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MEDIA RELEASE

COMMUNITIES MUST COME FIRST, DEVELOPERS SECOND

The President of the Northern Sydney Region of Councils (NSROC), Mayor Pat Reilly of Willoughby Council, has expressed strong concerns over recent reports that the State Government is considering bypassing Sydney communities to enforce urban consolidation.

In an article published by the Sydney Morning Herald on 31 October 2007, the state planning director of the Metropolitan Strategy, Gail Connolly, was reported as having discussed direct planning interventions with the Premier to ensure that the 445,000 new dwellings targeted for Sydney would be built.

The article states that the planning department has identified five sites in Sydney for redevelopment and that these are to be considered by cabinet in the near future. The article also states that the North Shore appears protected from too much development, with only 20,000 new dwellings earmarked under a recently released subregional strategy.

Mr Reilly stated that the article, if true, was likely to set the scene for a huge battle between communities and the planning minister, his senior advisers and developers.

‘This government has steadily eroded community involvement in the planning process since Frank Sartor became the Planning Minister. We have seen supposed reform after reform announced at Property Council breakfasts, all of them aimed at making things easier for developers and giving the Planning Minister increased powers to over-ride community concerns.’

‘None of these changes has improved housing affordability and nor are they likely to. What they will do is put more money in developers’ pockets and create a legacy of rushed development devoid of infrastructure and it will be local government which has to pick up the pieces’ he added.

‘Once the development genie is out of the bottle you can not put it back in. Look at Willoughby – it has copped a huge amount of residential growth in the past decade and

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yet the state government expects us to accommodate even more. There comes a time when every community has a right to say enough is enough.'

He also corrected the figure of 20,000 dwellings for the North Shore, stating that the correct figure was closer to 67,000 dwellings as the North Shore was covered by three subregional strategies; those of the North, Inner North and North East.

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