

Putting The Community Back Into Planning

The NSW Liberal & National Parties' plan to reform the State's planning system.



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The NSW Liberal & National Parties are determined to again restore the community – and public interest – at the centre of government in New South Wales.

As Liberals & Nationals, we trust people and want to empower them to make decisions. We also believe that local decision-making delivers better outcomes for communities.

As a result of these beliefs – and having witnessed the impact on local communities of Labor's flawed approach to planning – the NSW Liberal & National Parties are committed to reform of the State's planning system.

Return planning controls to local residents

Firstly, the NSW Liberal & National Parties are committed to returning local planning powers to local communities (through their councils).

We believe that local residents – through councils – are best placed to make local planning decisions affecting their suburbs. After all, it is local residents – not Macquarie Street planners – who have to live with the results of these planning decisions.

We are concerned that Labor's decisions will impose a greater number of dwellings on communities than was agreed between councils and the State Government under the Metropolitan Strategy (ie 10,000 for Ku-ring-gai over the period to 2031).

The NSW Liberal & National Parties are committed to respecting the targets agreed under the Metro Strategy. In government, we will audit decisions against those targets and, where they have been exceeded, work with local government to remove any obligation to continue with further unnecessary, unsustainable development.

Scrap Part 3A

Secondly, we will scrap 'Part 3A' – one of the wide-ranging powers Labor has given its Planning Minister to override local communities (and a factor that ICAC noted had contributed to corruption risks in the planning process).

Originally intended only for use on 'State significant' developments, it has been increasingly used to override the decision-making powers of local councils and their residents.

Part 3A has been used to take responsibility from councils for decisions on the proposed redevelopment of the UTS Kuring-gai site at Lindfield, proposals for high rise at Double Bay and Leaf's Gully power station.

Re-write the State's planning legislation

Thirdly, the NSW Liberal & National Parties will completely overhaul the State's 30 year-old planning legislation to ensure it provides greater certainty, transparency, timeliness and merit-based decision-making.

After constant 'patching' the legislation is struggling to cope with modern day demands – even Frank Sartor now admits it needs overhauling.

Appoint a Minister for Planning and Infrastructure

Fourthly, we will appoint a Minister for Planning and Infrastructure to put an end to the problems caused to communities across Sydney (and NSW) by Labor's failure to match decisions to increase populations with funded programs to improve infrastructure like roads, rail services, water and sewage.

Appoint a separate Minister for Heritage

Fifthly, a NSW Liberal & National Government will appoint a separate Minister for Heritage to be an advocate for heritage both publicly and at the Cabinet table.

This will end the inherent conflict of interest faced by Labor's planning minister who is meant to be responsible for both 'development' and heritage conservation. The National Trust's recent report on the destruction of heritage homes in Ku-ring-gai and the threat in other areas, like Butchers Row at Riverstone, reveal the cost of this conflict.

A NSW Liberal Government will remove heritage agencies from the planning portfolio and vest them in a separate portfolio oversighted by a Minister for Heritage.

Implement campaign finance reforms

Sixthly, the NSW Liberal & National Parties are committed to reform of the State's campaign finance laws to help restore community confidence in government decision-making and end Labor's 'decisions for donations' culture.

Our reforms will include:

- capping donations and restricting them to Australian citizens;
- imposing limits on election spending, including on third parties, whether unions or business groups etc;
- introducing an effective lobbyists register and banning so-called 'success' fees; and
- strengthen the powers of ICAC to specifically include oversight issues relating to donations/decisions.

These reforms will again place public interest at the centre of the State's planning system and ensure that the views of communities are again heard and respected.