

COUNCIL AMALGAMATIONS
AN UPDATE – BUT THIS IS A WORK IN PROGRESS!

On 12 May this year the NSW government announced the amalgamation of several NSW councils. Lane Cove was pencilled in for an amalgamation with Ryde and Hunter's Hill Councils but this has yet to happen.

The GCA is against forced amalgamations and has supported Lane Cove Council in its move to fight amalgamation in the NSW Land and Environment Court. This action was run in tandem with actions by other councils including Hunter's Hill, Mosman and North Sydney.

On 20 September Mr Justice Moore dismissed the objections of Lane Cove and Hunter's Hill but he found errors in the reports that justified the amalgamations of North Sydney and Willoughby. On the strength of the success of the North Sydney and Willoughby Council cases and, in the absence of a Court of Appeal decision on a Woollahra Council challenge, Lane Cove and Hunter's Hill Councils have lodged a notice of intention to appeal Mr Justice Moore's decision.

The Minister for Local Government has agreed that no moves will be made to force the amalgamation of Lane Cove, Ryde and Hunter's Hill Councils until seven days after the judgment is handed down in the Woollahra case.

So we are in a holding pattern and the Minister still has the power to change his mind.
It is never too late to register your concern about forced amalgamation.

PROPOSED MERGER OF EAST WARD WITH COUNCILS THAT CONTROL CROWS NEST/ST LEONARDS
STILL VERY MUCH A LIVE ISSUE

The marked increase in high density development approvals and completions in the Crows Nest/St Leonards area has impacted East Ward of Lane Cove Council significantly. This is likely to continue with 75% of Crows Nest/St Leonards controlled by other councils.

The possibility of East Ward becoming a far flung outpost of a Lane Cove/Ryde/Hunter's Hill Council will erode even further the voice of East Ward residents when they raise issues such as school capacity, traffic congestion and access to open space.

The GCA feels that East Ward residents will have a greater chance of preserving the amenity of their neighbourhood if they have a say in the council that will make most of the decisions that impact them. It is not yet clear just what this council will look like, with both North Sydney and Willoughby involved in legal challenges. But whatever happens, a merger of East Ward with North Sydney, Willoughby or a combination of both will provide East Ward with a stronger voice than it will have as an outpost of Ryde.

The Minister for Local Government has on his desk a proposal signed by 360 East Ward residents seeking integration of East Ward into the Crows Nest/St Leonards local government area (in whatever form it ultimately takes).

This proposal has not been dismissed – it is a live issue but nothing can happen while the amalgamation court cases are running.

The GCA will move on this front as soon as the shape of our area has been clarified.

See **HERE** for copies of correspondence with the Minister about this proposal.