

Tuesday, 22 March, 2011

**Mowbray Road precinct in Lane Cove and Urbanhorizon report**  
**Response given to the *Sydney Morning Herald***

The Department of Planning is required to ensure there's an adequate supply of housing for Sydney's needs, in the right locations.

The Mowbray Rd precinct contains an existing Housing NSW estate and is well-located to provide for additional dwelling supply.

It is located alongside a high frequency bus route which connects the site with the major employment centre of Chatswood. The site is also close to the North Sydney centre.

In light of the views of Housing NSW and the need for Lane Cove to meet a reasonable share of Sydney's additional housing needs, the Department considered the site could contain higher densities.

In saying that, any development proposals for the site will need to undergo a rigorous development assessment process, including for bushfire issues due to the site being located alongside Stringybark Creek.

In respect of a number of development applications being considered by the JRPP for the Mowbray Rd precinct, the Rural Fire Service had indicated that it required an independent traffic study, focused specifically on vehicle egress during a bushfire, before it could comment on the development proposals.

The Panel Secretariat sought the Department of Planning's assistance to secure the RFS comments, and the Department undertook to commission an independent traffic study.

The Department has worked closely with Council throughout the process, including:

- Working with Council and the RFS to develop a brief for this study. It was agreed by the parties, including Council, that the study should focus solely on traffic issues arising in a bushfire emergency, rather than being a comprehensive traffic study of the precinct.
- Advising Council of the selection and credentials of consultant Urbanhorizon. Council did not challenge this selection.
- Providing Council with two opportunities earlier this month to provide feedback on the draft Urbanhorizon report, at which stage Council did not provide adequate comments.

Lane Cove Council wrote to the Department on 21 January 2011, acknowledging the Department's actions in taking carriage of the study and for inviting Council's partnership in the process.

Urbanhorizon was selected from the Department's list of pre-approved consultants, which have all undergone appropriate authorisation and checks. The estimated cost of the study fell below the threshold which would require it to be put out to tender.

Urbanhorizon was a suitably qualified and appropriate independent consultant for the purpose of undertaking the traffic study required by the brief and its findings will now be

considered by the JRPP in its determination of the specified Lane Cove development applications.

The RFS this week endorsed the findings of the Urbanhorizon report and noted it would provide a better outcome to existing road infrastructure in the event of a bushfire.

### **On clearing of bushland...**

Urbanhorizon's report is a consultant's report which addresses the RFS concerns for appliance access, operation and egress of cars during bushfire evacuation.

It provides some options for the council and the JRPP as part of the assessment of development applications in this area, but ultimately decisions on council land are a matter for Council.