

Local Planning Panel - Appointment of Chairs

File No: X129914

Summary

The City of Sydney Local Planning Panel (LPP) has been operating since 1 March 2018. When meeting to determine development applications, a Local Planning Panel consists of 4 members: a chair, 2 expert members and one community representative.

The appointment of the chair and alternate chairs is a matter for the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces. Only the chair and alternate chairs approved by the Minister can be appointed to a local planning panel.

On 24 June 2024 Council endorsed the Minister's appointment of Robert Stokes as Chair of the City of Sydney LPP, and the appointments of Jan Murrell and Graham Brown as Alternate Chairs. However, on 20 September 2025, Rob Stokes resigned as Chair of the City of Sydney LPP. Since that time, the City of Sydney Local Planning Panel has operated with only the 2 Alternate Chairs.

Following the resignation, the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (Department) invited Council to provide a shortlist of preferred replacement Chairs, or to consider appointing an existing alternate Chair as Chair and nominating alternate Chair replacements. Council was provided with a recommended shortlist for the Chair/alternate Chair in late 2025 (via the CEO Update). This shortlist was subsequently provided to the Department and Minister for consideration.

On 3 June 2026 the Department of Planning Housing and Infrastructure informed the City of Sydney (the City) that the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces approved the addition of Jacqueline Townsend to the pool of chairs for the City's Local Planning Panel, and appointed Graham Brown, currently an alternate chair, to the position of Chair.

The Minister's approved pool is now:

- Chair - Graham Brown
- Alternate Chair - Janette Murrell
- Alternate Chair - Jacqueline Townsend

This report seeks endorsement of the Chair and Alternate Chairs approved by the Minister.

Recommendation

It is resolved that Council:

- (A) endorse the appointment of the current Alternate Chair Graham Brown to the position of Chair of the City of Sydney Local Planning Panel for 3 years from the date of appointment;
- (B) endorse the appointment of Jacqueline Townsend as an Alternate Chair on the City of Sydney Local Planning Panel for 3 years from the date of appointment; and
- (C) note the continued appointment of Jan Murrell as an Alternate Chair on the City of Sydney Local Planning Panel for the remainder of her term.

Attachments

Attachment A. Correspondence from the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure dated 3 June 2026

Background

1. The City of Sydney Local Planning Panel has been in operation since 1 March 2018.
2. The City of Sydney Local Planning Panel operates in accordance with the NSW Government's Local Planning Panels Code of Conduct and the City of Sydney's Local Planning Panel Operational Procedures.
3. When meeting to determinate development applications, the Local Planning Panel consists of 4 members: a chair, 2 expert members and one community representative.
4. The current pool of City of Sydney Local Planning Panel members are:
 - (a) Alternate Chairs - Graham Brown and Jan Murrell
 - (b) Expert Members - Megan Jones, Brendan Randles, Marcus Trimble, Annelise Tuor, John Bilmon, Melonie Bayl-Smith, Jocelyn Jackson, Stephen Pearse, Vanessa Holtham, Elizabeth Kinkade, Kara Krason, Elisabeth Peet, Louise Sureda, Alison McCabe, Ian Armstrong and Rodney Paesler
 - (c) Community Representatives - Jayden Bregu, Judy MacGraw, David Green, Nicholas Sanderson, Terry Mooney, Julie Waters and Gary Pogson
5. The expert members and community representatives were endorsed by Council in June 2024, then further appointments were endorsed in March 2026 to increase the pools of expert members and community representatives to 16 and 7 respectively.
6. In June 2024, Council also endorsed the Minister's appointment of Robert Stokes as Chair of the City of Sydney LPP, and the appointments of Jan Murrell and Graham Brown as Alternate Chairs.
7. On 20 September 2025, Rob Stokes resigned as Chair of the City of Sydney LPP. Since that time, the City of Sydney Local Planning Panel has operated with only the 2 Alternate Chairs.
8. The Chair and alternate Chairs of the LPP are appointed by the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces from the list of Chairs approved by the Minister.
9. To assist with this process the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (Department) invited Council to provide a shortlist of preferred replacement Chairs, or to consider appointing an existing alternate Chair as Chair and nominating alternate Chair replacements. Council was provided with a recommended shortlist for the Chair/alternate Chair in late 2025. This shortlist was subsequently provided to the Department and Minister for consideration.
10. On 3 June 2026 the Acting Executive Director Panels and Housing Delivery informed the City that the Minister had approved the addition of Jacqueline Townsend to the pool of approved chairs for the City of Sydney LPP, and the appointment of current Alternate Chair Graham Brown to the position of Chair. This correspondence is shown at Attachment A to the subject report.

Key Implications

Strategic Alignment - Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Continuing the Vision

11. Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Continuing the Vision renews the communities' vision for the sustainable development of the city to 2050. It includes 10 strategic directions to guide the future of the city, as well as 10 targets against which to measure progress. This report is aligned with the following strategic directions and objectives:
 - (a) Direction 1 - Responsible governance and stewardship - the operation of the Local Planning Panel is a collaboration between City staff, applicants, objectors, independent members and the NSW Government.
 - (b) Direction 4 - Design excellence and sustainable development - the Local Planning Panel determines development applications and reviews conditions of consent which provide for sustainability, renewal and design excellence.
 - (c) Direction 10 - Housing for all - the Local Planning Panel determines development applications which contribute to housing diversity and good design.

Organisational Impact

12. City staff provide secretariat and operational support to the Local Planning Panel.

Risks

13. If the LPP continues to operate without a full complement of chairs in the pool, there is a risk that the LPP may not be able to meet and determine development applications due to conflicts and availability issues.
14. Council's approved Risk Appetite Statement provides guidance about the amount of risk the City is willing to take in order to achieve its strategic goals, while ensuring the protection of its assets, reputation and the wellbeing of its employees and community.
15. There is no appetite for non-compliance with legislative and service delivery requirements relating to adequately servicing the Local Planning Panel.

Financial Implications

16. Local Planning Panel remuneration is based on meeting attendance.
17. The remuneration rate for chairs is \$2,000 plus GST per meeting.
18. There are sufficient funds available in the draft 2026/27 operating budget and future years' forward estimates for the operation of the City of Sydney Local Planning Panel.

Relevant Legislation

19. Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979.

Critical Dates / Time Frames

20. The chair and alternate chair appointments will be implemented as soon as possible following endorsement by Council, after which time a roster for the remaining 2026 meetings can be created, incorporating the changes.
21. In accordance with Schedule 2, Part 11 (6) of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979, a member of a local planning panel may not hold office as a member of that panel for more than 6 years in total.

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