



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **FOKE THANKS COUNCIL FOR CONTINUING TO FIGHT FORCED AMALGAMATION THROUGH THE APPEALS COURT**

The Friends of Ku-ring-gai Environment Inc. (FOKE) condemn Premier Berejiklian's decision to force amalgamation of metropolitan councils. Now, Ku-ring-gai Council and its community is depending on democracy being served through its appeal before the Supreme Court.

"FOKE thanks the Mayor and Council for continuing to support the majority of ratepayers who are opposed to forced amalgamation and the proposal to keep up the fight through the Appeals Court. It is the only democratic option we have to save Ku-ring-gai from an undemocratic merger with the Hornsby Shire", Kathy Cowley said.

"The Premier's undemocratic decision will be fought by Ku-ring-gai citizens and other affected communities right through the by-elections and the next State election. Residents who have voted Liberal all their lives are now vowing to put the Liberals last at the ballot box! A government that does not listen to, or respect its community does not deserve to be re-elected", FOKE President Kathy Cowley said.

"We believe that the NSW Liberal Government will rue the day they destroyed local councils and 100-year-old communities such as Ku-ring-gai to create mega councils. People will not sit back and accept a government's decision based on lies and political expediency. The Premier has put big business interests, such as the property and development companies, that give the party huge donations, before the constituents they vowed to represent. The Premier's decision is not about driving efficiencies. It is about driving excessive development in our suburbs at the expense of the community and our quality of life. It is about dictating outcomes and reducing the voice of the community", Kathy Cowley claimed.

"Not only is the Premier's decision extremely divisive from a city/country perspective, it completely ignores the fact that over 80% of the Ku-ring-gai community is opposed to a forced amalgamation with the Hornsby Shire. The NSW Government has acted in a very dishonest and devious way. This is not about creating housing affordability in Ku-ring-gai. It is about taking local decisions away from the community and centralising power within the NSW Government and the vested interests that lobby them, such as The Property Council, The NSW Urban

Taskforce and the Sydney Business Chamber who have all a lobbied to drastically reduce the number of councils”, Kathy Cowley added.

FOKE is extremely disappointed by the behaviour of our two State MPs who have put their Liberal Party ambitions ahead of the constituents they have been elected to represent. Neither Jonathan O’Dea MP nor Alister Henskens MP have come out publicly to support Ku-ring-gai Council’s strong stance against forced amalgamation and desire to remain a stand-alone council, despite all the correspondence they have received from constituents expressing their opposition to forced amalgamation. Hornsby Shire residents, on the other hand, have been silent or completely apathetic on the issue!

“We also put on notice those Ku-ring-gai Liberal party member councillors who have surrendered Ku-ring-gai and the residents they were elected to represent in order to focus on their own political interests of securing a position with the Liberal Government, in the event of a merger. We believe a number of the Liberal member councillors, (particularly those with elected Liberal Party positions) have failed to declare perceived conflicts of interest when voting on amalgamation issues. This conflict, and the carrot dangled by the State Government that the faithful will be rewarded generously for their duplicity, is both immoral and a disgrace”, Kathy Cowley concluded.

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

