

MERITON SUEING THE NSW PREMIER CONFIRMS SYDNEY'S PLANNING MESS

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The legal action filed in the Land and Environment Court by Meriton against the Premier of NSW and the Planning Minister demonstrates what a mess Sydney's planning system is in, says the Urban Taskforce.

"The legal action is over a planning proposal by Meriton that has been caught up in an 'assurance report' written by the Greater Sydney Commission and publically released by the Local Member for Ryde, Victor Dominello." says Urban Taskforce CEO Chris Johnson. "It seems that the Department of Planning and Environment had endorsed the Meriton planning proposal on behalf of the Greater Sydney Commission before new legislation introduced the concept of an 'assurance report'."

"The Urban Taskforce has been very critical of the assurance report for Ryde produced by the Greater Sydney Commission. The report claimed that housing completions were 'unprecedented and unanticipated', but at 1,500 a year over the last 3 years they were right on the GSC's target of 7,600 over 5 years. The use of the assurance report in the middle of a state election, and the fact that it has only been released by the local Member of Parliament, gives the impression that emotive pre-election logic is winning over rational planning rules."

"The assurance review terms of reference were skewed towards the community to give them assurance about growth and infrastructure. But it is also critical that investors and developers who are following the government's planning rules have assurance, and it seems in the case of Meriton's planning proposal this has not occurred. It does seem strange that the assurance review by the GSC did not discover that the introduction of an 'assurance report' was only introduced in an amendment to their own Greater Sydney Commission Act after the Meriton proposal was endorsed by the Department of Planning on behalf of the GSC."

"The saga of the intervention by the supposedly independent Greater Sydney Commission into planning within the Ryde Local Government Area does raise concerns about their impartiality and their understanding about their role in the planning process."

"Of greater concern is the fact that the Greater Sydney Commission in its report stated, that the review can 'inform broader planning practices....across Greater Sydney more generally.'. The Urban Taskforce believes the use of Assurance Reviews needs to be put on hold until a full understanding of what happened in Ryde during the state election is fully understood."

*The **Urban Taskforce** is a property development industry group, representing Australia's most prominent property developers and equity financiers.*

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