Lord Mayoral Minute

Title: Novocastrian Pride

Motion:
That Council:

1. Rejects the recommendation of the NSW Government’s Delegate Report on the forced amalgamation of the Newcastle and Port Stephens Local Government Areas to rename an amalgamated Council Area the “City of Hunter Coast”.

2. Notes the Premier’s commitment to give an elected council the final say on planning decisions involving the rail corridor land (Attachment A).

3. Rejects the recommendation of the NSW Government’s Delegate Report on the forced amalgamation of the Newcastle and Port Stephens Local Government Areas to remove elected representatives from office and appoint an Administrator.

4. Writes to the Premier and Minister for Local Government (with copies to the State Members for Newcastle, Wallsend and Charlestown) requesting that a merged council be named The City of Newcastle or The City of Greater Newcastle should an amalgamation be forced as per our previous resolution and submission to the inquiry.

5. Seeks legal advice on options available to the City of Newcastle on both retaining the City’s name as ‘Newcastle’ and the retention of an elected decision making body through the amalgamation process including consideration of the application of interim governance arrangements like those applied in other states where elected bodies remain in place.

Background:

Newcastle is Australia’s second oldest city, founded with a settlement in 1804.

On 7 June 1859 Newcastle Borough Council was one of the first Councils created in the state.

The Newcastle LGA, of which Newcastle city is its identified centre, has gone through a number of name changes over the years with various legislative changes of the time:

- The Newcastle City Council (1993-current).
- City of Newcastle (1949-1993)
- The City of Greater Newcastle (1938-1949);
- The Borough of Newcastle (1867-1938)
- Newcastle Borough Council (1859-1867).
On Thursday 12 May Premier Baird and Local Government Minister Toole announced the amalgamation of 45 Councils to form 19 new bodies. Elected bodies of each of the 45 previous councils were sacked, and Administrators appointed.

In relation to the proposed forced amalgamation of Newcastle and Port Stephens, the Minister announced that the merger was pending, awaiting the conclusion of a Delegate’s investigation into the separate amalgamation of Dungog and Port Stephens Council.

The Delegates Report for the merger of Newcastle and Port Stephens was subsequently made publicly available, and State government accepted the recommendation that a merger proceed. This is against the stated position of both Newcastle City Council and Port Stephens Council.

The Delegates Report additionally makes recommendations on the name of a new Council (“The City of Hunter Coast”), the proposed governance structure (including the removal of elected representatives) a model of governance that has been rejected by Samson author of the original review into local government in NSW.

The decision to rename the Newcastle area as Hunter Coast was undertaken without consultation.

Attachments:

Premier’s Letter to Council titled ‘Newcastle Urban Transformation – Former Heavy Rail Line’
Cr Nuatali Nelmes  
Lord Mayor  
Newcastle City Council  
Level 2, City Hall  
PO Box 489  
NEWCASTLE NSW 2300

Dear Lord Mayor

Newcastle Urban Transformation – Former Heavy Rail Line

In December 2014 I announced that Newcastle City Council would play a lead role in the planning decisions for the future of the former heavy rail corridor. The corridor is a critical piece in the once-in-a-generation revitalisation of the Newcastle CBD and it is vital that the future land uses have the support of the community.

I am pleased that real progress has been made on planning for the revitalisation of the CBD between Council and UrbanGrowth NSW under the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed earlier this year. The MOU provides a practical application of the commitment I made to the community and I commend the constructive approach taken by you and the Council.

Council’s constructive contribution to the community engagement process on the four concept proposals for the future of the corridor has enriched the public debate and has helped shape the development of a formal proposal by UrbanGrowth NSW for Council’s consideration. I also note the excellent contribution of the Property Council of Australia and its members to this important discussion.

We have always said we would involve the community in any decisions regarding the future of the rail corridor in Newcastle and we are now delivering on that commitment. The quality of the debate about the future of the Newcastle CBD is a tribute to the maturity of the city to working collaboratively and vindicates the Government’s decision to give the final say on planning for the corridor to Council.

I reiterate my Government’s commitment that Council will have the final say in determining the planning outcomes for the former heavy rail corridor and I look forward to the continued revitalisation of the Newcastle CBD.

Yours sincerely

MIKE Baird MP  
Premier

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