



The Chairman
Local Government Team
IPART
P.O. Box K35
Haymarket Post Shop
NSW 1240

16th July 2015

Dear Sir,

Pittwater Forever Submission on Warringah Council's Fit for the Future (FFF) Improvement Proposal

Pittwater Forever - a federation of eighteen of the major **resident** organisations covering the breadth of the Pittwater LGA and formed for the express purpose of combating the **amalgamation** aspects of the State Governments 'Fit for the Future' proposals make the following submission in respect of Warringah Council's FFF Improvement Proposal.

Whereas the Warringah Council Improvement Proposal is essentially a proposal to stand alone, it does make numerous references to its preferred model being a merger with Manly and Pittwater Councils to form one Northern Beaches Council. Such references can be found at Section 1.1, 1.2, 3.5 and the whole of Appendix 2.1. We consider that as these merger proposals have been rejected by both the Pittwater and Manly Councils they should not be considered further by IPART.

Pittwater Forever support Pittwater Councils decision to reject a Northern Beaches Mega Council. We fully support Pittwater Council's Improvement Proposal and indeed have submitted a supportive IPART Submission to that effect.

Notwithstanding the above, we would like to take the opportunity of providing some commentary on the key reasons why Pittwater Forever does not support a Northern Beaches Mega Council Option.

Pittwater Council is the newest council in NSW, formed 23 years ago, seceding from Warringah Council. The reason for the secession was that Pittwater community was not being represented either in financial or service terms by the then large Warringah Council. A referendum was ordered. This culminated in 1991 when a non-compulsory postal poll of the residents resulted in a 73.5% vote in favour of secession. Since then Pittwater Council has become an efficient, effective and reactive "role model" Council in the eyes of the residents. The Pittwater community do not want to undo the great successes of the last 23 years. In comparison Warringah Council has been placed into administration

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3 times, the last time for primarily being dysfunctional. It has also had 70 codes of conduct over the last 7 years and has applied for a 26.2% rate increase over the past 4 years.

Pittwater Forever would also like to point out a number of anomalies and statements within the Warringah submission which we wish to comment upon;

- Under Template 2 Section 2.3 Warringah makes statements that imply they are picking up 100% of the expenses of the Kimbriki Environmental Enterprises which supply waste management services for the region. This is incorrect, Warringah is the landowner of Kimbriki (the waste management site) but then leases the site to The Kimbriki Environmental Enterprise Pty Ltd a company made up of Warringah, Pittwater, Manly & Mosman councils (of which Warringah is a 51% shareholder) and this company then supplies the waste services to the four council areas splitting the costs proportionally.
- Under Appendix 3.1A Warringah indicates that their survey was based on 4,228 on-line surveys, submissions & comments whereas elsewhere in the same Appendix they talk about 2,001 on-line surveys and submissions. This means that they have counted 2,220 comments (whatever that means) in their numbers to bolster their case. Compare this to Pittwater council who received 3,598 surveys and submissions (refer Micromex survey report Appendix 3 of the Pittwater submission) and is a council less than half Warringah's size.
- Further in the same Appendix 3.1A 'Key Findings – Submissions' Warringah state that 80% of submissions support a change in the Northern Beaches (they do not quote how they came up with this number). They also state they have a recent (May 2015) council satisfaction survey where 94% of Warringah residents were satisfied with their council. Yet in the same summary they indicate that 74% of Warringah residents have a 1st preference for a new northern beaches council which suggests that 74% are not satisfied with their council. This is why we are saying there are anomalies in Warringah's presentation.
- Under Appendix 3.2 & 3.3 which are the independent telephone surveys, the more comprehensive Jetty research records that only 38.6% of all Northern Beaches residents surveyed support amalgamation (48.3% for Warringah residents) and that a similar number only 35% give some support for a new combined council (49% for just Warringah residents). The limited Micromex survey supports the Jetty findings. When you compare these finding with the statement by Warringah that 80% of submissions support a change, we think you need to rely on these independent reports to assess the real support level.

Pittwater Council's Improvement Proposal is supported by 89% of the residents of Pittwater with only 6% of residents favouring one Northern Beaches Council. This is probably the largest show of community support for any council proposal in the whole IPART FFF process. It shows the high level of engagement and support the community has in its strong, progressive, modern council.



Pittwater is highly valued by its residents and visitors for the natural beauty of its bushland, waterways and beaches. The community has a deep connection with the environment and a desire to protect it, including the community and cultural experience and the unique characteristics that shape each village. There appears considerable merit therefore in retaining Pittwater Council in its current form to play a specialist role in managing these important and unique areas.

Pittwater Forever strongly believes that Pittwater Council is 'Fit for the Future' and that there should be no forced amalgamations. 65% of the Pittwater community do not support forced amalgamations.

Contrary to Warringah Council's claims, Pittwater Council's research would suggest that there is no evidence to support a strong joint "community of interest" across Manly, Warringah and Pittwater - an essential prerequisite for any successful merger.

The KPMG reports also corrected the inaccurate claims by Warringah Council that one council would save \$250M over a ten year period. Professor Brian Dollery's reports also make clear that a merger of the 3 councils into one will not improve financial sustainability and will not generate cost reductions. Merging on the basis of no or negligible net savings isn't enough to justify turning councils upside down, reducing community representation and opposing the long held stance of the Pittwater community against amalgamations. Especially as Warringah Council has done **no due diligence** on its claims.

Pittwater Forever supports Pittwater Council's involvement in SHOROC, our regional shared joint services hub, and its vision of increasing collaboration for planning, lobbying and supporting efficiencies throughout the region. In contrast Warringah Council has progressively de-committed from its participation in SHOROC to the detriment of the other shareholders – a very strange and unfriendly tactic given Warringah's vision of one mega council. (their de-commitment commenced shortly after the commencement of the FFTF program and about the same time they commenced advertising for one northern beaches council so their motives are questionable).

It is the perception of the great majority of Pittwater residents that Warringah Council has wasted \$190,000 of Warringah rate-payers money on a sophisticated marketing led FFF campaign to win voter support for One Northern Beaches Council. This included funding a "Northern Beaches" website. Contrast this to the very controlled neutrality displayed by Pittwater Council during the voting period. We would contend that the voters of Warringah have been "**channelled**" to vote for One Northern Beaches Council.

Pittwater Forever regard the claims of greater efficiencies and effectiveness made by Warringah Council throughout Appendix 2.1 for one Northern Beaches Council as pure marketing hype. There exist no hard financial facts to support such claims, nor any due diligence or sign off by credible independent parties. Pittwater Forever has developed a 4 page supportive submission that is contained

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within Pittwater Council's Improvement Proposal at Attachment 6. Pittwater Forever fully support this submission and we attach it to this letter as part of Pittwater Forever's submission with respect to the **amalgamation aspects** of the Warringah Council's Improvement Proposal.

Yours faithfully,

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