Response to the Daily Telegraph re retirement village proposal at Galston

Response provided on 13 July in response to questions about recent changes to the Seniors Living State environmental planning policy (Seniors Living SEPP).

The Director-General of the Department of Planning originally signed a “site compatibility certificate” for the Galston site in 2008 and this was re-issued in November 2010 following the certificate’s expiry. It is normal practice for proponents for seek the re-issuing of expired certificates.

This allowed the proposal for the site to proceed to assessment by the local council and ensured that the development would be consistent with the conditions in the certificate (see further below).

The Director-General has the specified role in the Seniors Living SEPP to decide whether such a certificate can be issued. The certificate for the Galston site was dealt with strictly in accordance with the State planning policy and decisions were made solely on their planning merits.

Generally, once a certificate has been issued, council staff can decide to recommend to approve the application, or alternatively refuse it based on particular issues (which hypothetically could include sewerage, parking and road access). This situation remained in place irrespective of the March 2 changes.

In issuing the certificate, the Director-General imposed some strict requirements on the development (should it be approved).

This included requiring:

- Buildings to be limited to one storey in height and setback from property boundaries in accordance with council’s rural lands policy;
- Demonstration of adequate infrastructure for treatment of wastewater and the siting of on-site treatment to the rear of the site;
- Negotiations with the local bus company before the submission of the development application on the provision of a bus stop; and
- The development to take into account council’s policies in regard to on-site effluent disposal, drainage, open space and landscaping.