

Tuesday, 8 November 2011

NSW Planning System Review reschedules Penrith forums after flash flooding

Two additional community consultation sessions for the NSW Planning System Review will be held in Penrith on Friday 18 November, after yesterday's sessions were abandoned when flash flooding forced the evacuation of the Penrith RSL Club.

NSW Planning System Review chairs Ron Dyer and Tim Moore have decided to extend their listening tour of NSW by two days.

"The consultation tour was to have concluded with two forums in Castle Hill on Wednesday 16 November. But we have now scheduled additional forums in Penrith on Friday 18 November," Mr Moore said.

Two sessions will be held from 3pm to 5pm, and from 6pm to 7.30pm, to replace yesterday's sessions.

Mr Dyer and Mr Moore said flooding was the last thing they were expecting when they headed to Penrith yesterday.

"After eight weeks on the road visiting 37 regional and metropolitan locations around NSW, where we have hosted well over 100 stakeholder meetings and community forums, nothing had prepared us for this," Mr Moore said.

"Just as we were getting into the swing of our 3pm session with nearly 30 community members, a thunderstorm swept through Penrith.

"Initially, the lights started to flicker and we could hear the pounding rain on the roof of the building. A few moments later, a club staff member burst into our meeting room and warned us we were about to be flooded.

"We thought she was joking and then, under one of the doors to our meeting room, an advancing tide of water about 3cm deep started flowing across the carpet towards us. The lights went out in the foyer, the emergency alarm began to sound and we were instructed to evacuate the building."

Mr Dyer said everyone was evacuated to the car park.

"After the fire brigade arrived, we were advised that the club had shut for the day and there was no chance we would be able to continue our afternoon session or hold a consultation session that evening," Mr Dyer said.

Mr Moore said that he and Mr Dyer had decided to reschedule the Penrith forums to ensure everyone had an opportunity to have their say.

"Penrith is an important local government area experiencing high growth and planning challenges and as part of the NSW Planning System Review, it is important for us to hear any concerns the Penrith community have about the planning system," Mr Moore said.

After the listening and scoping stages are completed, the next steps will include:

- The preparation of a Green Paper – outlining options in regard to the future planning system and the basis of a legislative scheme.
- A White Paper – setting out the Government's new framework for the NSW planning system, including new draft legislation which will re-write the current Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979.

Further information is available on the Planning System Review website www.planningreview.nsw.gov.au. Notes from each community forum will be posted on the website.

NOTE TO MEDIA:

Interviews with the Planning Review Panel, Tim Moore and Ron Dyer, can be arranged on request.

All media are invited to attend the community forums, along with interviewing the panel chairs before or after the event. To organise interviews, please call 9228 6128 and we'll put you in contact with the panel chairs.

Media and members of the public can also follow feeds on Twitter and Facebook – more details are at www.planningreview.nsw.gov.au

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