

**15 February 2013**

## **BETTER COUNCILS THROUGH STRONGER COLLABORATION**

- The Northern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (NSROC) represents the constituents of the seven local governments of Hornsby, Hunter's Hill, Ku-ring-gai, Lane Cove, North Sydney, Ryde and Willoughby.
- NSROC supports local government reform that will help councils respond more effectively to the changing needs of our communities and the economy. Reform must be based on outcomes and not dictated by process or ideology and we look forward to receiving the Independent Local Government Review Panel's report due out in April.
- Local government reform should include mechanisms that allow councils to undertake cooperative activities more easily and efficiently. Our Councils hold the NSW Government to its pre-election promise of no forced amalgamations. We believe that reform should introduce changes that enable real improvements, without the need for mandatory amalgamations.
- Mandatory amalgamations may not be the best solution for better local councils. Amalgamations may not solve the fundamental problems facing us. A larger council will still face the pressures of increased service demand from a restricted financial base. Amalgamation experiences in other jurisdictions have created great upheaval. As Councils are merged, service levels, contracts, wages and technologies must be harmonised, creating substantial transitional costs.
- A key element for successful change is support by the community. If communities of interest are either fractured or pushed together in artificial groupings this will diminish community well-being. Reshaping councils into standard populations or geographic areas will not correspond to the uneven distribution of infrastructure, economic and employment centres. Nor will it create alignment with inconsistent State and Federal agencies' operational boundaries.

- In the NSROC region there are historically established communities with continuing separate identities. The financial management of our councils is sound, as recently verified by the NSW Treasury Corporation. As a Regional Organisation of Councils we have a history of successful collaboration and have achieved valuable outcomes for our communities through cooperation.
- NSROC believes that greater collaboration should take place in our region. We are investigating new shared services and joint activities that recognise the strategic gains from sharing of resources and maximise the outcomes from our communities' assets.
- We seek and support reform that will strengthen our capacity as individual councils to engage in collaboration that delivers improved value for money and is in the best interests of our communities. This may include utilising local businesses and partnering with other organisations, as well as cooperating through ROCs. With greater flexibility we can improve our operations while maintaining local participation and democracy to our constituents under our existing boundaries.

Cr Richard Quinn, President (Mayor of Hunter's Hill Council)

**Northern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils**

*Representing Councils of Hunter's Hill, Hornsby, Ku-ring-gai, Lane Cove, North Sydney, Ryde and Willoughby*

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