

SPLITTWATER

Pittwater secession 2.0 to be discussed at public meeting

Robbie Patterson

A RENEWED push to demerge Pittwater from Northern Beaches Council is under way.

A public meeting will be held tomorrow night at Pittwater RSL in Mona Vale to discuss the presentation of a

plan to secede from the amalgamated Northern Beaches Council.

Protect Pittwater president Bob Grace labelled the combined council "a joke". "They promised no rate increases and improved services. What we now have is a rate increase and reduced services. We want Pittwater back," he said.

Mayor Michael Regan hit back, saying his council was providing infrastructure Pittwater was not capable of.

And state Liberal MP for Pittwater Rob Stokes urged disgruntled residents to give the council more time before calling for it to be dissected.

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Former councillor Bob Grace.



Pittwater MP Rob Stokes.

We want Splittwater

Robbie Patterson

A RENEWED push to reinstate the boundaries of Pittwater council has begun, with disgruntled residents hosting a public meeting tomorrow night.

The group, called Protect Pittwater, has raised \$13,000 to launch a legal battle against the State Government claiming the residents were involuntarily merged with Warringah and Manly councils.

Group president Bob Grace will outline the latest plans at the meeting, at Pittwater RSL from 7pm-9pm.

"It is just a community forum to bring the people up to date on what is happening and the future direction of Protect Pittwater, and our strategy to get Pittwater back," Mr Grace said. "Protect Pittwater is all for writing to the government for a public review of the Northern Beaches Council especially the finances and reduced services."

Mr Grace, a former Pittwater councillor, said he would take a proposal to the State Government on May 15 to de-amalgamate.

"Northern Beaches Council is a joke," Mr Grace said. "They promised no rate increases and improved servi-



Former Pittwater councillor Bob Grace (second left) next to David Shoebridge, who will speak at the forum.

Petition to be lodged for Pittwater to demerge

ces. What we now have is a rate increase and reduced services. We want Pittwater back."

Northern Beaches Mayor Michael Regan defended his council's track record, and a recent rate increase of 2.3 per cent, saying it kept the council in line with inflation.

"We have significant renewal of assets underway that simply wouldn't have occurred without amalgamation," he said. "They got a \$91 rate cut from the waste collection which will offset the 30-odd dollars they would pay from the 2.3 per cent."

He pointed to the opening

of Church Point carpark yesterday as one example of improved infrastructure.

"Significant savings are being made and the debts of former Pittwater and Manly are being paid off and we are seeing unprecedented investment in infrastructure north of Narrabeen Bridge," Cr Regan said.

"We opened up Church Point carpark, it was a 37-year project — it even preceded Pittwater it went from former Warringah, then Pittwater. The Northern Beaches Council signed off on it."

Pittwater MP Rob Stokes

said the merger needed to be given more time.

"Like a lot of people in my community, my preference was not for a single council," he said. "Nevertheless that is where we have ended up, the right thing to do is give it a chance."

"It is democratically-elected and able to do projects Pittwater never had the capacity to do. At the least it would be worthwhile to get those projects delivered."

Greens spokesman for Local Government David Shoebridge will be among speakers tomorrow.

"The mood of the community remains very solid behind getting the council back and there are clear legislative paths to help them do that," he said.

"I have been extremely impressed by the organising among locals to get hundreds and hundreds of signatures... that is the kind of community action that should deliver results."

He said Local Government Minister Gabrielle Upton was "obliged to review this application, not just politically but also as a matter of law".

"I would hope it gets rapidly referred to the boundaries commission and a positive recommendation comes to reinstate a much-loved, financially robust and competent council," he said.

A spokesman for Ms Upton said significant community consultation was undertaken and "a clear majority of public submissions supported the creation of a single council".

"The Government has no plans for any further changes to the boundaries.

"However, we note that under the Local Government Act, residents are able to lodge boundary change proposals with the Minister."

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