



# SAVE HUNTERS HILL MUNICIPALITY COALITION

A Coalition of community and precinct groups and residents determined to save the historic Municipality of Hunters Hill

PO Box 85 Hunters Hill 2110 • Email: [info@savehuntershill.com.au](mailto:info@savehuntershill.com.au) • Tel: 9816 2325 • Fax: 9816 1074 • [www.savehuntershill.com](http://www.savehuntershill.com)

The Hon. Anthony Kelly, MLC  
Minister for Local Government  
Parliament House,  
Macquarie Street,  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Minister,

## **Re: Ryde City Council Boundary Proposals relating to the Hunter's Hill Local Government Area.**

### **The Public Outcry**

The Save Hunter's Hill Municipality Coalition (**SHHMC***Coalition*) was formed by concerned residents on 28<sup>th</sup> August 2003 to ensure that the full breadth of community outrage at Ryde City Councils proposals was directly heard.

The **SHHMC***Coalition* consists of many community groups and residents determined to save historic Hunter's Hill Municipality. Our purpose is to maintain its unique character and community of interest within the existing boundaries and governance arrangements.

Any intrusion into Hunter's Hill Municipality area by neighbouring councils will make the governance arrangements unworkable and result in the extinction of the Municipality and its special community of interest. The predatory behaviour of the Ryde City Council, at their meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> August 2003, resulted in a submission to the Minister for Local Government for two boundary changes that would take significant areas of Hunter's Hill. The Hunter's Hill Council shortly after held an extraordinary meeting, 28<sup>th</sup> August 2003, and rejected the Ryde City Councils proposals.

**SHHMC***Coalition* called a strategic meeting of residents for the following Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2003 to alert the community to the threat and galvanise community support. Reports were presented on meetings with you and your office the previous day. That meeting unanimously endorsed the formation of **SHHMC***Coalition* and called for a Crisis Public Meeting to be held at the Hunter's Hill Town Hall, 17<sup>th</sup> September 2003.

The **SHHMC***Coalition* with its extensive support across the Municipality has:

- Formed a coordination group headed by two Co-convenors;
- Formed finance, publicity and youth groups;
- Established 8 precincts – informing, coordinating and galvanising community of interest across the Municipality - with two coordinators per precinct;



- Organised ribbons in the colours of the Municipality Coat of Arms, inspirational placards and banners for residents to express their support and passion for the Municipality;
- Documented the case for Hunter's Hill to remain a 'Municipality' with its existing historic boundaries;
- Facilitated a series of public meetings maximising awareness and informing residents; and
- Informed the local and broader communities of the gravity of the threat and issues at stake.

While we realise that strictly speaking the term 'Municipality' does not apply to local government areas any more it accurately embodies what the areas community of interest is about. Our concept of 'Municipality' embodies the historic boundaries since 1861, the many



many community groups, the incredible sense of belonging right across the Municipality, its history and heritage, its residents over time and the council structure with its many community committees.

The Municipality's geographical boundaries embrace Boronia Park, east Gladesville, Henley, Huntley's Point, Huntley's Cove, Hunter's Hill and Woolwich.

### **Crisis Public Meeting.**

On 17<sup>th</sup> September 2003 the largest public meeting ever held in the Hunter's Hill Town Hall took place. Over 800 people attended the meeting, with half the Hall standing room only and a crowd of 200 people spilling outside onto the steps.

A number of speakers addressed the meeting including:

- Phil Jenkyn, Co convenor **SHHMC**oalition;
- Jack Munday, Environmentalist and initiator of the first 'Green Ban' at Kellys Bush in Hunter's Hill;
- Mr Justice Barry O'Keefe, President of the National Trust of Australia (NSW);
- Ross Williams, Co convenor **SHHMC**oalition and Former Mayor of Hunter's Hill; and
- Tony Coote, President of the Hunter's Hill Trust.

Other speakers spoke from the floor including Kathy Prokhovnik, President of the Hunter's Hill High School P&C, Michaeli Mills on behalf of the local students, Phil Haldeman Radio Broadcaster and local resident and Jennifer Noble a Ryde Resident knowledgeable in heritage matters.

The meeting was recorded and the **SHHMC**oalition has now summarised it down to an 8-minute video recording.

***Please find enclosed two copies of the video.***

At the public meeting held at the Hunters Hill Town Hall on Wednesday 17th September 2003 the following unanimous resolution was passed:

**“That this public meeting called by the Hunter’s Hill community totally rejects the two Ryde City Council boundary proposals that would result in the extinction of our local government area; and affirms its overwhelming support for the retention of our historic boundaries.”**

### **The Ryde City Council Proposals Have No Merit.**

The Ryde City Council proposals in relation to Hunters Hill are seriously flawed because:

1. Gladesville Shopping precinct;  
The bulk of the Gladesville business and commercial district lies within the Hunter’s Hill Council boundaries. Hunter’s Hill has actively promoted the precinct and secured in recent times a major retail shopping centre including a Coles supermarket. The library is funded jointly by both Councils. The largest car park and the bulk of services to the community, including Banks, the Post Office and toilets are within the Hunter’s Hill area. Hunter’s Hill and Ryde City Councils have both cooperated in the preparation of studies and plans for the precinct and at present are jointly preparing a Master Plan.
2. Community of interest;  
The Ryde City Council’s farcical proposals rely on Professor Sproats’ view on “community of interest”. Unlike Professor Sproats experience the Hunter’s Hill “community of interest” relates to the whole Municipality not just a suburb – our institutions and clubs span long time periods, for example Cricket and Rugby over 100 years, Arts and Craft Exhibition and Pre-School 50 years demonstrating a cohesion and sense of spirit not seen any where else. Ryde argues in Proposal 1 that the suburb of Gladesville needs to be rejoined while in Proposal 2 they are saying Hunter’s Hill suburb should be split down the middle.
3. Historical division;  
The community was outraged by the statement in the Ryde City Council submission to you, the Minister, that “The Municipality of Hunter’s Hill is generally characterised into two main parts; the historic peninsular and the remainder that has similar characteristics to the City of Ryde”. This shows an appalling failure to understand the character and heritage of Hunter’s Hill. A significant part of our heritage lies in the area that Ryde proposes to swallow including the historic Gladesville Hospital Site, Villa Maria Church, The Priory, St Josephs College, many heritage houses and items, and important natural areas like Boronia Park. This statement in our view disqualifies Ryde City Council from ever getting its hands on the heritage of Hunter’s Hill.
4. Failure to consult;  
Ryde City Council did not consult with residents about their proposal. Why won’t they listen? At the last Local Government election referendum 80% of voters did not want any part of Hunter’s Hill Municipality amalgamated. Ryde put its unilateral position to the Minister without even consulting its own residents let alone those potentially affected in other areas. Hunter’s Hill General Manager had to get his copy from the local library. This is an outrageous situation.

Ryde just **does not understand** the complexities and the unique character, community of interest and environment of our Municipality.

## **Case for Maintaining the Hunter's Hill Municipality.**

The case for the retention of the Hunter's Hill local government area is extremely strong.

The **SHHMC***Coalition* has identified 15 compelling reasons why Hunter's Hill should remain as is:

1. Hunter's Hill Municipality is one of the earliest local government areas in New South Wales (1861), and the only one of the original councils to have essentially kept its boundaries.
  2. Hunters Hill is recognised as the most significant historic Municipality in the Nation. Its significance has been recognised by the National Trust since 1974, and it is on the register of the National Estate.
  3. The Municipality contains more heritage-listed items per head of population than any other area in the State, and a number of significant natural areas including Boronia Park and Kelly's Bush.
  4. The historic boundaries of the two rivers, and Pittwater, Victoria and Punt Roads, remain today as our natural and relevant boundaries.
  5. The Council over time, in partnership with the community, has developed environmental and heritage controls through its Local Environmental Plan (LEP), Development Controls Plans (DCP's) and conservation areas. This has provided a level of protection, and experience and awareness of these issues by Council.
  6. The community of interest and sense of belonging run right across the Municipality and beyond. This is evidenced by the large number of community and cultural groups, and the great spirit and determination of its residents.
  7. The Council is economically viable, has no debt and outsources a number of services. It also combines with its surrounding Councils including through the Northern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (NSROC), in seeking efficiency gains and economics of scale.
  8. Ryde City Council Proposal No. 2 seeks to take over 8,000 residents of Gladesville and part of the suburb of Hunters Hill, and 43,000 residents from Parramatta and Hornsby Councils. Apart from minor adjustments by consent, no other Northern Council is seeking boundary changes, however they do seek reform through NSROC.
  9. The Gladesville commercial shopping precinct is Hunters Hill Municipality's major shopping area and provider of services to the community. Hunters Hill Council and Ryde City Council have already jointly produced studies and plans for that area and are at present committed to providing a new Master Plan. The community wants this process to continue.
  10. The Ryde City Council submission to the Minister is seriously flawed. It does not comprehend the heritage significance and community of interest that extends across the Municipality.
  11. Ryde City Council failed to consult with Hunter's Hill residents and indeed Ryde residents before making its proposal to the Minister.
  12. If the Ryde City Council proposal were implemented, it would lead to the demise of the Hunter's Hill Municipality. Residents transferred to Ryde would see an increase in rates resulting from the Ryde City Council current rate structure.
  13. The Hunter's Hill community values accessibility to Councillors and Council staff flowing from the size of the Municipality.
  14. The heritage of Hunters Hill Municipality is best protected for future generations by maintaining its Council and historic boundaries.
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15. At the referendum at the last Council election 80% of all residents in Hunter's Hill Municipality voted "**No**" to any amalgamation.

### **What's At Stake.**

Cost effective local government; a premium of 30% will be added to the residential rate and for what reason? Services will not improve and in most cases service reductions could follow. There is absolutely no proof that bigger is necessarily better, the Victorian experience has scuttled that theory.

A loss of local governance. Will residents be better represented or have direct access to their local councillor? With 150,000 people in Ryde covered by 12 Councillors the Hunter's Hill community would be lucky to have one voice in the Ryde City Council Chamber. We have already seen first hand how undemocratic Ryde City Councils procedures can be, with no consultation and denial of opportunity for Hunter's Hill residents to speak at meetings.

Degraded heritage and conservation protection. Hunter's Hill Municipality is a National Treasure. As Justice Barry O'Keefe has stated "Hunter's Hill is one of our most significant historic Municipalities – it is vital that its unique identity and heritage be preserved not only for current residents but for posterity". Ryde City Council's record in relation to conservation issues is woeful.

Degraded landscape and garden/ tree amenity. At risk is Australia's oldest surviving garden suburb. Our community has fought long and hard to preserve this character. Ryde's planning codes would see its demise.

### **Conclusion.**

It is clear from the above that there is an overwhelming view expressed by the residents at the 1999 Referendum and recently at 17<sup>th</sup> September 2003 Public Meeting that the Municipality should remain within its existing historic boundaries. The Council is clearly viable, has already embarked upon structural reforms and cooperates well with its neighbouring Councils. It has the support of its residents.

Relevant information is available on our web site [www.savehuntershill.com](http://www.savehuntershill.com)

The Ryde City Council proposals are without merit, are inconsistent and are based upon inaccurate information. It is the strong view of the **SHHMC** *Coalition* that these proposals **do not warrant** consideration by the NSW Boundaries Commission and should be rejected by the Minister for Local Government.

The **SHHMC** *Coalition* request your earliest consideration of this matter as it is causing considerable community anger and concern locally and in the wider community due to the national significance of the Municipality.

We would be happy to meet with you if you would like to discuss further any point raised in this letter.

Yours faithfully,

Ross Williams  
Co convenor  
(02) 98175977

Phil Jenkyn  
Co convenor  
(02) 98172677

28<sup>th</sup> September 2003

