

**INQUIRY INTO ALLEGATIONS OF IMPROPRIETY  
AGAINST AGENTS OF THE HILLS SHIRE COUNCIL AND  
PROPERTY DEVELOPERS IN THE REGION**

**Organisation:** West Pennant Hills Valley Progress Association  
**Date Received:** 20 January 2023

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## **NSW Legislative Council Inquiry into allegations of impropriety against agents of the Hills Shire Council and property developers in the region.**

We do not have any direct evidence of any impropriety by The Hills Shire Council (THSC) and its dealings with developers.

We do, however, have several questions that flow from the actions of THSC.

### **1) Maximum height limits set by NSW Planning deemed 'unnecessary and unreasonable' by THSC**

The Development Applications for the site at 55 Coonara Ave, West Pennant Hills, included Clause 4.6 written requests for height variations. Maximum height limits for this site were set by NSW State Government, but the developer wanted to exceed these height limits by more than 23%.

Since it is difficult to believe that NSW Planning set maximum height limits on this site that were unnecessary and unreasonable, we expected THSC to reject the developer's argument. However, we are not aware of any attempt made by THSC to challenge the height variation request. It appears that THSC simply agreed with the developer's advice, and made a recommendation to the Planning Panel for approval of the Development Applications.

Why didn't THSC respect the height limits set by NSW Planning, why did they think that the height limits set by NSW Planning were unreasonable and unnecessary, and why didn't they challenge the height variation request?

### **2) Selective Removal of Unauthorised Signs**

During the public campaign opposing the residential development at 55 Coonara Ave, West Pennant Hills, many residents displayed protest signs both on private and public land. All signs on public land are prohibited by THSC by-laws and likely to be removed by Council, however, our elected representatives and THSC executives told us that signs are generally only removed following a complaint.

However, signs on public land objecting to the development were selectively removed by THSC employees as soon as they were displayed, once within a couple of minutes, far too quickly for a complaint to have been received. Other unauthorised signs including those promoting local home businesses were generally not removed for weeks or even months.

THSC employees charged with the task of removing unauthorised signs, told us that they had been instructed to remove all anti-development signs regardless of whether a complaint had been made or not.

Some signs were also displayed on City of Parramatta (CoP) land. When we rang CoP to ask why signs had been removed, we were mistaken for someone complaining about the display, and asked if we were calling on behalf of someone with the same name as one of THSC councillors. Was THSC also putting pressure on CoP to remove signs?

THSC management appears to have favoured the developer in their handling of residents' signs, and we believe that the question must be asked why?

Thank you for considering these issues which are important to the residents of the Hills Shire

**Submitted by and on behalf of The Committee, West Pennant Hills Valley Progress Association.**