

# Local Government

## Scrutiny on cost of mandatory IHAPs

**Jacob Saulwick**

The NSW Government says it will monitor the costs incurred by councils in implementing mandatory independent assessment panels for local developments.

In August, the government passed legislation requiring councils to establish, if they do not already have them, independent hearing and assessment panels (IHAPs) for development applications.

But some councils continue to oppose the panels, in part based on what they would cost to implement and maintain.

Hornsby Council is to resolve at a meeting tomorrow to request an urgent meeting with the Planning Minister, Anthony Roberts, about the proposal. The council believes



Hornsby Council may meet with Anthony Roberts. Photo: Daniel Munoz

the panel will cost more than \$100,000 a year to operate, which could not be recovered from development application fees.

The requirement to establish a

panel is also being resisted by Hawkesbury Council and Hills Shire Council in Sydney's north-west.

In his second reading speech on

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Planning Minister  
Anthony Roberts

other changes to state planning laws last week, Mr Roberts said the "department will be closely monitoring" the implementation of the reforms.

"We have had informal advice from councils that IHAPs can save them money by reducing legal challenges to planning decisions," Mr Roberts said. "We will monitor

the costs and savings to councils and, if necessary, allow adjustment to development application fees to ensure the cost of IHAPs is not borne by ratepayers generally."

Hornsby Shire Council, whose mayor is former federal attorney-general Phillip Ruddock, said councillors should continue to control planning decisions.

"At election time, the community holds elected officials to account for the planning decisions they make," council papers released before tomorrow's meeting say.

"Where panels are adopted, this should be at the discretion of the council with their structure determined in response to the unique characteristics of the local government area and the expectations of the local community."