

Submission
No 318

**INQUIRY INTO PLANNING PROCESS IN NEWCASTLE
AND THE BROADER HUNTER REGION**

Name: Name suppressed

Date received: 24/10/2014

Partially Confidential

I wish to raise concerns with the NSW Legislative Council (or Upper House) inquiry into Planning Process in Newcastle and the Broader Hunter Region. Specifically with reference to probity a lack of transparency perceived conflict of interests and excessive developer influence on planning decisions surrounding the spot rezoning of Newcastle's Mall and East End heritage area to facilitate the development application Newcastle East End DA 2014/323.

While I support urban renewal in Newcastle I am alarmed at the proposal submitted by joint developers GPT Group/Urban Growth NSW for high rise apartment towers in the low rise heritage precinct of inner city Newcastle. This development triples height limits to 20 storeys and significantly increases floor space ratios.

The proposed development runs contrary to the guiding principles of the so-called Newcastle Urban Renewal Strategy (NURS - 2012) in which high rise towers were to be located at Wickham or Newcastle west end. How did this excessive and inappropriate development plan be produced and submitted when the existing strategic planning documents specifically ruled out high rise in Newcastle's East End heritage precinct. I made a comprehensive submission on the NURS -2012 but now the community consultation process to change the height limits seems like a joke and Urban Growth had no intention of giving us a say in their proposal.

My specific concerns that I hope the inquiry will investigate include: critical decisions have not been based on actual evidence and there may have been inappropriate influence by developers on decision makers and or conflicts of interest that need to be investigated. ie Which Minister approved GPT and Urban Growth becoming partners.

I respectfully urge the Upper House Committee to please consider making the following recommendations

1. Revoke the SEPP amendment by providing a revised SEPP amendment overriding the 2014 approval.
2. With respect to building heights restore the NURS (2012) that includes - acceptable height limits (maximum 24 metres or roughly 8 storeys - appropriate floor space density provisions - maintain iconic public vistas to and from the city and East End Precinct.