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January 2002

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Important Notice Proposed Changes to Hornsby Shire Ward Structure

**Public Meeting, Monday 4th February, 2002 at 8.00pm.
Hornsby Shire Council Chambers, Hornsby**

Residents may be aware that at the last Local Government elections on 11 September 1999 voters were asked two referendum questions. They were;

1. **'Do you approve of the Mayor being popularly elected by all electors enrolled in Hornsby Shire Council and the number of councillors being increased to eleven (ten Councillors and one popularly elected Mayor) for the next following term commencing 2003?'**
2. **'If the Mayor is NOT popularly elected, do you support the number of Councillors being increased to ten for the next following Council term commencing 2003?'**

Polling on these questions resulted in the following;

Question 1.

	Shire	C Ward
Number of persons voting	79,368	23,144
Percentage "Yes"	54.4%	53.5%
Percentage "No"	36.5%	38.2%
Percentage "INFORMAL"	9.1%	8.3%

Question 2.

	Shire	C Ward
Number of persons voting	79,368	23,144
Percentage "Yes"	28.4%	27.0%
Percentage "No"	49.8%	52.1%
Percentage "INFORMAL"	21.9%	20.9%

Data calculated from Poll returns supplied by the State Electoral Office

The Trust is concerned that the community is not fully aware of the consequences of this referendum.

The residents of Hornsby Shire now have to elect 10 Councillors plus another Councillor as Mayor. In the past residents have elected only 9 Councillors (three in each ward) who in turn elected a new Mayor each year. As a consequence of the increase in Councillors the ward boundaries must be radically changed to either:-

- (a) Two very large wards of 5 Councillors each
- (b) Five wards with 2 Councillors each or
- (c) Ten small wards with 1 Councillor each.

There is a legislative requirement that the ward populations must be within 10% of each other. Currently a variation of 24.5% exists between B and C Wards.

Council did not publicly raise the matter again until October 2001. This was done by circulating with the Annual Report a brochure titled 'A New Ward Structure for Hornsby Shire' explaining the ward structure options and associated systems arising as a result of the tenth Councillor. The Trust recently became aware that a significant number of residents may not have received this brochure. Copies may be obtained from Gary Bensley at Council or by 'phoning Council on 9847 6605.

Council advertised three public meetings that were held in November 2001 to explain the options and seek public feedback. Attendances at these meetings were respectively only 8, 15, and 25. Feedback to the Trust indicated that residents were not fully aware of the implications of the referendum, and with submissions closing on 23 November 2001 Council had set deadlines that were too tight. Council proposed to vote on the number of Wards at its meeting on 12 December 2001.

In November Planning Power for People alarmed at the developing situation, involved its supporting Civic Trusts, Progress Associations and resident groups in an effort to defer any decision until proper public consultation on the issue had been undertaken.

Subsequently at the ordinary meeting of Hornsby Shire Council on 12 December 2001 Council resolved that;

- A. Council defer a decision on the ward structure until the February 2002 Ordinary Meeting.
- B. Council hold a Public Meeting on the ward structure during the first week of February 2002, at the Council Chambers.
- C. Council request the Minister for Local Government to investigate the circumstances of the 1999 referendum, including:
 - whether notification of the referendum question was adequate;
 - the inclusion of two questions and two non status-quo propositions within the one question, and the confusion this may have caused given the results to Question 2 being inconsistent with those of Question 1;
 - the failure of the for and against case to mention the possibility of ten (10) Wards of one (1) Councillor; and
 - the Minister being requested to allow Council to consider allowing the status-quo number of Councillors to be divided into wards.
- D. Council contact the Local Government Association seeking that they pursue amendments to the Local Government Act such that ward boundaries are dealt with by an independent commission in order that Councillors may not be seen to be 'feathering their own nests' in terms of such decisions.
- E. Council seek legal advice as to the February Ordinary Meeting including budgetary ramifications of a further referendum.

Extract-The Shire of Hornsby Minutes, Ordinary Meeting 12/12/2001 Item 35

The Beecroft Cheltenham Civic Trust is very concerned about the implications of the 1999 referendum, namely,

- ***That the existing unity of Beecroft Cheltenham will be threatened***
- ***That, if the wards are changed, the community interests of adjoining suburbs such as Cherrybrook and West Pennant Hills are different to those of Beecroft Cheltenham***
- ***Whether the Shire should have 2 or 5 or even 10 wards***
- ***That, due to legislative requirements, the method of vote counting is different depending on the number of wards.***

As Council is holding its own public meeting the Trust will not hold a separate meeting as this is likely to be counter-productive. The Trust regards these issues to be among the most significant changes to Beecroft Cheltenham in our lifetime. All residents are therefore urged to attend the **Public Meeting** convened by Council to be held **at the Council Chambers**, Pacific Highway, Hornsby (next to the Police Station and Court House) **on Monday 4th February 2002 commencing at 8.00pm.**

Further information may be obtained from Council's web site www.hornsby.nsw.gov.au go to what's new, council reports.