

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## SYDNEY COUNCILS UNITE AGAINST DRACONIAN PLANNING REFORMS

The Presidents of three Regional Organisations of Councils (ROCs) representing 29 Sydney councils have joined together to condemn a raft of dramatic changes to planning legislation proposed by the state government and due to be considered in the Upper House on 28 March.

The changes outlined in the Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment Bill 2006 give the Planning Minister unprecedented powers to appoint external planning administrators or panels to take over the planning and development functions of councils, and to direct councils to create or change development plans without the necessity for public consultation.

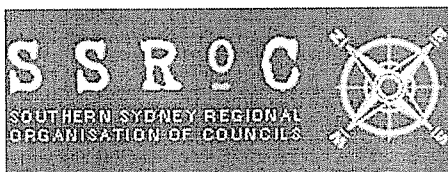
The proposed legislation also enables the Planning Minister to impose infrastructure levies on new development and forces councils to submit development contribution plans to the Minister, who then has the power to amend or approve the plans at the Minister's discretion.

"This legislation has been introduced into parliament without any consultation and should be rejected by all parties interested in transparent and representative government" said the President of Southern Sydney ROC, Mayor Ron Hoenig.

"The Planning Minister is seeking to give himself total discretion to interfere in the processes adopted by councils to ensure sustainable and appropriate development. This is totally unacceptable, and the legislation should be rejected in its entirety."

The President of Northern Sydney ROC Mayor Pat Reilly said this is another case of cost-shifting, with the state government seeking to use councils to collect funds for infrastructure which it itself has failed to deliver over many years. He stated the concept of the Minister nominating a special infrastructure levy for new developments without any defined criteria or thresholds should be of concern to home-buyers and the development industry alike. At the same time the legislation will further remove the people from the process of determining what happens in their community or how developer contributions for infrastructure are spent.

"The legislation strips councils of their long held role in working with the community to provide sustainable development in an appropriate context. It is a step towards doing away with local government and the community of interest will be abolished. The current Planning Minister has already demonstrated a willingness to call in sites all over Sydney



under the basis that they are state significant. Communities don't want the potential for more deals between major developers and planning Ministers at their expense."

The President of Western Sydney ROC, Councillor Tony Hay, summed it up by stating "This legislation strikes at the heart of local democracy. It gives the Minister unfettered powers with no rights of appeal or review and should be abandoned as it runs contrary to all the principles of good governance that this government so readily espouses. It has all the hallmarks of bad policy done on the run."

The Bill and related papers can be viewed at [www.parliament.nsw.gov.au](http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au)

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