Tuesday, 11 August 2015

TOUGHEST FINES IN THE COUNTRY COME INTO FORCE

Planning Minister Rob Stokes today announced the start of five-fold increases in planning penalties for companies that breach conditions.

The changes come into force today after being passed by the NSW Parliament in November last year. They include:

- an increase in the maximum fines available to courts in prosecution from $1.1 million to $5 million
- greater powers for councils to investigate suspected breaches of conditions.

From 14 August, a further reform will come into force allowing the Government to issue $15,000 on-the-spot fines to companies who breach development consents, an increase from the current maximum of $3,000. This will enable the Department of Planning and Environment to issue the toughest on-the-spot fines in the nation.

Mr Stokes said compliance and monitoring are essential to the planning system.

“We need to send a strong message that conditions enforcing matters like fire safety are not optional extras,” Mr Stokes said.

“These are the toughest fines in the country for planning offences, and reflect our commitment to protecting our community and the environment.

“Planning conditions are about ensuring community safety and neighbourhood amenity. Public confidence in planning is wrecked when conditions are breached and the rights of neighbours are ignored.

“Today we make it very clear to the minority of contractors who breach planning conditions that the NSW Government takes breaches very seriously and will deal with them severely.”

The commencement of amendments to the Environmental Planning & Assessment Act 1979 come following the doubling of Department of Planning and Environment compliance officer numbers across NSW.