

Mosman Parks & Bushland Association Inc.



Mr Michael Bullen, Delegate
Council Boundary Review
GPO Box 5341
Sydney NSW 2001

Submission From: Katherine Susan (Kate) Eccles
President, Mosman Parks & Bushland Association Inc
P O Box 4113
Mosman NSW 2088

Email: mosman.parks@gmail.com
Phone: 9968 1336

Dear Mr Bullen,

I write on behalf of the Mosman Parks & Bushland Association Inc to **object to the Merger Proposal for Mosman, Manly and (part) Warringah Councils.**

The Mosman Parks & Bushland Association was formed fifty one years ago to protest against the destruction of bushland at Bradleys Head, Mosman. Among its founding members were Eileen and Joan Bradley who developed a system of bush regeneration known as the Bradley Method which is still practised today.

Over its 51 years, the Association has worked to foster community awareness of the values of bushland and to encourage community involvement.

Association members and other residents have continued to take an active part in bush regeneration as volunteers. They are encouraged and supported in their efforts by their local representatives and Council staff.

The objectives of the Association remain the same today - the protection and preservation of bushland, parks, and open space in the Municipality of Mosman for the benefit of current and future generations of residents and visitors.

We strongly believe that these objectives will be better fulfilled by a *local* council with adequate representation in the *local* area than by a large council on the other side of Spit Bridge in which there will be only two elected councillors representing the interests of Mosman.

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Mosman has an exceptional natural landscape and the survival of so much of it can be attributed, at least in part, to the efforts of the Mosman community.

Bushland is vulnerable. If it is not adequately maintained it becomes degraded. Once degraded it ceases to have the high ecological value that gave rise to its protective zoning (E2). The land can then be rezoned for alternative use or even sold.

Parks: The claims of active and passive recreation have constantly to be balanced. Our parks will be subjected to the needs of a wider, more populous community and their qualities of quiet repose will come under increased pressure.

We object to the Merger Proposal on the following grounds as listed in the section 263 (3) of the Local Government Act 1993.

1. The financial advantages or disadvantages of the proposal to the residents and ratepayers of the area concerned

- The proposed savings announced in the Merger Document (\$47m when the cost of the merger is excluded) are paltry.
- In Queensland expenditure on staff is higher in amalgamated councils than in those that are not amalgamated.
- There is no evidence that cost savings will be achieved.
- After the 4 year freeze on rates, it is expected that rates for Mosman residents will rise substantially as land values are used for the calculation of rates. This means that Mosman residents will pay more, but with only two representatives in the merged council, they will not receive the benefits of the increased rates. Mosman residents will be supporting assets and services in Manly and part of Warringah.

We can see no evidence that expenditure on our parks and bushland will be increased or even maintained. Indeed, the Association fears that in a Council where there are only two councillors representing Mosman, the parks and bushland of Mosman will not be seen as a priority.

Bushland: Our fear is that bushland not adequately financed and without adequate support for its volunteer bush regenerators will become degraded and lose its high ecological value. Then it can be rezoned for alternative use or even sold.

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Parks: Our parks will be subjected to the needs of a wider, more populous community that will increase the demand for active recreation. Their balancing qualities of quiet repose will come under pressure.

2. The community of interest and geographic cohesion in the existing areas and in any proposed new area

Geographically, Mosman is a harbourside suburb with a sense of identity which contributes to its sense of community.

It has clubs and a cultural life which result in a sense of "belonging". Mosman has a high percentage per capita of volunteering. One of the many activities undertaken in Mosman by volunteers is bush regeneration. Mosman Parks & Bushland members are proud of what they and their association have achieved in Mosman and they are grateful for the support of Mosman Council staff.

Proximity to the bushland areas worked is important for both the volunteers and the supporting staff. It is not to be expected that the same community interest and commitment would be engendered from across the Spit Bridge.

3. The existing historical and traditional values in the existing areas and the impact of change on them

Mosman has a superb harbourside setting of which its residents are justifiably proud. Its foreshores are steeped in history - aboriginal, navigational, military and artistic.

It is renowned for its natural features, its bushland, its bush walks and its harbour views.

Time and time again its residents have demonstrated their preparedness to defend these qualities and to preserve public land and open space particularly along its foreshore.

- In 1893 a proposal for a coal mine at Bradleys Head was defeated
- In 1964 this Association was formed in shocked reaction to the bulldozing of bushland for a road
- The campaign for the Defence lands at Middle Head and Georges Heights resulted in the formation of the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust
- A campaign for part of Wyargine Reserve went on for more than 20 years
- The battle to preserve the Bathers' Pavilion during the 1990s was for an iconic building on a treasured part of Mosman's foreshore.

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Recognizing the value that the community places on its foreshore land and bushland, Council representatives and staff have worked to preserve and enhance these assets, particularly in recent years.

- In 2015 Mosman Council was eventually successful in negotiating an exemption from a new building code which would have led to inappropriate development on Foreshore Slopes
- Also in 2015 Mosman Council applied to upgrade the protective zoning level for some of its unformed roads with genuine bushland qualities.

The impact of change

Local representatives who live in Mosman are likely to continue to support these values. When there are only two councillors representing Mosman's interests, its foreshores and bushland are in danger of succumbing to the different priorities of eight representatives of Manly and the south part of Warringah.

We will lose control over our planning. The future of our Local Environment Plan (LEP) and our Development Control Plan (DCP) will be decided by a large council in which Mosman has little representation.

Bushland has been a particular interest of the Mosman community since the development in Mosman during the 1960s of the Bradley Method of Bush Regeneration. The continuation of Mosman Council's financial input and its support for its volunteer bush regenerators is vital. It is greatly feared that that a large (or streamlined) bureaucracy on the other side of the Spit Bridge will destroy the spirit of community so conducive to the spirit of volunteering that is presently exhibited in Mosman.

4. The attitude of residents and ratepayers of the area concerned

In plebiscites and polls (1962, 1977, 2012 and 2015), Mosman residents have consistently voted in favour of retaining their independence.

Mosman Parks & Bushland Inc has stated in its submission to IPART and in an appearance before the Delegate for the Council Boundary Review that it opposes amalgamation.

A local independent government will continue to support our objectives for the protection of parks, bushland and natural values.

Mosman will be under-represented in an amalgamated council.

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Our two representatives out of ten, will be vastly outnumbered by the eight who do not live locally and who will not have an appreciation of Mosman residents' concerns for the individual character and landscape of Mosman.

5. The requirements of the area concerned in relation to elected representation for residents and ratepayers at the local level, the desirable and appropriate relationship between elected representatives and ratepayers and residents and such other matters as considered relevant in relation to the past and future patterns of elected representation for that area

A local council enables residents and organisations such as this one to be heard locally. Access to local representatives can be readily obtained. Valuable discussion can occur both formally and informally at the local level. Local representatives gain an understanding of community needs through such encounters.

In the proposed merged council, two councillors from Mosman will have to deal with all that the current seven deal with now. This would be impossible. Councillors would rely on a bureaucracy. Ratepayers and organisations like ours would receive bureaucratic service and answers in bureaucratise.

Residents appreciate the political independence of Mosman Council. Members of large councils often have party political allegiances that can interfere with decisions of a local and community nature.

The location of council offices is relevant to this discussion too. It is unlikely that residents will make the effort to exercise their democratic rights by attending council meetings if they have to drive long distance for little chance of an independent or sympathetic hearing.

We cannot expect the voice of Mosman Parks & Bushland to be heard as it currently is. Mosman's bushland and natural qualities will be the losers and future generations will be the poorer.

6. The impact of the proposal on the ability of the council to provide adequate, equitable and appropriate services and facilities.

Mosman Parks & Bushland is concerned that a merged council with only two elected representatives from Mosman will be less likely to prioritise expenditure on Mosman's bushland and that this puts the bushland in

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danger. It could become degraded, lose its ecological value, lose the protection of its zoning, and in a worst case, be lost altogether.

Furthermore the connection of volunteers with their local council will not be maintained from across the Spit Bridge. Much social capital will be lost and the genuine service provided by volunteers is likely to be reduced. Will those voluntary services be replaced by paid staff from a merged council where the bottom line is under scrutiny?

Members of Mosman Parks & Bushland and other volunteers provide their services to bush regeneration in Mosman. Their efforts are supported by Mosman Council staff. They are motivated in part by a love of bushland but also by a sense of community. Remove that sense of community and part of the recompense for the sacrifice of their leisure hours is lost.

Thank you for including our concerns in your report.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kate Eccles". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Kate Eccles

President

23rd February, 2016