



MEDIA RELEASE

28 October 2015

NSW LIBERAL GOVERNMENT IN TOTAL DISARRAY OVER FORCED COUNCIL AMALGAMATIONS.

The Friends of Ku-ring-gai Environment (FOKE) has written to Ku-ring-gai's two state government representatives, Jonathan O'Dea MP and Alister Henskens SC MP calling on them both to publicly state where they stand on forced council amalgamations.

This follows the release last week of the Independent Pricing Regulatory Tribunal (IPART's) **recommendations to the State Government that Ku-ring-gai Council is not 'Fit for the Future' and will be recommended to merge with Hornsby Council.**

Kathy Cowley, President of FOKE said "It was time the ratepayers of Ku-ring-gai know where Ku-ring-gai's State MPs stand over forced amalgamations. Our representatives know Ku-ring-gai Council has voted unanimously to oppose amalgamation with Hornsby and has made a lengthy submission to IPART which endorses that the council is "Fit for the Future' and can stand alone. Community consultation is against mergers so we are asking for them to support their constituents to oppose forced amalgamation."

"The Liberal Government when elected in 2011 promised to communities that there would be no forced amalgamations and that communities would be listened to and respected. Since then we have had nothing but broken promises over returning democracy and planning decisions back to local communities." Kathy Cowley said

"This is a serious breach of trust by the NSW Government and shows that the Government lacks respect for local councils and their communities" Kathy Cowley said

FOKE believes Premier Mike Baird and Minister Paul Toole have not provided any credible evidence to drive amalgamations. Premier Baird has wasted 1million of taxpayers money on TV ads. Premier Baird promised us genuine consultation but in reality the process has been a farce and a fait accompli." Kathy Cowley said

"No credible evidence has been provided by the Premier or Minister for Local Government to support the Government's push to amalgamate councils and its

mantra of “bigger is better” the evidence in fact is to the contrary.” “There has been no cost analysis produced by the government to underpin or drive council mergers. We understand they do not wish to go down that path because the answer might not be what the Government is looking for!” Kathy Cowley said.

“The only group which will benefit from mega councils will be the development industry who have been lobbying the Government to considerably reduce the number of councils” Kathy Cowley said.

FOKE has also sought assurances that our MPs will take FOKE’s concerns regarding IPART’s recommendations and forced amalgamations to the Premier Mike Baird , Minister Paul Toole and Cabinet.

For media comment, please call Kathy Cowley on 0431 158 880 or 9416 9007

