

‘Community against government controlled mandatory Local Planning Panels’ – Phil Jenkyn addressing Hunters Hill Panel



Phil Jenkyn OAM addressing Hunters Hill Local Planning Panel members at their first meeting in the Council Chambers 15 March 2018 (Photo courtesy Aurelia Roman).

The State Government passed controversial legislation in August 2017 that mandated all councils in Sydney and Wollongong to establish ‘Local Planning Panels’ with four members; a chair (with two alternates) appointed by the Minister for Planning, two members (with alternates) appointed by the Council from a pool of ‘expert persons’ approved by the Minister, and one community member appointed by the council.

Hunters Hill’s Panel was so selected and commenced on 1 March 2018, with its first meeting in the Hunters Hill Council Chambers on 15 March. The Panel members are as follows – Chair: The Hon. David Lloyd QC former Judge NSW Land and Environment Court with alternate chairs Lesley Finn planning lawyer and Peter Webber former Government Architect; Expert Panel members: (Planner/Heritage) Sheridan Burke with alternate Chris Young, and (Architect/Heritage) David Logan with alternate Ron Edgar; and one community

member to be drawn from Meredith Sheil with alternate Virginia Wise, and Philip Hart with alternate Richard Quinn.



Hunters Hill Local Planning Panel pictured left (rear to front) Chair David Lloyd, Lesley Finn, Chris Young, Ron Edgar, Richard Quinn, while pictured right (rear to front) General Manager Barry Smith, Peter Webber, Virginia Wise, David Logan and Philip Hart. Apologies Sheridan Burke and Meredith Sheil. Courtesy TWT on-the-spot PHOTO

At the first meeting of the Hunters Hill Local Planning Panel on 15 March the Mayor of Hunters Hill Clr Mark Bennett welcomed the Panel to Hunters Hill on behalf of the Council and spoke of the Municipality's heritage and environmental significance and the important protections developed over time with its planning provisions. "Like a small country town, we are a small community and we are passionate about our community."

Phil Jenkyn OAM, Co-convenor of Save Hunters Hill Municipality Coalition, spoke on behalf of the community and made the following remarks:

"On behalf of the community I would like to publicly welcome all Panel members to the historic Municipality of Hunters Hill, and recognise your considerable professional expertise and experience."

"Hunters Hill has a long history of aldermen and councillors elected by the community making local planning decisions. They have been doing this successfully for over 156 years. Councillors of course make those decisions advised by expert council staff, consultants and a special advisory panel on heritage, and have the assistance of written and oral submissions

from the applicant and advisers and the community. It is a system of local democracy that has served this community well.”

“The Government’s legislation establishing Local Panels contains provisions that strike at the very heart of our local democracy. Councillors are prevented from making any decisions in relation to development applications, not only those that go to the Panel, but all the remaining applications, which will now go to the staff for decision with no involvement from councillors.”

“The considerable significance of this Municipality as outlined by the Mayor is a direct result of the concern and actions of this community and its elected councillors over a very long period. It wasn’t government or experts that saved Hunters Hill, it was its community and its elected representatives who fought for these values, and indeed on occasions including recently for its very survival. Over two thirds of the area lies within conservation areas and the remainder has important character values. This is why Hunters Hill is recognised as Australia’s oldest surviving ‘garden suburb’ and most significant heritage Municipality. It is important to appreciate that it is the low density – dwellings set in established gardens, that lies at the heart of its heritage. This must be conserved and preserved.”

“Many in this community are strongly against the legislation – Hunters Hill Council, the Northern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (NSROC), the NSW Local Government Association (LGNSW) and many other local councils and communities are all against the mandatory nature of Local Planning Panels and the degree of Government control over them. Communities and councils are determined to have the legislation revoked or significantly changed.”

“However, at the moment the law is the law. Until it is changed the community wants this and other Panels to work well, to respect and listen to communities, to make decisions according to law that safeguard what the community values of its place and what is important to it. We will endeavour to help the Panel in this regard because that is the most constructive course that we can adopt until we get our local democracy back, which we surely will.”

“In the meantime, we wish you well.”

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