

- 27 January 2015: Councillor workshop on Fit for the Future options and opportunities held with all Councillors present.
- 5 February 2015: Participation by all Councillors at the Fit for the Future Councillor Forum at Chatswood convened by the six councils named above plus Ku-ring-gai.
- 10 February 2015: Participation by myself at the Sydney Metropolitan Mayors Association Executive meeting.
- 12 February 2015: Participation by myself, the General Manager and Councillor Corrigan at the joint meeting of SHOROC and NSROC in Chatswood to discuss sub-regional planning.

Considerable time has been spent examining options and determining the best way to engage the community on this most significant issue for Mosman's future. Many more meetings are likely as we work towards responding to the State government's Fit for the Future deadline of 30 June 2015.

The 5 February meeting of councillors of the six councils plus Ku-ring-gai was of special importance to us. All seven Mosman Councillors attended - a 100% attendance record and the most of any of the Councils participating. This demonstrates the importance of the issue and this Council's commitment to full consideration of opportunities at hand.

At this Forum, 32 of the attending councillors registered votes on several key questions. Over 90% of these councillors voted against the proposed amalgamation.

A large majority supported an independent review of the proposed amalgamation. The purpose of this review is to test the case for the proposed merger, given that neither the Independent Local Government Review Panel (ILGRP) nor the State government has provided any form of business case whatsoever to demonstrate the value of the merger to the councils or communities involved.

In the event that the review produces some options for cooperation between some or all of the councils, we will certainly engage with any such options.

It should however be noted that Mosman Council has been and remains an active member for many years of the Northern Beaches group of councils (Pittwater, Warringah, Manly and Mosman) known as SHOROC. This has been a highly effective regional organisation and has delivered many of the kinds of benefits and strategic outcomes that the ILGRP claimed could be obtained via amalgamation.

Given the views expressed at the NSROC / SHOROC Councillor Forum and ongoing discussions with Councillors, I propose that Council seek the views of the Mosman community on the following options:

1. Maintain Mosman's Independence and continue to work collaboratively with other councils, especially with SHOROC

This option supports retention of Mosman as a stand-alone local government area, with its own locally-elected Council and local service delivery.

The option acknowledges that Mosman Council can achieve effective cross-border collaboration with other councils without the need to merge organisations.

It rejects proposals for amalgamation with other councils, including the lower north shore grouping proposed by the State Government.

2. The proposal for a 'mega merger' of Mosman, North Sydney, Lane Cove, Hunters Hill, Willoughby and (part) Ryde Councils

This option has been put forward by the ILGRP and the State government as having appropriate 'scale and capacity'.

It presupposes the amalgamation of the administration and governing bodies of the six councils into one centralised organisation.

This option has been rejected by the councils involved.

3. Possible Mosman Council merger with an adjoining Council, namely (a) North Sydney or (b) Manly

These options would also result in the creation of one organisation including a single administration and governing body.

Mosman has not approached either North Sydney or Manly Council. Nor has either Council indicated its support for this option.

However, it is important that we can provide the NSW Government with a clear statement on these lesser amalgamations as well as on the proposed mega merger in case one or other becomes an issue.

As Councillors are aware, 81.3% of voters at the 2012 local government elections registered opposition to the amalgamation of Mosman Council with any other local government authority.

However, Council and the community must address the specific alternatives to continued independence.

Engaging the community on the above options will vitally assist Council in assessing current community sentiment on the issue of amalgamation.

In relation to the proposed community engagement program, I anticipate that this would include descriptive materials outlining the costs and benefits of the four options outlined above. The engagement would be for a period of four to six weeks commencing late February, and would involve:

- An information brochure letterboxed to local households and business
- Prominent information on Council's website
- Information available at the Civic Centre and Library
- A public meeting chaired by myself in the Council Chambers
- Appropriate use of social media
- Newspaper advertisements and media releases

I propose that local community engagement proceed as soon as possible, with the public meeting to be held on Monday 9 March 2015 and that we invite our local member the Hon Jillian Skinner, Member for North Shore and Minister for Health, to the public meeting.

Community feedback would be sought until the end March/early April 2015 with the exact timing to be determined.

Both the preparation of the independent review agreed upon at the NSROC / SHOROC Councillor Forum and the local community engagement regarding Fit for the Future options will require some unbudgeted expenditure and I recommend appropriate allocations up to \$50,000 be provided to enable these important initiatives to proceed.

COUNCIL RESOLUTION

Motion Bendall/Corrigan

That Council:

1. Confirms that it is strongly opposed to forced amalgamation in any form.
2. Endorses preparation and part funding (on an equal-contribution basis) of an independent review of the amalgamation of six councils proposed by the Independent Local Government Review Panel which the NSW Government has asked us to consider (namely Mosman, North Sydney, Lane Cove, Willoughby, Hunters Hill and East Ryde).
3. In the event that the review produces some options for cooperation between some or all of the councils, we will certainly engage with any such options.
4. Prepares a program of community engagement in the next 6-8 weeks to fully inform Council's response to the State Government's Fit for the Future requirements, including our response to the amalgamation proposal outlined above and other possible amalgamations.
4. Invites our local member the Hon Jillian Skinner, Member for North Shore and Minister for Health, to the public meeting on Monday 9 March.
5. Allocates up to \$50,000 to implement the review, appropriate communications and the consultation process.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY
