Sydney Council Amalgamation

I am against any amalgamation of the City of Sydney and following are some reasons.

The City has demonstrated that they are indeed “Fit for the Future” and should not be amalgamated with neighbouring councils. Amalgamations are enormously disruptive and would put at risk the plans for the future of our city.

- They have scale and capacity

The City of Sydney delivers high quality services and infrastructure while keeping rates and charges low. The residential population recently topped 200,000 and there are around 1.2 million people in the area daily. The City generates \$108 billion worth of economic activity annually - over 30 per cent of metropolitan Sydney’s economic activity and almost a quarter of the NSW State gross domestic product. The City has completed over 250 major projects including parks, playgrounds, childcare, pools, libraries, theatres, community and cultural spaces - more than any other NSW council. They are now working on 370 projects as part of their ten-year plan.

They have committed to reducing our carbon emissions 70 per cent by 2030. They have already slashed them by 21 per cent and are on target to achieve 26 per cent by 2016.

They were Australia’s first Carbon Neutral Government, we’ve installed solar panels and low-carbon LED street lights, and built the largest urban water recycling program in Australia.

- They are sustainable

The City of Sydney’s demonstrated effective governance, strong finances and skilled personnel are critical for securing Sydney’s continued transformation as a modern global city and to capitalise on unprecedented development investment potential over the next decade. Leading independent financial auditors PricewaterhouseCoopers say they are “benchmark against which other councils

could be compared” and the NSW Government’s own Treasury Corporation rate their finances as “strong” with a “positive outlook” – the only NSW council to receive this rating.

- They are in a period of unprecedented investment

In 2013-2014, they oversaw \$3.95 billion of development, over four times more than the nearest council. In the past decade, they approved development worth \$24 billion. Last year they approved over 1,800 development applications and have consistently been in the top ten for development application assessment times while processing the highest value and some of the highest numbers of complex applications. They achieved this while maintaining their commitment to sustainability, design quality, heritage and livability.

- Amalgamations are disruptive without demonstrated benefit

The financial benefit of an amalgamation is marginal compared to the risks of a loss of business and development confidence due to an uncertain investment climate and disruption to city operations and critical infrastructure projects. A decline in construction activity of just one per cent over the next decade due to disruption or delays would have a negative economic impact in excess of \$300 million. By contrast, any benefits from an amalgamation would be marginal. Detailed analysis by Randwick City Council, reviewed and supported by the City of Sydney, identifies potential savings of just \$146 million over 10 years resulting from the State Government’s preferred amalgamation – that’s just 54 cents per resident a week.

Sincerely,

Robert Baker