

# Planning law changes slammed by local councils

The Daily Telegraph 9 August 2017

Kirstie Chlopicki, Daniel Zautsen and Daniel McGookin,  
Macarthur Chronicle Campbelltown

Campbelltown, Camden and Wollondilly may lose their control over local projects, following a State Government decision yesterday.

NSW Planning Minister Anthony Roberts yesterday announced that new independent Hearing and Assessment Panels (IHAP's) will be made mandatory for councils from in the Greater Sydney area and Wollongong.



*NSW Planning and Housing minister Anthony Roberts. Picture: John Appleyard*

Campbelltown and Wollondilly councils have slammed the move with Camden Council expected to make a statement tomorrow.

The change means that decisions on development proposals over a \$5 million threshold would be taken out of the hands of local elected councillors and placed in the hands of representatives appointed by the government.

Decisions on proposals worth over \$30 million will be decided by the Greater Sydney Commission's planning panels which currently have jurisdiction on developments worth more than \$20 million.

Mr Roberts reasoned the decision would prevent inappropriate relationships between councillors and developers.

“Today I introduced legislation to end the dodgy and dirty backroom deals that have gone on for far too long inside local councils,” he said in state parliament yesterday.

“The introduction of mandatory independent Hearing and Assessment Panels across Greater Sydney mean that shonky developers and their mates will no longer be able to flaunt their power with elected councillors in order to get their DAs through.”

Campbelltown independent councillor Paul Lake was concerned Mr Roberts’ comments painted all councils with the same brush.

“I challenge the minister to find me one councillor on Campbelltown Council who is corrupt,” he said.

Cr Lake said he was concerned local people would be stripped of their lines of communication with decision makers.



*Cr Paul Lake says local government should be left to make local decisions.*

“Any member of the public is able to call me or e-mail, will the planning panel members be available,” he said.

“All we’ll be dealing with now is rates, roads and rubbish. How will the council be able to plan our city properly?”

Campbelltown Labor councillor Darcy Lound was concerned an independent panel would lack community representation.

“Local councils are in the community and are in touch with what’s going on,” he said.

“It’s taking away powers from councillors and residents.

“If a proposal fits the criteria then are the panel going to look ensure that a development is actually good for the area?”

According to Mr Roberts, the Independent Commission against Corruption has investigated at least 20 planning decisions by councils that did not meet the rules.

Wollondilly Mayor Judy Hannan said she was disturbed by Mr Roberts’ inference that councils were corrupt.

“I am appalled by these inflammatory and inappropriate comments which defame local government and deeply insult the thousands of councillors who represent their communities with honesty, integrity and dedication,” she said.



*Wollondilly mayor Judy Hannan (front) has defended Wollondilly Council’s record.*

“I personally challenge the Minister to show me any dodgy corrupt back room deals done by myself or any of my councillors.”

Mr Roberts said the new IHAP’s will be made up of four members, which must be independent and have expertise in either planning, architecture, heritage, the environment or urban designs.

“The other panel member will come from the geographical area within the local government area where the proposed development has been lodged to provide a local perspective and will be nominated by the council,” he said.

“Councils will still be responsible for their local environmental plans that set overarching strategic policies for their area, with the IHAPs taking over the minutiae of individual development applications.”

<https://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/newslocal/macarthur/planning-law-changes-slammed-by-local-councils/news-story/206495c67b8e0498081e89f519e7ba52>