

Highlands Eye



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Forgiveness or Permission?

A fundamental tenet of good governance is the consistent application of rules and regulations. For Local Governments this particularly applies to their Development Application procedure.

Many believe in recent years a handful of developers may have cynically manipulated the WSC planning process. Among the causes for disquiet are *bait and switch* techniques used by some developers who have a DA approved and then significantly alter the project prior to, or during, construction.

Another DA dirty trick is evident when supposed objectors are eventually exposed as little more than an applicants' skill. As for construction without a DA, do we need a new planning classification, the *fait accompli* DA?

What message does it send when dangerous precedents circumvent the intent and purpose of our planning regulations? Either everyone must comply, or no one need do so.

We believe there is room for significant improvement in WSC construction supervision, community engagement, compliance, and enforcement, especially in cases of wilful disregard for the rules.

A number of HiEye readers also ask why WSC do not have a mandatory DA notification policy? It is difficult to understand why residents are denied knowledge of what may be happening next door or across the street.

Councils failing to equitably apply and enforce their development policies aid and abet the systematic degradation of a Shire's planning integrity.

Contravention by a few is completely at odds with our Shire's broader interests, and must be vigorously discouraged.

Isolationism

We applaud and support a recent public commitment made by several councillors to seek a **moratorium on SEPP Seniors DAs**. Will these same councillors please make best efforts to address the ramifications of a public remark made by a senior WSC planning officer who stated DAs are not assessed in the context of others in process, or likely to be approved, in a neighbourhood.

May we conclude from this planner's statement that our Shire's planning does not actually involve planning? If so, it is extremely disturbing?

Does our planning department really consider DAs in complete isolation from other likely developments in the vicinity? Do they only assess DAs on an individual basis, and ignore the wider planning picture?

What consideration is given to the DAs' collective detrimental impact on life quality, property values, infrastructure, and traffic? Is there no deliberation of how such policies may permanently distort the character of our Shire? Surely not!

The following statement appears on the WSC web site. "The Planning Department has many functions relating to the creation of a quality environment for the Wingecarribee Shire community in which **land use and development is planned and the Social and environmental well being of the community is enhanced and protected.**" Perhaps some councilors and planning department staff may like to reacquaint themselves with these words.

On September 13 we have the opportunity to decide whether sincere best efforts have been made during this council's term to pursue these laudable aims.

Please Value Your Vote

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