



25 February 2016

Mr Michael Bullen
Delegate, Council Boundary Review
GPO Box 5341
Sydney NSW 2001

Via online portal

Dear Mr Bullen,

Re. Council Boundary Review: Parramatta City*, Auburn City*, The Hills Shire*, Holroyd* and Hornsby Shire* councils

The Sydney Business Chamber, Western Sydney (SBCWS) is a division of the NSW Business Chamber and represents Western Sydney's leading corporations. The SBCWS advocates for the prosperity of Western Sydney by providing a voice for the business community on issues which impact the region. The SBCWS welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Council Boundary Review of Parramatta City, Auburn City, Holroyd and Hornsby Shire councils.

The SBCWS has been a consistent and vocal advocate for local government reform. The current governance structure of 41 local councils within metropolitan Sydney is failing to support the needs and aspirations of a modern and growing city. Change is both necessary and long overdue. With council boundaries in Sydney having essentially been snap-frozen for the past 50 years, a failure to embrace change and take the opportunity before us to build councils that can support both the current and future demands of our growing community can only result in a reduction in the quality of services and delivery of infrastructure.

While the Chamber supports the commitment of the Government to reduce the number of councils in Sydney to 25, we believe the proposed mergers before you of Parramatta City*, Auburn City*, The Hills Shire*, Holroyd* and Hornsby Shire* councils (City A) AND Auburn City*, Holroyd City* and Parramatta City* councils (City B) in their current form represents a significant missed opportunity to achieve a council structure with sufficient scale, capacity and resources to adequately support Sydney's fastest growing CBD.

The financial advantages or disadvantages of the proposal to the residents and ratepayers of the areas concerned

The current 'City A' proposal takes in the growing Sydney Olympic Park precinct. With a dedicated light rail line commencing construction in 2019, Government forecasts indicate that this precinct is about to experience an employment and residential construction boom¹.

'City B' to the south of Parramatta has less potential; there are fewer businesses, more residential and less public and private investment. Put simply, City B is not experiencing the growth of City A and is comparatively disadvantaged.

¹ With light rail construction expected to commence in 2019, NSW Department of Planning estimates that as many as 10,000 homes could be built in the Camellia area alone.

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Sydney Business Chamber:
Helping Sydney maximise its potential as a leading global city.

Sydney Business Chamber is a division of NSW Business Chamber which represents 30,000 businesses across the state.



What Sydney needs at its geographical centre, is a united council that includes a large rate base and the ability to fund regional infrastructure. To that end the Chamber proposes the amalgamation of City A and City B.

Such a proposal aligns with IPART's assessment of *Fit for the Future* Proposals which quotes the 2013 Independent Local Government Review Panel (ILGRP) stating that:

"The ILGRP considered the expansion of the cities of Sydney and Parramatta to be the centrepiece of local government reform...Parramatta would be the centrepiece of reform with a large base of 435,000 residents as proposed."

Parramatta's proposal to **Fit for the Future** was to redraw the Council boundaries to include the whole of the current Parramatta and Holroyd LGAs, and portions of the Auburn, Ryde, Hills and Hornsby LGAs. Such a council would create a rates base of 174,500 (2011 Census) growing to 236,864 by 2036. This was considered 'unfit' and accordingly rejected by IPART.

The new proposal for City A however only grows to 215,725 and City B is 219 147.

IPART's review said, *"Councils need a strong base to ensure their long-term sustainability; to achieve economies of scale and scope; to deliver quality services; to provide a pool of talented councillor candidates; to attract skilled staff; and to develop strategic capacity in governance, advocacy, planning, and management."*

Surely a council of 'City A' plus 'City B' culminating in a total of 434,872 residents, consistent with the 2013 Independent Local Government Review Panel report, would achieve better long term sustainability for the community rather than dividing residents into 2 council areas .

Additionally, while the assessment of the proposed mergers indicates a total financial benefit of \$69 million over 20 years would be achieved, the administrative and operational complexity of merging parts of existing councils into two new separate councils (rather than merging them under one new council) may mean that these benefits are harder to realise (or that these benefits are less than if a more ambitious merger was pursued).

SBCWS continues to support the local Government reform process to deliver a better, and stronger local government sector in New South Wales. We emphasise again however that the opportunity to build a strong resilient, sustainable and unified council for the Parramatta area should not be missed and a more ambitious merger than that currently proposed should be recommended to Government.

I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you in person to discuss the proposed mergers in more detail. In the interim, please feel free to contact Mrs Kate Bryant Public Affairs Manager, Sydney Business Chamber on 8838 0445 or via kate.bryant@thechamber.com.au if you wish to discuss these matters further.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Borger'.

David Borger
Executive Director
Sydney Business Chamber, Western Sydney