

What confidence can the community have in Warringah Council's handling of the proposed 20 storey towers in the Dee Why Town Centre when even the Council breaks its own rules?

Council has revealed that it organised a private meeting between Multiplex/Vambucca Developments and certain members of the Council's Independent Hearing and Assessment Panel (IHAP) to outline their proposal.

The Charter for the IHAP states that its purpose is "To avoid any lobbying or external communication from applicants or objectors outside the forum of Panel hearings" and "Panel Members must not approach an applicant or representor, or if approached by an applicant or representor must not discuss any application which is either before the Panel or will come before the Panel at some future time, except during the course of a panel meeting where the application forms part of the agenda and the applicant or representor has a right to be heard by the Panel".

Ironically, at the same meeting, the Director of Planning who arranged this meeting involving the developers stated in a report on IHAP "The charter, under which IHAP currently operates, precludes the members from having any contact with either the applicant or objectors".

So why then did Council arrange this private meeting when it clearly breaches the rules and compromises the independence and integrity of the IHAP?

Administrator Dick Persson was asked at the same meeting whether he would call upon the NSW Ombudsman and St James Ethics Centre to examine Council's handling of the proposals to date - he refused. I wonder why?

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