



MAYORAL MINUTE NO 21/2023

GOVERNMENT WRONG TO PUT ALL THE BLAME ON COUNCILS FOR STATE'S HOUSING WOES

24 OCTOBER 2023

Dear Councillors,

I wish to draw your attention to a concerning statement in the Legislative Council of the NSW Parliament on Wednesday 18 October by the Minister for Housing The Hon. Rose Jackson MLC. The Hon. Mark Latham MLC asked "What action is the Government taking about nimby councils like Parramatta and Randwick, which are deliberately obstructing housing supply? Will the Government intervene to make sure that the developments can be approved?"

Answering the question without notice, Minister Jackson firstly stated that The Hills Shire Council "is one of the only councils in New South Wales that refuses to do an acknowledgement of country – which is just ridiculous".

Greater acknowledgement of our indigenous community is very important to this Council and was the first motion adopted in the 21-24 term. We have conducted an Acknowledgement of Country at every Council meeting in this term and indeed in tonight's business paper, Council is proposing to name a park in North Kellyville 'Kiliiyurra Reserve', following consultation with our local indigenous community.

Minister Jackson continued, specifically calling out The Hills Shire Council as a NIMBY Council, saying "Also, despite infrastructure delivery in that area, it consistently describes new housing as an attack on the character of their area."

The Minister's comments are ill-informed and I encourage her to correct the record.

Had the Minister checked her own Government's open data sources, she may have reconsidered her answer.

Was the Minister aware that The Hills Shire Council is ranked second in NSW for the number of dwellings approved in the 12 months to March 2023? Only our neighbours in Blacktown approved more than the 3799 homes that we approved.

Was the Minister aware that again, according to her own Government's open data sources, that The Hills Shire Council is ranked second in NSW for the number of homes expected over the next five years? Again, only our neighbours in Blacktown exceed the expected 13,830 homes coming to our local government area.

Instead of "calling out" this Council for its efforts on housing, the Minister should be thanking us. The Hills Shire Council is one of the few Metropolitan Sydney Councils meeting its housing targets. Without our state-leading work in rezoning land, approving homes and funding local infrastructure, the NSW Government's housing crisis would be significantly worse.

Being in a growth area and being located along the Sydney Metro Northwest, Hills residents are very understanding that we need to play a significant role in delivering housing. However it is not unreasonable for the community to expect development to occur in line with the Regional and District Strategies, as well as the Councils Local Strategic Planning Statement and Local Environment Plan which our residents and the Council had a say in putting together and were approved by the NSW Government.

Council were assured that the number of homes in the Hills Showground precinct would remain limited to 5,000 dwellings until there was sufficient commitment and plans in place from the NSW Government for new regional infrastructure to cater for this growing population. This promise has been discarded, potentially allowing up to 9,500 dwellings in the precinct before the promised school is announced and funded.

The State Government have also targeted the Cherrybrook Precinct for additional development beyond the Place Strategy, which was finalised just in December 2022.

The Government are also continuing to pursue an initiative to allow developers to increase the height and density of their projects by 30 per cent in exchange for allocating 15 per cent of their developments to affordable housing for 15 years, overriding local controls.

Our community have very clearly said to us that the State roads are already choked with traffic and our schools are already bursting at the seams. The State Government have identified several ways in which densities may be further lifted in The Hills but have not elaborated what additional infrastructure our community may get if the further development occurs. We are even currently lending the State Government funding for the upgrade of Annangrove Road, which should be funded from State Special Infrastructure Contributions (SIC).

Our job as Councillors is to represent our community, and our residents have very clearly said that they have major concerns that a Council that is performing highly in terms of housing supply is being asked to do even more without region transforming infrastructure on offer. Part of my election platform as Mayor was to fight against overdevelopment and that is what Hills residents expect me to do. I won't be intimidated by anyone who seeks to stop me representing the interests of our community.

Councils are not the cause of the housing crisis. In the last 10 years The Hills Shire Council has approved more than 30,000 dwellings, yet only 18,800 have been delivered by the market. I've attached the Hansard transcript of the Minister's exchange in Parliament. I call on Councillors to stand united with our community against these comments.

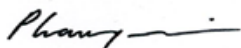
I also noticed the Minister listed the peak industry groups she's met and liaised with on this matter. Curiously, we haven't had the pleasure of a single conversation on the topic of housing with any NSW Government Minister despite numerous attempts at dialogue.

Therefore, I'll try again. I'd like to invite Minister Jackson to The Hills Shire to visit key sites to convey the genuine concerns our community hold and discuss how we can move forward towards our mutual goals.

The Hills Shire Council is exceptionally well qualified to show the Government how councils can meet their housing supply targets. The NSW Government could do worse than coming out and seeing what we know.

Accordingly, I move:

1. The Mayoral Minute be received.
2. A formal invitation be forwarded to Minister for Housing The Hon. Rose Jackson to visit The Hills Shire so she can see firsthand the contribution The Hills is making to housing.
3. Council conduct a community engagement campaign requesting the views of residents, businesses, stakeholders and community groups on the rate of development and provision of infrastructure across the Shire.



Dr Peter Gangemi
MAYOR



HOUSING SUPPLY

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS (11:22): My question is directed to the Minister for Housing. I refer the Minister to the Government's stated ambition of sustainably increasing housing stock in New South Wales to ease the housing affordability crisis. Major private sector property developers have said that they will not invest in New South Wales because of the slow pace of rezoning and development approvals and have taken their money to the fast-track system in Queensland. Has the Minister met with these developers? What is the Government doing to draw lost housing investment back to New South Wales?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON (Minister for Water, Minister for Housing, Minister for Homelessness, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Youth, and Minister for the North Coast) (11:23): I thank the Deputy President for his question. I absolutely have met with so many stakeholders involved in delivering housing and I hear their concern that the current planning system in New South Wales is not fit for purpose. I have met with the Urban Development Institute of Australia, the Property Council multiple times, the Urban Taskforce, and individual developers and their representatives. I take the role of being part of the team that delivers housing in New South Wales incredibly seriously. I absolutely hear their concerns, including the specific concern that the honourable member raised, which is that they are leaving this jurisdiction to take up opportunities in other jurisdictions because their settings are more optimal. That is why we have already started the process of reforming the planning system in New South Wales, and there will be more to come.

To refresh the honourable member's memory, I will say that we have made a series of changes to the planning system already, including, importantly, from my point of view, self-assessment powers for our Government housing delivery agencies—Landcom, the Aboriginal Housing Office, and the Land and Housing Corporation—and incentives for those large residential builds with over \$75 million of capital investment. If they deliver the 15 per cent of affordable housing, which we desperately need, they get the 30 per cent bonuses. Those are changes we have already announced.

Will that be enough? Absolutely not. Developers have continued to raise with me that there needs to be more reform of the planning system. This week my colleague the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces is having conversations with the community about the insufficient engagement with R2 and R3 zones at the local government level. I think that 6 per cent of R2 zones allow dual-occupancy buildings, such as duplexes and terraces. Only 39 per cent of R3 zones, medium-density zones, allow mid-sized apartment buildings. So the Minister is out there and drawing attention to these failings in the planning system. He is doing that deliberately. As I said, it is about R2 and R3 this week. Other conversations have been happening to bring the community along with the conversation we are leading about fixing the housing crisis. That does mean reforming planning. We have heard those concerns. We have already acted. We will do more to reform the planning system in New South Wales to make sure that we are confronting the housing crisis and delivering our commitments under the Housing Accord.

The Hon. ROD ROBERTS (11:26): I ask a supplementary question. Will the Minister elucidate her answer where she talks about reforms her Government will be adopting? Will her Government adopt the Queensland model, where DAs are deemed approved within 12 months?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON (Minister for Water, Minister for Housing, Minister for Homelessness, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Youth, and Minister for the North Coast) (11:26): I will take the specific consideration of the Queensland model on notice for the Minister. He is leading the reform of the planning system. I will get back to the honourable member. But to give him comfort, I say that, as he knows, we have already indicated that we are willing to reform the planning system. Another example is the work that the Minister for Local Government and I, as the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, have done on the number of DAs that are being withdrawn through local governments. Again, we have made changes recently to try to work with local governments to ensure that they are not implementing systems in which DAs are taking so long to be assessed and then at the end of the day being withdrawn, which is another failing of the planning system, another reason why we are not getting the housing we need and another area of reform.

We have looked at and seen the very high number of DAs being withdrawn in certain local government areas. It is a mixed bag. Some are better; some are worse. Some are very bad, though, and we have taken action to try to ensure that, when you submit a DA, you can move it through the system and ensure that the link between DA submission and housing completion is as short as possible. I will take the specifics of the Queensland reforms on notice. My area is social and affordable housing. Community housing providers talk to me all the time about how long it takes to get similar proposals approved in Queensland and in New South Wales, and we are losing the race to Queensland in New South Wales. We should be leading. We have the highest population, and we are taking the highest number of new migrants, but we have the most unaffordable housing. We are coming last on the eastern seaboard. We are aware of those issues. I will take the specifics on notice.

The Hon. MARK LATHAM (11:28): I ask a second supplementary question. Will the Minister elaborate on the work she is undertaking with the Minister for Local Government? We are losing housing investment to Queensland. We are non-competitive against the Queensland model. What action is the Government taking about nimby councils like Parramatta and Randwick, which are deliberately obstructing housing supply? Will the Government intervene to make sure that the developments can be approved?

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON (Minister for Water, Minister for Housing, Minister for Homelessness, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Youth, and Minister for the North Coast) (11:29): As I have explained, the answer is absolutely yes. We want to bring people along the journey. We do not want to waste time, energy and effort fighting with people who should be part of the movement for change. Our arms are open and our hands are outstretched to local government. Partner with us. Come along the journey with us and be part of the solution. Do not be part of the problem. It is our preference to say to people, "This is an incredibly important issue for our State. There is simply not enough affordable housing in New South Wales and we want you to be part of the solution."

Having said that, if local government areas refuse to accept that they are part of the work that has to be done, we will start calling them out. I call out specifically The Hills council. For starters, it is one of the only councils in New South Wales that refuses to do an acknowledgement of country—which is just ridiculous. Also, despite infrastructure delivery in that area, it consistently describes new housing as an attack on the character of their area. Housing is part of building a better character for an area. We will call out local governments that refuse to be—

The Hon. Scott Farlow: Point of order: The question specifically referred to both Randwick and Parramatta councils. I ask that the Minister be relevant in her answer to those councils that she was asked about.

The Hon. Mark Latham: To the point of order: This is a great answer. As the person who asked the question I said, "such as Parramatta and Randwick", but there are many others. I was about to mention The Hills but I did not want to take up too much time of the House. I have got a few others. The Minister is totally in order.

The PRESIDENT: There is no point of order. The Minister has the call.

The Hon. ROSE JACKSON: I take the tenor of the interjection to suggest that this Government is less likely to call to question Labor councils. That is just not true. I have criticised Bayside Council, a Labor council. I do not care if they are Labor, Liberal or whatever. I care about housing. When it is a Labor council I will tell them, "Come on guys, get with the program." When it is a Liberal council that describes housing as an attack on the character of an area, I will call it to question too. When it is The Greens that are being a bunch of nimbys against building new housing in Leichhardt, I will have a go at them. It does not matter to me what your politics are, what matters to me is housing. [*Time expired.*]