

MM/4: **Mayoral Minute: Proposed Response to State Government's Latest Proposal to Merge Mosman with North Sydney and Willoughby Councils (MM)**

MAYOR: **Mayor Abelson**

MOSPLAN REF: **Governance - Leadership and Engagement (Strategy 2)**

RECOMMENDATION

That Council endorse its existing policy and oppose the Government's proposed merger of Mosman with North Sydney and Willoughby.

MAYORAL MINUTE

On Thursday 25 February the Minister for Local Government made a new proposal that Mosman Council be merged with North Sydney and Willoughby Councils. This proposal is to run concurrently with the previous proposal that Mosman Council be merged with Manly and the southern part of Warringah.

This new proposal was brought into effect by way of a letter from the Minister to the Chief Executive of the Office of Local Government (OLG) published on the OLG website on 25 February. As per this proposal, Council and community have until 8 April 2016 to make a submission.

To-date the Minister has not provided any business case or paper describing the proposal and any justification or reasons for it. This is an extraordinary situation.

Worse than this, the Government continues to promote misinformation. It tells us that we need to have larger more effective councils like Victoria and Queensland when rates per capita are of the order of 35% higher in Victoria and Queensland than in NSW. And it continues to tell the public that councils in NSW are losing money and not financially sustainable when we are collectively achieving an operating surplus of \$0.5 million a day.

We councillors have to determine a position to guide our formal response. In this regard I draw attention to our current position as resolved recently by Council and as provided in our submission to the delegate reviewing the proposal that Mosman Council merge with Manly and the part of Warringah.

"Having regard to the advice of the Government's delegate, Mr Bullen, that he would take note of and report on any Council preferences regarding amalgamation, it was resolved unanimously by Mosman Council at its meeting of 16 February 2016 that, while Council remains strongly opposed to any forced merger, it would - on the basis of its resident and ratepayer surveys and communities of interest - consider a one-to-one merger with North Sydney Council to be superior to any other merger under the criteria in section 263 of the Local Government Act 1993, noting that this merger would provide a population of over 100,000 in a few years.

However, to be absolutely clear, this is **not** the first preference of the Mosman community. The first preference of the community is continuation of the present Council. As described in this submission, the Mosman community strongly supports current governance and sees no case for any change. Support for a merger with North Sydney is only 23%. Moreover, the Mosman community does not see any shared communities of interest extending further north or west to the local government areas of Willoughby or Lane Cove."

I believe that this is a clear statement and one that has broad community support as indicated in polling over the last four years. Accordingly I propose that Council resolves to endorse our existing policy and to oppose the Government's proposed merger of Mosman with North Sydney and Willoughby.