



# Newport Residents Association Inc.

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22<sup>nd</sup> February 2016

The Delegate,  
Council Boundary Review,  
Pittwater/Warringah (part)  
GPO Box 5341  
Sydney NSW 2001

Dear Sir,

## **Re Submission Council Boundary Review Pittwater/Warringah(part)**

On behalf of the Newport Residents Association we wish to make the following submission. We will address much of the criteria that are required to be considered by yourself as Delegate. However, before we move to those points we wish to comment on the recent Public Meetings held on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2016 at the Mona Vale Golf Club.

The majority of the attendees at the public meetings were from the Warringah LGA. This was understandable as the division of Warringah into two had not been contemplated seriously by its residents until the announcements immediately prior to Christmas. A majority of the Warringah attendees at these meetings were strongly advocating for a 'one northern beaches council'. We are concerned that this large voice does not distort the outcomes of your review.

From the Pittwater residents perspective, they were attending these meetings not to argue the merits or otherwise of one Northern Beaches council but to debate the subject matter of the proposal on the table of the public meeting, viz the proposed merger of *Pittwater and Warringah (part)*. If the Pittwater residents had at all felt that the public meeting was about an argument/support for one northern beaches council versus the merger proposal or retention of Pittwater as is then there would have been many hundreds more Pittwater residents at the meeting. Pittwater residents, over the last 18 months or so, have already *vigorously* been addressing the various retention and merger options as part of the '*Fit for the Future*' Government process.

We would now like to address some of the criteria required to be addressed by you in your role as Delegate to the Boundaries Commission:

*(c) the existing historical and traditional values in the existing areas and the impact of change on them.*

History has shown the existing and traditional values (including social and environmental factors) of Pittwater and Warringah to be anything but compatible. We commend to the Delegate, as essential reading, the book "*Pittwater Uprising*" This was published only two years ago by the first elected mayor of Pittwater, Robert Dunn.

This book chronicles the gross inequalities and other evidence which culminated in the secession of Pittwater from Warringah. This included the total ignorance and impertinence applied by the majority 9 Warringah councillors to all matters important to the community of A Riding (now Pittwater, which had only 3 councillors to represent it). A final blow was the Warringah approval of the Delmege building in Mona Vale, against overwhelming community objection. It still stands today as an ugly reminder of the uncaring attitude of a remote Council to the communities in its more distant areas.

(d) *the attitude of the residents and ratepayers of the areas concerned*

Firstly, Pittwater was formed barely two decades ago when it seceded from Warringah and so is one of the newest councils in NSW. Pittwater council has been a very successful council being a prior winner of the prestigious Bluet Award and runner-up as best council only last year in 2015. It met all the *Fit For The Future* criteria except for the dubious 'scale & capacity' test set by the Government (and since amended).

***The attitude of the residents and ratepayers can be summarised from the three surveys conducted and/or commissioned by Pittwater Council*** in 2015 being on-line and paper surveys conducted by the Council itself plus a randomised telephone survey conducted externally by Micromex Research.

The support for ***Pittwater remaining as is*** was:

- ***89% of online respondents***
- ***95% of paper survey respondents***
- ***89% of randomised telephone survey respondents.***

A second alternative of a so-called 'Greater Pittwater' (similar to the Government's current proposal) was included in the surveys although, except for the telephone survey, the results were muddled by the way the questions were presented and how they were counted. Despite this and upon analysis, the results show as a *forced* second preference:

- Second preference for both on-line and paper was 65%
- 48% of the randomised telephone survey were supportive *and*
- When asked to select a second preference the randomised telephone survey received 74% support.

A third alternative of one Northern Beaches council was also included in the survey with ***very little support*** and its results were as follows:

- 15% of online respondents gave it a first preference
- 5% of the paper survey gave it a first preference
- 12% of the randomised telephone survey gave it as a 1st preference

*(e1) the impact of any relevant proposal on the ability of the councils of the areas concerned to provide adequate, equitable and appropriate services and facilities.*

Again we refer you to "*Pittwater Uprising*": the examples of infrastructure lag when Pittwater was a part of Warringah were many!

We quote from the *IPART CIP summary report* with regards to Pittwater today:

"(It) satisfies the criterion for infrastructure and service management based on its forecast to meet the benchmarks for the infrastructure backlog ratio, the asset maintenance and the debt service ratio by 2019-20." Additionally, Council has a \$30million infrastructure funding already in place to address this.

The *Merger Proposal* in the Government's own document (page 8) shows Pittwater as having a 5% Infrastructure Backlog. This is likely to blow out once again, if Pittwater were to revert to a minority position in what would become an essentially Warringah Council.

*(e4) in the case of a proposal for the amalgamation of two or more areas, the desirability (or otherwise) of dividing the resulting area or areas into wards*

One of the great strengths of Pittwater is its **ward system**, comprised of three wards with three councillors elected to represent each ward. This allows the word 'local' in local government to have some meaning (and indeed the potential loss of this in a larger merged council is one of the things we fear most). The ward system is critical to an LGA to supply reasonably even councillor representation across the whole LGA and therefore give local communities a chance for their 'voice' to be heard. Should the proposed merger of *Pittwater/Warringah (part)* go ahead we strongly believe that there should be five wards with three locally elected Councillors per ward.

*(e5) The need to ensure that the opinions of each of the diverse communities of the proposed Council would seem insurmountable.*

Whether the outcome in a merged Council were four wards or five wards (and even if we were to end up with six Pittwater area Councillors out of a total twelve Councillors), in any plebiscite, the voice of Pittwater as we know it would be drowned out, because it represents only 45% of the population of the proposed Council. And that voice will only shrink further because of the considerable component of Pittwater which is National Park and waterways, compared to the dense development already under way in the southern and western parts of the proposed area.

Again, we refer you to the historical evidence for this, from when Pittwater was part of Warringah, less than 25 years ago.

(f) *Other factors relevant to the provision of efficient and effective local government in the existing and proposed new areas?*

You only need to consider the 2015 coveted "Bluet Award" as noted in the preamble to (d) above. Winner Warringah; runner-up Pittwater. Where is there any logic in drastically deconstructing the two councils most recently honoured as the best two in New South Wales?

We would like to make some further comments regarding this proposal that we think are very important for the people of Pittwater.

Pittwater residents were asked to give serious thought to merging with part of Warringah on the basis that the government forced an amalgamation. The arguments put forward were to expand the southern boundary to take into account the Narrabeen Lagoon Catchment, based on a suburbs basis, which on environmental and catchment management grounds had some merit.

This proposal only differs from the government's proposal by the inclusion of *Killarney Heights* and *Forestville*. Many Pittwater residents object to the inclusion of these two suburbs which have never been canvassed with the community; they have no relationship to the Narrabeen Lagoon Catchment and geographically are closer to Chatswood. Additionally they would create an unequal merger and potentially undo even more of the benefits of Pittwater's last 25 years.

From our observations at the Boundaries Commission public hearings, the residents of Killarney Heights and Forestville would also agree that it makes no sense to be included in a northern merger.

In fact, many Pittwater residents seriously question the inclusion of *Frenchs Forest* and *Davidson* into the proposed northern merger and believe it would be more logical for those suburbs to be included in the proposed southern merger with Manly. If those four suburbs were excluded from the northern merger proposal completely, it would move some way towards being more acceptable to Pittwater residents and produce greater synergies on environmental, catchment management and geographic terms.

We appreciate this opportunity for members of Newport Residents Association to put forward these matters which we believe are critical to Pittwater residents and the future sustainability of our region.

Yours sincerely,

Gavin Butler  
President