



Our Ref: ECM No. 8649252

13 November 2023

Mr Paul Scully MP
Minister for Planning and Public Space
Parliament House
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Minister Scully,

I am writing in respect of a number of matters relating to flood and land-use planning in the Hawkesbury Nepean Valley.

Letter dated 30 October 2023

I refer to your letter to me dated 30 October 2023 (received on 1 November 2023), regarding the NSW housing crisis and discussing the 'need to allow for more housing in our low and medium density zones across NSW'.

In this letter, you are asking councils, including Hawkesbury City Council, to:

- 'review their local policy settings and approaches in the interest of housing supply';
- 'identify existing well located areas where terraces, small unit blocks or well-designed mid-rise apartments can be permitted';
- 'begin work identifying locations and permitting more low and mid-rise homes immediately'.

You also reference the September 2024 NSW Council elections as a factor to ensuring that Council's get on with this work as a matter of urgency, so that 'we can keep up the momentum on delivering the approvals for housing developments across New South Wales.' Lastly, you have asked that as Mayor, I table your letter at my next Council meeting.

With all of this in mind, I strongly seek your guidance as to why you have sought this of Hawkesbury City Council, given your recent media release concerning the entire Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley Floodplain Evacuation Modelling, released on 29 October 2023 (<https://paulscullymp.com.au/news/media-releases/focus-on-prevention-to-reduce-risk-to-life-during-floods-in-the-hawkesbury-nepean-valley/>), where the first line of your media release reads '*The Minns Labor Government is delivering on its election commitment to no longer develop housing on high-risk flood plains in Western Sydney.*'

I understand your letter to me dated 30 October 2023 may have been a standard letter that was sent to all Councils in NSW, but given that the day before, you and your department have now alluded to major possible changes to planning instruments and guidelines for the Hawkesbury community due to findings in recent flood plain studies and evacuation modelling, I am seeking clarification given the conflicting messages provided.

I further note that the draft Hawkesbury Nepean River Flood Study was also released by the NSW Government to affected councils for comment on the 30 October 2023, and has the affect of raising the Probable Maximum Flood (PMF) level. Hawkesbury City councillors were briefed by the NSW Reconstruction Authority on Tuesday 7 November 2023 in regard to the draft Flood Study, and we appreciate the time of the staff at the Authority. However, these staff noted that the responsibility for land-use planning implications of the draft Study and the Evacuation Modelling now falls with the Department of Planning.



In light of the findings of the flood evacuation modelling report which appear to question the viability of Hawkesbury's existing housing strategy outcomes; the raising of the PMF in the draft Study; and your letter of the 30 October seeking Council to urgently find more housing sites, Council has significant concerns for all future development in the Hawkesbury. This also includes commercial and industrial zonings, as we fear a loss of employment/job opportunities in Western Sydney may result if significant changes come into force. In terms of residential development, any housing sites in the Hawkesbury that are not on the floodplain would demand that improved evacuation routes and vital infrastructure, such as the planned Richmond Duplication Bridge and the Grose River Crossing, are built *before* any additional housing could even be considered. Even then, there is an appetite in our community for limited residential development, given the constraints of flood and bushfire in our area.

As you may now appreciate, I am unable to table your letter at a Council meeting until your position regarding the Hawkesbury is clarified. Having such contradictory statements come from your office in a number of days has left us further confused. Your urgent clarification would be most welcome.

Outstanding Matters from 16 August 2023 Meeting

You may recall that you visited the Hawkesbury with Minister Dib, myself and senior Council staff on 16 August 2023, where you saw first-hand the destruction and devastation caused by the recent six floods in less than three years.

At this meeting, Council presented a suite of outstanding measures that we required for flood recovery, resilience and mitigation, of which we have not heard anything from you to date. I remind you that we still urgently seek your government's plans on flood mitigation, as now with the cancelling of the Warragamba Dam Wall raising project, we have not been shown any detailed plans or designs for flood mitigation or improved evacuation routes. Our traumatised and fragile community eagerly awaits any information in this regard.

We would appreciate a response from you in relation to all of the above important matters raised at the earliest opportunity.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sarah McMahon'.

Clr Sarah McMahon
Mayor, City of Hawkesbury | Hawkesbury City Council
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