

Beachside towers to be cut down to size

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FIVE years since Warringah Council's elected representatives were sacked for ineptitude and close ties to the property industry, a new batch of councillors has taken a decidedly anti-development stand.

At a packed council meeting last night - the first time councillors have voted in the chamber since 2003 - the newly elected community leaders urged the Planning Minister, Kristina Keneally, to reject an attempt by the old council to allow towers of up to 18 storeys to be built in Dee Why.

In May the council's former administrator, Dick Persson, adopted a staff recommendation to seek the Planning Minister's permission to amend the Dee Why town centre local environment plan. If approved, it would have allowed developers to build an 18-storey and a 17-storey tower in an area covered by a six-storey height limit.

The staff recommendation said the amendments would help transform Dee Why "from a local shopping centre to a vibrant major centre and significantly improve its urban design quality, character, attractiveness, role, function and employment-generation capacity".

But these benefits were insufficient to warrant such tall buildings, councillors decided last night. They unanimously backed a motion by Cr Vincent de Luca calling for the minister to reject the amendments.

They supported obtaining legal advice on the feasibility of withdrawing the amendments, or challenging them in court should they be approved by the minister.

"The community have made it loud and clear they want the existing height limits," Cr de Luca told the *Herald*.

If approved, he said, the towers would set a precedent for other large-scale developments. "We just simply don't have the infrastructure to cope with that type of development. We are not on a train line.

"Our buses and arterial roads are clogged to the hilt. We have parking chaos as it is.

"To sustain such a massive Chatswood-like development, the State Government would have to inject billions of dollars into the northern beaches to facilitate new infrastructure and services."

In 2003 the council was dismissed following a six-month inquiry by Emeritus Professor Maurice Daly, who found the council was dysfunctional beyond repair.

The relationship between councillors was "so poisonous that little hope can be placed in the ability of the body to manage their affairs in a rational fashion", he found.

The professor also noted the close links to the property industry. "The fact that two of the longest-standing councillors have their primary business interests in the property industry has generated a belief that they must have benefited from the pro-development stance of the council."

This story was found at: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/09/29/1222650989547.html>