D-Day for Democracy & Local Government

Canada Bay Council is now forced to propose a merger

The City of Canada Bay has over-turned its decision to submit a stand-alone proposal to the State Government and will re-enter discussions with neighbours at Burwood and Auburn regarding potential amalgamations.

The back flip follows a Motion of Urgency put to last week's council meeting by Labor Clr Neil Kenzler who said a stand-alone submission would put the City of Canada Bay in a vulnerable position.

The City of Canada Bay has until the end of this month to submit the new merger proposal to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) for assessment as part of the State Government's Fit for the Future local government reform program.

Mayor Angelo Tsirekas told The Weekly Times that while his council would prefer to stand alone, this would make it a target for a forced amalgamation.

"We have always said we are Fit for the Future and would prefer to stand-alone but there has been real concerns that doing nothing would put us in the firing line for a forced merger with five other inner west Councils," Mayor Tsirekas said.

"It's not something that sits comfortably with any Councillors so we need to look at the best option for our community

"All of the communication from the State Government indicates submitting a stand-alone proposal will mean we are deemed not to be fit.

worked too hard and delivered too many great initiatives for our community to be labelled unfit."

Mayor Tsirekas added that the Council has kept the door open to remain stand-alone and has retained the right to review the resolution should the criteria or reform program change.

"We have been looking at a range of options over the past nine months, including the State Government's preferred option of an inner west mega Council involving us, Ashfield, Burwood, Leichhardt, Marrickville and Strathfield," he said.

"Independent modelling on this option has been undertaken by Morrison Low demonstrating that financially, for the long-term future of our community, this simply does not stack up.

"But if we do nothing, and we are forced into the mega Council option, it could have serious consequences for our community."

Ryde calls Parramatta gutless arrogant bunch of parasites!

In an extraordinary media release, the City of Ryde has likened neighbouring Parramatta City Council to a gutless bunch of arrogant parasites and megalomaniacs.

Yesterday's media release comes only days after the City of Ryde blasted Hornsby Shire Council for attempting to take over parts of North Ryde under the Baird Government's Fit For The Future regime.

"Ryde Council is once again appalled at the gutless, arrogant tactics of another Council attempting to take over large parts of the City of Ryde in particular, Macquarie Park, in its bid to become Fit for the Future," the media release said.

"The Fit for the Future initiative is descending into a farcical exercise of cash and land grabs.

"Parramatta Council in the stealth of grab of the majority of Ryde without a single discussion with our Council.

"Their obsessive desire for power is akin to that of a megalomaniac on steroids.

"They are like parasites attempting to suck the life-blood out of the City of Ryde."

The media release tells Parramatta to focus on building the west and not trying to expand east where there are already well managed, mature economic zones such as Ryde's Macquarie Park.

"This is the act of a reckless, immature Council with no integrity which is simply proposing this as a revenue raising exercise for Parramatta Council in an attempt to build a proper CBD that they have failed at dismally over the past 50 years," the media release said.

"They think that by simply expanding their boundaries that they have the initiative and capability of managing a thriving business hub like Macquarie Park."

Ryde views takeovers as 'hostile' under the Fit For The Future regime.

"Parramatta's actions are not only counter-productive, they totally contradict the Office of Local Government's Fit for the Future guidelines in respect of a hostile

Hunters Hill fears a political act could kill top alternative

Despite hours of work and more than half a million dollars in ratepayers funds being spent to save Hunters Hill, Ryde and Lane Cove the Baird Government could make a political decision to forcibly amalgamate the three councils.

Hunters Hill General Manager Barry Smith is at the forefront of the three council's campaign to keep local government local and to have the three represented at a joint regional authority.

In an exclusive interview with The Weekly Times Mr Smith expressed his fear of a forced merger despite all three councils being able to meet the Baird Government's financial targets under the Fit For The Future regime.

He said the 'worst case scenario' is for the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) to accept the three council's submission and for the government to disregard it.

"My biggest fear is that a political decision can be made on top on this IPART recommendation," he said.

"The government could decide to sit down and just draw a line or ask do you really want to have small councils with independent councillors?"

Mr Smith said a joint regional authority of Hunters Hill, Lane Cove and Ryde will see two councillors from each a consensus based model.

This model will see the representative councillors go to the regional authority with endorsement from their own councils and report back on binding decisions.

"This doesn't mean we can't adapt or modify decisions to suit local circumstances," he said.

"For example, in Ryde the Rangers use cameras because of a high level of assaults and in Hunters Hill we don't have that high level and cameras wouldn't be appropriate here.

"On the other hand, we have a large aged community and we can bring our expertise in aged and disability services to the regional authority."

Mr Smith said claims by Ryde Labor that 'mansion dwellers' in Hunters Hill will force large developments in Ryde are nonsense.

"That is complete and utter rubbish," he said.

"All our existing Local Environment Plans will be respected under our superior model and decisions like how many stories you can build will continue to be determined