

Media release



Planning &
Infrastructure

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Feedback sought on proposed awning advice

Feedback is being sought on proposed advice to local councils to ensure awnings over public areas such as footpaths are safe.

Department of Planning and Infrastructure Director-General Sam Haddad has issued a draft circular to advise local councils of steps they and building owners should take to identify potential safety issues related to awnings in public spaces.

“The circular also seeks councils’ co-operation to ensure appropriate action is taken to minimise the risk of awnings collapsing in the future,” Mr Haddad said.

The move follows recommendations by the Deputy State Coroner in December 2010 after an inquest into an awning collapse at Balgowlah that killed a man during a storm.

“The Deputy Coroner noted there had been 17 reported incidents involving awning collapses throughout NSW since 1998, when a fatal accident resulted from an awning collapse at Bathurst,” Mr Haddad said.

“The circular reminds councils of their powers and owners of their responsibilities with regard to awning safety. It arises out of the coronial recommendations and follows extensive consultation with the Division of Local Government in the Department of Premier and Cabinet.”

Mr Haddad said local councils are being requested to establish a program, or review any existing program, in their area to monitor awnings as they age.

“An awning is a part of a building that was approved according to relevant construction standards in force at the time, and councils have the power to enforce compliance with such standards.”

The main components for a program to monitor awning safety include councils writing to owners of buildings in their areas with awnings over public lands, including buildings owned by councils, to:

- notify owners of the dangers of awnings collapsing, especially during storms;
- remind owners of their responsibility for the safety of their buildings and advise them to obtain legal advice about questions of legal liability for any failure or collapse of their awning over public lands;
- strongly advise owners of awnings more than 10 years old to have them inspected regularly by a professional engineer for structural adequacy; and
- request the inspection results and any action taken to be communicated to council.

“Since the release of the Deputy Coroner’s report a number of councils have instituted individual safety programs, but we need to ensure a consistent approach is achieved across NSW to address safety issues,” Mr Haddad said.

The circular for Safety of Awnings Over Public Land is on exhibition until **Wednesday 19 December 2012**. For more information people can visit www.planning.nsw.gov.au/proposals or contact the department on 1300 305 695.

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