

Newport Residents Association

I have been involved in local politics, Parish Support Groups & Social Justice Groups as well as various volunteer organizations for many years but I may be somewhat of a “mystery woman” to many of you at present. (Although, chances are, I’ve taught a member of your family or organized a Funeral for someone you know!) I have lived and worked (as a Primary teacher, small business owner and Funeral Director) on the Northern Beaches for the past 40 years. I raised and educated my 3 sons locally. Like many women of my generation, I returned to fulltime study by way of the HECS scheme later in life in order to convert my 3 year-teaching diploma into a degree in Adult Education.

From my first day as a resident of the peninsula in 1976 I have always felt that I’m perpetually “on holiday”. I live in Collaroy and look out over Dee Why Lagoon and Long Reef and Dee Why Beaches. Every day the view is different and captivating. I have always deeply appreciated our breathtaking scenery and very special local environment. My husband Jim and stepson Brendan both also have a deep affinity for the Pittwater area, having both volunteered for a number of years with the Broken Bay Coastal Patrol, now Marine Rescue. My family and I have never taken this beautiful place in which we live for granted. No doubt, each of you feels the same way.

As concerned residents of Newport, you obviously deeply appreciate the unique natural, environmental and cultural history of the area as a whole. You all have a deep understanding of the need to balance controlled development whilst ensuring the preservation of Pittwater’s natural beauty for many generations to come. You rightly pride yourselves with being able to “keep a finger on the pulse” of local issues, the needs of the residents and potential threats to the environment and Newport’s unique lifestyle. Like me, you would be all very aware of the devastating effects to our beautiful coastline and waterways of Climate Change and believe we need to seriously address this immediately.

Many of your organizations have successfully lobbied against over-commercialization and exploitation of unique areas in the past. Your efforts, and the efforts of Pittwater Council, have restored, enhanced and added to an enormous amount of green space and areas of natural beauty. Well done to you and the other 18 organizations involved in “Pittwater Forever”. In this vein, I also wish to congratulate former Cr Julie Hegarty in standing up for her local community over the past 21 years.

Despite Mackellar being in Liberal hands since its inception, the needs of the community have been consistently ignored. I ask the question: “Can anyone think of 3 major initiatives for the area that your local MP’s have delivered over the last 20 years?” I think not. This area has been crying out for a better deal for years, especially in relation to our hopelessly inadequate road network. The chaos of several weekends ago is just the latest example.

However, commendable inroads have been made in the past by people such as Minister for Health at the time, Billy Sheahan who opened the original Mona Vale Hospital after Labor first set aside the land for a public hospital and Peter Garrett when he completed the walkway and cycleway around Narrabeen Lake with Federal funds. When noting the worthy achievements of various notable figures in Mackellar's past, I would be remiss not to mention my good friend and former Pittwater Mayor David James, who was deeply involved in the Warriewood Wetlands issue, starting in 1978. David was committed to this cause when he was a Warringah A Riding ALP Councillor and remained steadfast in his commitment continuously until the decisive 1994 Land and Environment Court Hearing.

I am a woman who does not shy away from taking a positive stance on issues that are dear to my heart when something or someone I love is vulnerable or under threat. Like you, I believe that, when like-minded voices unite, the "impossible" can be achieved. In the words of Nelson Mandela, "It always seems impossible until it's done."

As the Labor candidate for Mackellar in this Election and as a local resident for 40 years, I consider it my duty and my privilege as a local advocate to stand up and be counted when my community has been treated with disdain and disrespect. Because an issue is technically deemed to come under the umbrella of another level of Government, I don't accept that I should just wash my hands of it and say it's someone else's problem. That is just nonsense.

I wholeheartedly believe that this forced Council amalgamation has been totally undemocratic and un-Australian. Our NSW Labor Party policy has been abundantly clear since Day One: NO FORCED AMALGAMATIONS. I quote from an Opinion Piece written by Luke Foley and printed in "The Guardian" on Wednesday, 18th May, 2016, entitled "Mike Baird's Forced Council Mergers Are a Disgraceful Rort". Foley says: "The forced mergers are cloaked in the pious pretence of municipal efficiency, but the truth is their motivation is cynically political." He goes on to say: Don't just take my word for it: Listen to what Baird's Federal Liberal colleague Nick Varvaris MP has said: "After 4 years of what the State Government dishonestly portrayed as consultation, Mike Baird has crudely rammed through amalgamations that will provide nothing but personal political benefit to a small cabal. The contempt that Mike Baird and the NSW Government have shown towards the electorate is nothing short of breathtaking and displays how out of touch they collectively are." Foley goes on to say: "Labor will not stand for this. The next Labor Government will ensure fair boundaries and will provide a democratic opportunity for all communities to vote on demerging."

Local Government Elections are currently scheduled for September 10, 2016 in line with the Act. For the recently forcibly merged Councils, the Baird Government has decided that

they will be under care of the Administrator until March, 2017, when they will have their own election. Therefore, 2 separate elections will need to take place. We as a Party do not believe that a Council such as ours needs to be under Administration for this extended period of time and that we too should be able to hold our Election concurrently with other Councils, in line with the Act, this coming September.

The reasons behind why the Liberal Government of the day agreed to a separate Pittwater in 1991 are as valid today as they were then. The Council has performed well over the years, in all areas of finance and decision-making. They have not failed in any way. The decision by Mike Baird has more to do with politics than good governance. Who can forget the first recommendations including merging part of Mosman with Manly. Bizarre! In this whole scenario, the State and Federal Liberal Party have seriously underestimated the deep concern, resilience and fighting power of the good people of Pittwater.

As your representative I would re-visit the whole decision-making process. We need a fresh set of eyes to look at this mess. What I fear is that a non-elected public servant will be making planning decisions that may have long-term implications for our community. That is why I have already written to Dick Persson, the Administrator seeking his re-assurance that there will be no tinkering with the current planning controls until such time as a new council is elected. I have given a copy of my letter to the Gavin. I give you my word that, if I am elected, I would do all in my power to have this travesty reversed.

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Labor Candidate for Mackellar 2016