

THE UNITED KOGARAH CITY RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

INCLUDING BY COLLABORATIVE REFERENCE

Community Group Carlton, Kogarah Bay & Carss Park
Friends of Oatley Inc.
Georges River Environmental Alliance
Kogarah Bay Progress Association Inc.
Kogarah Residents' Association Inc.
Kyle Bay Residents Association Inc.

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31 July 2015

Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART)
Expert Advisory Panel

RE: Kogarah City Council, Fit for the Future Proposal

The United Kogarah City Residents Association is a conglomeration of the predominant residents' and progress associations of the Kogarah LGA, all having the objective of protecting the democratic structures for local government that ensure it remains close to the people it serves.

The Independent Local Government Review Panel (ILGRP, 2013) report does not substantiate its view that larger councils would be more efficient or financially sustainable than small ones. Councils can all share services with neighbouring councils and outsource to private providers.

Core functions of local government include social and personal services that are best provided in relatively small communities. "Fitness" should be a council's ability to provide desired local services. Closeness to constituents is critical for understanding preferences and for observing costs. There is no service oriented benchmark being used by IPART to evaluate submissions, it is finance concentrated, therefore derides effective service delivery.

Of primary importance for councils and local communities is the capacity to deliver the local services that residents and ratepayers want, and accountability. Councils' customer satisfaction surveys and related data provide essential evidence on these issues. Nearly all such surveys demonstrate a strongly held view that small and medium sized local councils are the best means for providing local services and protecting the local environment.

Kogarah LGA (of about 59,000 residents) is unequally partnered with Rockdale (105,000 residents) and Hurstville (83,000) therefore not a merger with equals, but a takeover by the larger councils resulting in a significant loss of elected representation. The strategic capacity of Kogarah is also reduced in any merger proposal that would ultimately take a broader view in relation to the protection of its built and natural environment.

The IPART process is not evaluating a council's ability to manage the environment e.g. parks and reserves, coastline, waterways, climate change. Nor is it evaluating a council's ability to manage other areas of concern to Kogarah City Council residents, such as public transport integration, planning and development, waste management, etc.

The "Fit for the Future" proposal states, "Sydney needs a new approach to local government if we are to deliver the housing, jobs and transport people will need in the next 20 years".

However, Hurstville City Council and Kogarah City Council are already united in doing this through the Southern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (SSROC): "to undertake projects that cross council boundaries achieving results that will contribute to the sustainability of member councils and their communities. ...current focus includes the environment, transport, procurement, waste, library services and planning."

The "Fit for the Future" proposal is suggesting to replace the current form of regional planning (SSROC) which has 16 member councils serving 1.6 million people, with amalgamated councils that are essentially smaller boards that are distanced from the community. In doing so, the proposal will cost us \$445 million (NSW Parliamentary Budget Office estimate) but only \$258 million has been allocated for the task amalgamation.

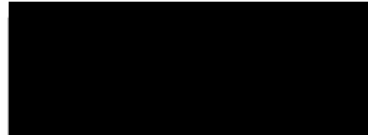
Council amalgamation will only result in increased and misdirected council rates and the loss of community priority.

Yours faithfully,

THE UNITED KOGARAH CITY RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION



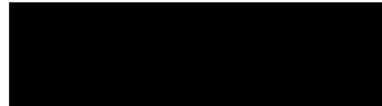
Ross Barone
Community Group Carlton, Kogarah Bay & Carss Park



Peter Martyn – President
Kogarah Bay Progress Association Inc.



Leesha Payor – Honorary Secretary
Kogarah Residents' Association Inc.



Mary Casey - Committee
Kyle Bay Residents Association Inc.



Stephen Bible
Connells Point Resident



Fay Keech
Blakehurst Resident



Suzanne O'Connor
Kogarah Resident



Janice and John Totterdell
Beverley Park Residents