



Hunters Hill Trust Journal

Volume 3 No. 1 MARCH 1974

— ISSUES OF OUR TIME —

1. AMALGAMATION

2. TOWN PLAN

THE BARNETT REPORT

As the recommendations of the Barnett Report on Local Government seriously threaten the future of Hunter's Hill as a separate Municipality, the Trust has examined the report in detail and commends the following articles to residents in order that they may be fully informed.

- A. What the Report Says
- B. The Trust's Opinion
- C. The Town Clerk's Analysis of Rates
- D. How we won in '48.

What the Report says

In more than 100 pages the Barnett Report attempts to set down the development of Local Government in New South Wales, the need for changes and the introduction of Districts to replace the existing system.

The Committee does not say that existing Councils are inefficient but points out that amalgamations would create efficiency - a word used many times in the report without definition or explanation.

As far as local government areas are concerned, the Report recommends that the terms 'Shire' and 'Municipality' be replaced by the term 'District'.

That the State be divided into 97 districts.
(District 89 is to comprise Hunter's Hill, Lane Cove, Mosman, North Sydney, and Willoughby)

That provision be made for community councils to be established at discretion of district councils to be a voice for local communities (Community Councils will have no executive power)

That members of district councils be called "Councillor" and the chairman be called "President" but where proclaimed a city, the chairman should be called "Mayor" or "Lord Mayor".

In the critical area of management, the Committee says a system of administration for local government generally should be adopted under which the Council exercises reserved functions mainly directed towards the formulation of policy.

A Chief Officer (or Manager) should be appointed to exercise all other powers necessary for the local government of the area.

The Chief Officer will advise Council, and have the right to attend meetings and take part in debate but to have no vote.

The appointment of a Chief Officer will be at the discretion of Council or as DIRECTED BY THE MINISTER, but after a fixed date all Councils will be obliged to make appointments.

Provision should be made for full or temporary qualification and establishment of training courses.

A new position of Secretary be created requiring qualification as a Town Clerk.

Councils be allowed to co-opt non-elected members to committees.

A review of local government accounting procedures be undertaken by an expert committee.

Payment of allowances to Council members be increased.

Further the Report says the 'Manager System' must follow if amalgamations take place because of the size of the areas involved and the need to take full advantage of modern management practices in an effort to retain economic and "efficient" standards.

In addition it is recommended the term of office for Council members be extended to six years from the present three.

The Municipality of Hunter's Hill "rates" two mentions in the report; which is two more than most Councils. The report notes our Council's opinion that because of its size there is a greater ability to communicate with local community groups and to respond to these groups effectively.

Secondly, the document claims there can be no doubt that an especially close sense of identification exists here.

THE TRUSTS OPINION

If the State Government adopts the Barnett proposals for amalgamation it will, at a stroke, do far more for the cause of centralism than any move by the Federal Government about which it has been so critical.

If these recommendations are adopted, the administrators will become far more remote and inaccessible to those they administer at present. Hunter's Hill will become a very small part of the City of North Sydney, which will contain about 200,000 people. It is not difficult to see what this will mean to us - the extinction of Hunter's Hill as we know it.

At present Hunter's Hill has 9 Aldermen for its 14,500 inhabitants. As a result, all of the Aldermen are known by name, and many by sight, to a large proportion of our residents. Under the Barnett proposals we should be reduced to one, or possibly no Councillor in the new City Administration.

The residents of Hunter's Hill would then have no chance of deciding how their affairs were to be run. Further more our new Town Plan would not be worth the paper it is written on, and this illiberal and undemocratic process will have been brought about by that guardian of liberty and democracy, the N.S.W. State Government.

The whole Barnett enquiry smacks of stage management. One cannot help feeling that the State Government had decided on wholesale amalgamation before the report was written.

The Trust was told that no transcript of hearings was available and no short hand or tape record appeared to be made of the public sessions in Sydney. The report was tabled by Sir Charles Cutler just before everything shut down for the holiday period. In spite of its extreme importance, only a small number of copies have been printed. In spite of the indigestibility of its 150 or so pages, the Government has made no attempt to explain its import; the vast majority of citizens have had to rely on scanty newspaper reports. On top of all this, only SIX WEEKS was to be allowed for objections to be lodged before State Cabinet made up its mind whether or not to implement the report.

One cannot help suspecting therefore that this is a careful plan to steam-roller the recommendations through before effective public opposition can be organised.

There is no doubt that certain undemocratic interests would be served by the amalgamations. Large property developers would find their task of making money through wrecking our city, eased by having fewer Councils to deal with. Undemocratic non-elected bodies, such as the Main Roads Department and the Water Board, would also find the new situation to their liking. But the price will be heavy in terms of loss of democratic rights by the people, in whose interests Local Government is supposed to operate.

All over the world, life in large cities appears to be breaking down with alarming increases in crime, violence and vandalism. The individual city dweller feels increasingly a loss of personal identity, that he is caught up in the wheels of the administrative machinery, and that he is powerless to make his opinions felt, or in any way to influence the actions of the administrators who increasingly control his life. While many react by becoming apathetic, evincing no interest at all in Government at any level, it seems highly probable that others resort to vandalism or more serious crime in order to "hit back" at impersonal authority.

Anything that counters such anti-social activities and encourages the citizen's sense of involvement in the system in which he lives, must be encouraged.

A way to hand is to foster, not destroy, areas like Hunter's Hill which have a demonstrably separate identity in which their citizens take pride. The Barnett report recognised, in passing, the force of these arguments by proposing the setting-up of Community Councils in such areas.

However, these would have advisory power only and can be dismissed as an administrative trick to give the illusion of power while withholding the substance.

If our State Government is sincere in its resistance to centralism, it should throw out the recommendations for amalgamation in the Barnett report and explore other ways in which Municipalities can beat rising costs.

Democracy demands this.

ANALYSIS OF RATES

We asked our Town Clerk, Mr. W. Phipson, about the consequence of implementation of the Barnett Committee recommendations.

Apart from the serious question of representation on the new District Council, Mr. Phipson is certain that a substantial increase in Hunter's Hill rates would occur immediately. This would be in addition to the present trend he said.

Mr. Phipson explained to us that the rate level in Hunter's Hill is much lower than any of the other four areas involved. It is not sufficient to compare just the rate in the dollar because some Councils do not charge separate garbage fees and in any case there is no common valuation date.

The figures shown in the table indicate an average rate assessment of about \$195 over the whole of District 89. In Hunter's Hill, the average is \$163 including garbage fees. An increase of \$30 on the Hunter's Hill figure would make little impact on the other areas (possibly \$2) and the average Hunter's Hill ratepayer would continue to carry that penalty unless an overall saving of \$2 million per annum in rate revenue could be achieved. Economies of scale, if there are any, would be nowhere near that amount, said Mr. Phipson.

	Hunter's Hill	North Sydney	Willoughby	Mosman	Lane Cove
Rate in \$	0.80	0.985	0.940	1.425	0.80
Last valued	1971	1971	1971	1969	1973
Populations	14,250	53,000	53,750	29,000	29,000
Council Members	9	15	15	12	9
Rate Assessments	3750	18,000	18,000	9,400	10,190
Average Rate per Assessment	\$163	\$221	\$179	\$197	\$172
Average Rate per Capita	\$43	\$75	\$60	\$64	\$61

HOW WE WON IN '48

By Roy Stuckey, O.B.E.
former Town Clerk of Hunters Hill

In 1945 the Labor Government in power in New South Wales, set up a Royal Commission to enquire into boundaries of the Local Government areas in the County of Cumberland, of which were 60 at the time. The Commission comprised of Judge Clancy as Chairman, Mr. Stan Harrland, Under Secretary Department of Local Government and Mr. Ron Storey representing the Local Government Association of New South Wales.

The Royal Commission sat for many long months and heard a great deal of evidence, including a substantial amount from the Municipality of Hunter's Hill. Its report was a most interesting one - Judge Clancy wanted the Local Government areas reduced to 18, Stan Harrland wanted 8 large cities only and Ron Storey wanted 33!

Local Government Minister, Joseph Cahill, afterwards to become Premier of New South Wales, piloted his Local Government Alteration of Areas Bill through the Legislative Assembly and under it, Hunter's Hill was added to Ryde Municipality. The Bill provided for the disappearance altogether of many local government areas, the majority of them larger in area than Hunter's Hill.

Hunter's Hill Council, forcefully backed by its people, took the lead in the fight and was ably backed by many other Councils, which ultimately owed their continued existence to their fighting qualities.

When the Bill reached the Upper House or Legislative Council, it was ultimately referred to a select Committee for report and this provided the opportunity for further pressure to be applied. This select Committee united many areas, including Hunter's Hill, and we were able to convince the members that Hunter's Hill should be left alone.

When the amended Bill went back to the Legislative Assembly, it provided for Hunter's Hill to be retained as a Municipality and to have added to it the remainder of the Gladesville postal area, then part of Ryde Municipality. Minister Cahill was not very happy. He refused to increase the area of Hunter's Hill, something we had never asked for, but he was forced to accept the fact that Hunter's

Hill should retain its identity. The final result was that 24 Local Government areas were eliminated by amalgamation, leaving the present 36 areas.

Hunter's Hill Council was created by permissive incorporation 113 years ago, one of the first few in New South Wales. Its people asked for their own Municipality although it meant the imposition of local taxes. Our forebearers created this lovely suburb of Hunter's Hill. Let us keep faith with them by ensuring that it retains its identity as one of the Jewels of Sydney.

AUXILIARY NEWS

Three functions organised by the Auxiliary prior to the Christmas break were well supported by members and guests.

Firstly, the house inspection on November 11 raised \$1000 for Trust funds. We are most grateful to Mr. & Mrs. J. Cummins, Dr. & Mrs. Scrivener, Mrs. Hayes and Mr. & Mrs. Howie for opening their homes and gardens.

Dinners held at the popular Blackets Restaurant in Balmain drew more than 60 people on November 21 and 28. We shall be organising further dinners this year.

Thank you all for your support.

"GARIBALDI"

A second submission to the Enquiry on the National Estate has been made by the Trust on behalf of the "Garibaldi".

Last year the Trust Committee submitted papers on a Sydney Harbour Foreshores National Park and Oil and Water.

Copies of all submissions are available for inspection in the Trust Centre.

"EULBERTIE"

The Department of Education has, at long last, decided to preserve and restore "Eulbertie" in the grounds of the Hunter's Hill Public School.

The building will be used for a school library.

1974 MEMBERSHIP FEES NOW DUE

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

The Treasurer,
Hunters Hill Trust,
P.O. Box 85,
Hunters Hill N.S.W. 2110

I wish to open/renew membership with the Hunters Hill Trust and enclose \$..... for subscription valid to February 28, 1975.

FAMILY	\$4.00	()	(tick appropriate space)
INDIVIDUAL	\$2.00	()	
STUDENT OR PENSIONER	\$1.00	()	

DONATION \$.....

NAME.....*OCCUPATION.....

ADDRESS.....POST CODE.....

CHRISTIAN NAMES (Family Membership).....

(*optional)

THE TOWN PLAN

The Trust has prepared a 5000 word report on the Certified Plan for submission to the Council with its formal objections.

This is a summary of the report.

The Hunter's Hill Trust was initially formed in 1968 to resist the growth of home-unit development in the Municipality and to retain the buildings and the features of the townscape that give this suburb its unique and historic character.

In its comprehensive report on Town Planning and Proposed Historic Districts (1969) the Trust's concept of the idea and purpose of district preservation was stated in the following words.

" The concept of district preservation is applicable to those particular cases where there is something about the total effect of the elements which make up the district's character which will be lessened or destroyed by the erosion of any one of the elements. Preservation of individual buildings or isolated elements of landscape is not enough in such a case. It might even be true that each element is not the best of its sort to be found, but the total effect can still be outstanding, even unique. In the case of Hunter's Hill there are very outstanding individual examples of old houses, harbour-side landscape, stone-walled streets and sandstone outcrops. There is also a total effect, made up from these leading examples and the many others in the district. That total effect, too, is quite special ."

In all its campaigning in connection with town planning in Hunter's Hill the Trust has sought to have this basic approach recognised. The extent to which the Draft Town Plan incorporated this concept was a matter of great satisfaction to the Trust.

In the Certified Plan, an attempt has been made to retain some of the features of the Draft Town Plan but in the Trust's view the Certified Plan fails to enunciate in clear and positive terms the most valuable features of the Draft Plan.

For these reasons, while the Trust commends the preponderance of Zone 2a, and the smallness of the areas zoned 2b and 2c in the Certified Plan, it wishes to criticise as strongly as possible those aspects of the Certified Plan in which the preservation measures embodied in the earlier Draft Plan have been obscured and enfeebled. In contrast with the Draft Town Plan, in which preservation was clearly announced as a major intention, the Certified Plan does not commit Hunter's Hill Council to preservation of the area. As a result, it would be possible for a Council, if it wished, to abandon preservation of the area entirely, without departing from the formal provisions of the Certified Plan, merely by changing its interpretation of the Ordinance.

In the hands of an unsympathetic Council the Certified Plan would have very little value for the preservation of the Municipality. The Certified Plan provides for no more than could in fact be done without it by a preservation-minded Council.

BASIC OBJECTIONS TO THE CERTIFIED PLAN

The overriding need to recognise the special case of Hunter's Hill as a unique area, has been ignored. The Plan imposes "standard" formulae and ordinances. The Council should insist that the SPA recognises the special case of Hunter's Hill and accepts the need for special or non-standardized Town Plans.

Apart from the scheduling of a number of particular houses, whose demolition without permission attracts the derisory penalty of \$200, the present plan makes no specific reference to the need to preserve the unique and historic character of Hunter's Hill.

1. The Certified Plan's value and efficacy is seriously weakened by the absence of any overall "declaration of intention".

2. There is an absence in the Certified Plan of the term "Historical and Environmental Precinct" (or its equivalent) which was used in the Draft Town Plan.

Zones 2(a3) occupy part of the Historic Precincts detailed in the Draft Plan but are not as extensive as the Historic Precincts proposed by the Trust. The Trust considers that the 2 (a3) areas would gain greatly in force, and would reflect the intention of the plan to preserve the district, by being named as Historic and Environmental Precincts. They should be extended to the original areas laid down in the Draft Plan.

3. A serious weakness is the omission of provision for an Advisory Committee to assist the Council in formulating aesthetic, architectural and historical judgments.

4. The Trust believes every effort should be made to preserve open space and harbour foreshore areas. Fortunately Clarkes Point now appears safe and its rezoning as 'open space' is applauded.

The Trust regrets that the present Plan still zones as 2(a2) a section of Kelly's Bush. The argument for preserving Kelly's Bush in its entirety, as 'open space', has increased over the years. We request the Council to revise the zoning--to 'open space recreation'.

5. The Trust applauds the restriction of industrial zoning--The "Pulpit Point" area should have been zoned residential or open space. Such zoning would not have affected Mobil's existing use of the land, but it would have been an important indication of the Council's attitude to the presence of such an industry in the district.

6. In the Certified Plan, restrictions on site coverage are laid down in "Residential B", "Residential C" and "Business" Zones, but not in residential zones A1, A2 and A3.

Any plan which makes a serious attempt to preserve the character of Hunter's Hill, which is derived essentially from the quality of its single dwellings in a special context, must exercise some control over the construction of such dwellings.

7. The Trust, along with the Council, and other organisations have consistently opposed the siting and construction of the Lane Cove Valley Expressway. The Expressway should be removed from the Plan.

The full Trust report then lists 17 properties wrongly omitted from or wrongly included in the Historic Buildings map.

Other main points from the report are:-

* Proposals for foreshore open spaces are appreciated, but greater areas should have been set aside.

* The Trust supports a principle of a foreshore building line.

* The "Civic Purposes" zoning in Madeline Street is questioned.

* A clear statement is needed on responsibility of Council and the SPA in the "foreshore protection area".

* Wording of several ordinances is criticised as unclear or ineffective.

* There is no definition of "historic buildings" and the report offers a definition.