



RESIDENTS MATTER ACTION GROUP

MEDIA RELEASE

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HILLS SHIRE COUNCIL OPPOSITION TO INDEPENDENT PANELS 'LAUGHABLE'

Council's conduct the reason why panels have been introduced

A Hills-based residents action group has strongly backed new NSW Government legislation for the compulsory appointment of Independent Hearing and Assessment Panels (IHAPs) to take over development approvals at local councils.

"With a council like the Hills Shire Council which up-zones its own land to sell to developers for a massive windfall, but at the same time deliberately stops development elsewhere even in priority precincts, IHAPs are a must," according to the Residents Matter Action Group (ResMAG).

Spokesman, Paul Cook, described the Hills Shire Council's recent actions to join in with other councils to oppose the introduction of IHAPs as "laughable in the extreme".

"Are the Council staff, Mayor and Councillors so blind that they don't realise that their conduct is the reason why independent panels are so necessary and why they've been introduced. IHAPs also stop local MPs like Ray Williams and David Elliott interfering by pulling political strings."

ResMAG is in a bitter dispute with Hills Council in the Showground Station Precinct over council's deliberate blocking of development in the precinct despite its location on the new metro rail line. Council has resisted a State Government mandate for transport-oriented development that allows higher density near railway stations.

Local residents, who stand to make gains on the value of their property if developers take up options to build in the designated Showground Station Precinct, have been angered by Hills Council's deliberate refusal and delaying of development proposals since 2015.

"Not a single development has been given the go-ahead by Council in three years in the Showground Precinct. But, Council at the same time sold off public land in the neighbouring Castle Hill for a substantial \$140M, and even allowed the developer who bought their land to increase the height allowance from 18 to 23 storeys as well as ignore normal development controls that apply elsewhere. There was also no requirement for super-sized apartments that now have been imposed on development in the Showground Station Precinct," Mr Cook said.

ResMAG has called on the State Government to immediately suspend Hills Shire Council, and for an investigation into major mal-administration and potential corrupt conduct.

Residents are pushing for the NSW Government to take control of planning and development approvals and consent away from Hills Council in the Showground Station Precinct.

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