

MEDIA RELEASE

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***Corruption does not discriminate between industries or professions
All fees for politicians should be banned – in all areas***

Urban Taskforce CEO, Tom Forrest today called on the NSW Parliament to ban politicians from taking any form of secondary income associated with promoting the interests of any third party.

“It’s time to stop the property development industry being demonised by corrupt politicians”, Mr Forrest said.

“It has come with a struggle, but NSW has a strong system of public accountability. There are many regulatory bodies with considerable investigative powers available to oversee public processes. The property development industry supports these strong measures.

“These include: ICAC; the NSW Parliament (Upper and Lower House Committees); the Police Integrity Commission; the NSW Ombudsman; the NSW Electoral Commission (responsible for the administration of the Register of Third Party Lobbyists); the Auditor General; Special Commissions of Inquiry and Royal Commissions (as appointed by Parliament from time to time); and, of course, the Police and Courts.

“No politician should be allowed to take commissions or fees from anyone. If politicians are making the rules, they should not be able to take any money from anyone where a colleague is in a position to determine the outcome. Disclosure of an interest is simply not enough.

“In the case of planning, we should not allow a system to evolve which creates such dysfunction, confusion and risk that it takes a corrupt politician to get your project across the line. Unfortunately, many developers – particularly the smaller or part time developers – are desperate.

“The NSW Planning System is the most complex, dysfunctional, slow planning system in the nation, a fact called out by the NSW Productivity Commission in 2019. This is a system created by politicians. Politicians have created a system that creates desperation. They should not be allowed to take a fee on the side for finding a pathway through.

“But this argument should apply to all areas. No secondary income would make corruption clear – for everyone.

“In the case of property development, politicians pass laws which prevent any sensible dialogue between planners and the development community. They mitigate against any negotiated win-win solution for feasible development and community interest.

“The current complex planning Act makes the production of new homes for our growing population more and more expensive. They punish the majority of developers with rules set up because some of their own can’t be trusted. They make Council staff and planners scared to speak with honest developers, lest they be accused of behaving corruptly.

“We need a strong ICAC. We need honest politicians. We also need development of new homes, workplaces and communities and we need politicians who aren’t looking for any supplements to their income on the side”, Mr Forrest said.