

LYFORD PRAISES COURAGE OF SACKED GLOUCESTER COUNCILLOR ALED HOGGETT

Julie Lyford, Greens candidate for the seat of Lyne, has strongly supported dismissed Gloucester Councillor Aled Hoggett who has refused on principle to take part in the merged Mid Coast Council so called representation committees.

Last week the Government dismissed all Councillors from the Gloucester, Taree and Great Lakes Councils and appointed an unelected official to be boss of the new Council.

On 17 May, Government appointed Council Administrator and former National Party Deputy Leader John Turner, wrote an email to Mr Hoggett and all other dismissed Councillors asking whether they would nominate for a position on such a committee. Hypocritically the request told the former Councillors that the Government wanted strong local representation on the newly formed Council.

Julie Lyford says:

The statement that the Government wanted to ensure local representation on the new Council was breathtakingly hypocritical because by dismissing all elected Councillors the Government had just destroyed local democracy which was working well in all three dismissed Councils. In any event the so called Representation Committees will be hand-picked by Mr Turner who has no community legitimacy and who has clear political allegiances to the National Party."

In response to John Turner's email, Mr Hoggett made it clear that he wanted no part of the charade and told Mr Turner that neither Mr Turner nor the Council General Manager were democratically elected or accountable to the public and that he would not "*collaborate in such a fundamentally undemocratic process.*"

Julie says:

"I congratulate Mr Hoggett for standing up for his principles. The dismissal of all three Councils and the failure to hold elections until late 2017 smacks of totalitarianism which must be roundly condemned. The democratic rights of a large number of people within the Lyne electorate have been trampled upon by the arrogant Liberal/National Party State Government. The community should not, and will not take this abuse lying down.

These disturbing events illustrate why on 18 May the Greens have a strong policy of constitutional recognition of local government and which would, if implemented, give communities real power to stand up against forced and undemocratic amalgamations"

The Greens launched their Regional Local Government Package re Federal Constitutional Recognition 18th May (**attached**)

Copies of Mr Turner's email and Mr Hoggett's email in reply are as follows:

EMAIL TO ALED HOGGETT FROM JOHN TURNER

Dear Sir/Madam,

Following my appointment as Administrator I attended a weekend briefing session with the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC) and Office of Local Government (OLG). The advice

received emphasised the need for strong local representation in the formation of the new Council and to assist me in fulfilling my role.

Local representation is to be provided to the new Council through Local Representation Committees (LRC's). I have attached the Model Terms of Reference prepared by the DPC. The Terms of Reference state that the membership of the LRC's will primarily comprise of Councillors of the former Council's.

I am writing to you to ask that you consider nominating for a position on the LRC. The DPC have made it clear that the previous EOI process does not apply to the nomination process for the LRC's. All information from the EOI process will be retained by the DPC and will not be released to the new Council's for privacy reasons. As a result I encourage you to consider becoming part of the formation of the new Mid Coast Council and assisting in the development of a positive future for our community by nominating for a position on the LRC.

If you would like to nominate for the LRC please complete the attached Nomination form and return it to me as soon as possible (10 days) using the General Manager's email address -

I look forward to hearing from you

John Turner

ADMINISTRATOR

EMAIL FROM ALED HOGGETT TO JOHN TURNER

Dear John

Thank you for inviting me to apply for membership of the Local Representation Committee.

I write as a courtesy to inform you that I will not be applying.

Local government is crucial in our three tiered system of democracy. The State Government could have preserved democratically elected local representation during amalgamation. The two most obvious routes would have been by establishing an interim council (elected by pre-existing councils) or moving to rapidly elect a new amalgamated council (LG elections were due in September anyway). The State chose not to.

I note the LRC will have no decision making powers. It is also unclear which issues will be referred to the LRC. Irrespective, it is apparent that decisions over billions of dollars of public assets and hundreds of millions of dollars of annual income will remain the preserve of either the Administrator or the interim General Manager.

With all due respect, neither are democratically elected. Neither will be directly accountable to the public whose assets and income they have the responsibility to manage.

Any attempt on my behalf to collaborate in such a fundamentally undemocratic process would be profoundly problematic.

sincerely

Aled Hoggett

Greens say that Local Government is a National Issue

No nation can achieve its potential if it fails to respect, and properly resource, the level of government closest to the people. The Greens understand this. That's why we are releasing a package to strengthen local government in the regions.

Greens NSW Senator and Local Government Spokesperson, **Lee Rhiannon** said:

"The Greens believe with Federal leadership we can respect local government, deliver constitutional recognition and give residents the power they need to stand up to Mike Baird's attempts to force council amalgamations.

"This package shows that the Greens have been listening to the needs of regional councils, and we are promising to deliver fairer funding and respect the rights of local communities to control their own futures."

Greens NSW MP and Local Government Spokesperson **David Shoebridge** said:

"With the Liberal and National Parties tearing up local councils, forcing amalgamations and ignoring residents, the fact is local government hasn't had a lot of respect of late. It's time that changed.

"Regional councils in NSW need a fairer share of the \$700 million in federal road funding grants, this has been a crying need for decades that requires some political will to resolve," Mr Shoebridge said.

Summary of the Greens regional Council package

1. Respect. This means saying no to forced amalgamations and supporting legislation that gives residents, not politicians, the final say on any proposed amalgamations.
2. Resources. Commonwealth financial assistance grants deliver more than \$700 million in roads funding to local councils. The Greens believe that regional councils need a fairer share of this funding to deal with their extensive road network.
3. Recognition. It's well past time Local Government was recognised in the Australian Constitution. The Greens support meaningful constitutional recognition that gives legal protection to local democracy.

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