

# Liberal councillors divided on approval powers

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**THE LIBERAL Party on Ryde City Council is divided on the issue of giving away council powers to decide local development applications.**

Independent Hearing and Assessment Panels (IHAPs) to determine local development applications on the local council's behalf are a pet issue of the Berejiklian Government, which already funds Independent Planning and Assessment Review Tribunals to determine significant development applications before local councils.



*Mayor Bill Pickering*



*Clr Roy Maggio*

Ryde Mayor Colonel Bill Pickering and his Liberal Party colleague Cllr Sarkis Yedelian OAM are against the Panels in Ryde and believe that councillors are capable of adjudicating all applications without the need of outside help.

"If we're going to give this away then what's the point of having a council," Cllr Yedelian OAM told a recent council meeting and Mayor is yet to be convinced of their benefit to the City of Ryde.

However Ryde Liberal Cllr Roy Maggio said the panels are working well at other councils and could work well here.

He said the Panels reduce the risk of corruption and keep councillors at "an arms length" from controversial developments, especially those where offers of "civic benefits" are made.

"I know, Mr Mayor, you're not a believer but this is a cleaner, smarter way," Cllr Maggio said.

In Hunters Hill the Save Hunters Hill Municipality Coalition opposes the Panels and said their introduction would surrender vital local planning powers to faceless bureaucrats.

It said Hunters Hill is particularly vulnerable to developments which can have a very significant effect on the garden municipality's character and should therefore require the consent of whole community, represented by its councillors.

“The Hunters Hill Municipality is one of the nation’s most significant heritage areas and two thirds of the Municipality lie within conservation areas,” Coalition spokesman Phil Jenkyn OAM said.

“It already has a long standing advisory panel in relation to heritage and a proud history in protecting the areas historic and garden character.”

Former Mayor Ross Williams agreed.

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