



## STEP Inc

Community-based Environmental Conservation since 1978

28 February 2022

Ms Paulina Wythes  
Director, Planning Legislative Reform  
Department of Planning, Industry and Environment  
Locked Bag 5022 Parramatta NSW 2124

Via Planning portal

Dear Madam

### **Re new approach to rezonings**

STEP Inc is a local community-based environmental group, with a membership of over 550 in the Hornsby/Ku-ring-gai area. Our main objective is to preserve natural bushland in northern Sydney from alienation or degradation and ensuring proper management of this bushland including ensuring its role as habitat for animal species. Our group has considerable experience in environmental issues and regenerating and preserving natural bushland and native vegetation

The Discussion paper states that

Ongoing reforms to the NSW planning system aim for a 'plan-led' system – an approach that ensures strategic planning is the foundation for all decisions about potential land-use changes

However, the proposals go against the principle of strategic planning. They are likely to result in an increase in the number of ad hoc developer driven rezoning applications that a Council has to process. The pressure to assess applications within a fixed time frame will compromise the ability of councils to assess how a proposal fits into the area's strategic framework and take into account other developments in the process of construction or under assessment.

**STEP therefore opposes the proposed reform as councils should retain control of rezoning applications.**

### **Community input and time limits**

Councils must be able to inform the community with plenty of time to make submissions. Fixed time limits are unsuitable. Flexibility is essential so that councils can take into account individual case circumstances. There is often a situation where inaccurate or incomplete documentation is provided. The council may identify this situation or it can be discovered by the community.

The Discussion paper states that 'we need to improve current processes to optimise the economic and environmental benefits of development'. Community input is essential to ensure that environmental and social considerations are fully understood.

Often councils use e-newsletters to alert the community of planning proposals but they not sent frequently enough for the community to be made aware of the application and be given plenty of time to investigate a rezoning plan and to make a submission. After all it is

the community that has the local experience of the possible impact of a development including the cumulative impact of several similar applications.

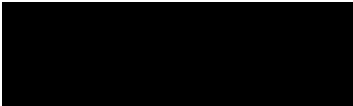
**Merits review rights**

Merits review rights for third party objectors are critical to ensuring balance in the planning system and should be included for category two and three applications.

**Assessment fees**

In regard to the proposed types of assessment fees, we have a preference for the flexibility of Option 3: Fixed and variable assessment fees.

yours sincerely



Jill Green  
President