

19 May, 2026

Mr Craig Woods
Manager - Regulatory Services
The Hills Shire Council
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Email: cwoods@thehills.nsw.gov.au

Dear Mr Woods

The Hills Draft Tower Crane Policy

I write in relation to Council's proposed policy on tower cranes.

Tower cranes are well-regulated, subject to a rigorous compliance regime governing their operations.

This involves certification, permitting, operational restrictions, and the requirement to carry insurance.

Operators must not only conform with strict standards covering their construction and activities but also undergo regular inspections and ongoing maintenance and comply with the requirements of the SafeWork NSW Code of Practice.

These processes add significantly to construction times and operational costs, but industry recognises their important role in preserving the safety of the community and workers.

Some of these existing regulatory requirements for crane operators were noted in the report to Council prepared by staff for its meeting of 31 March, 2026, particularly when it stated:

"The policy aligns with WHS laws, SafeWork NSW's Tower Cranes Code of Practice (July 2025), Roads Act approvals and Australian Standard (AS) 1418 (which sets out operational standards for cranes)."

Urban Taskforce Australia does not believe that Council has demonstrated any need for it to impose itself as a de facto regulator of the industry. It has not provided any evidence of poor practice in the industry nor of the departure by operators from the regulatory requirements listed above.

The Hills Tower Crane Policy effectively seeks to create a parallel and duplicative regulatory regime that will add layers of cost and compliance to what is already a rigorous process without any evident justification.

The report to Council states that the policy will "provide a clear approval pathway" and "mandate compliance" with the Code of Practice and standards. However, there is no indication why current approval processes are insufficient, and compliance with the Code and standards is already mandatory.

The policy appears to be designed in part, if not completely, as justification to draw additional revenue from a sector that is already beset with an array of taxes, fees, and charges from Federal, State, and local governments.

The proposal for an application fee of \$370 for applications and a weekly fee of \$610 per crane represents an untenable tax on development that will not increase on-site or public safety in any way. For a site using two cranes for two years, these charges would result in a fee levied by the Council on the developer of **\$127,620**.

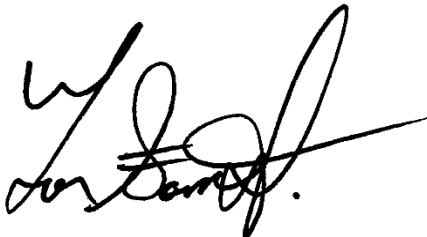
These imposts will either be passed on to homebuyers, adding to the price of housing, or will push developments to the point where they cease to be feasible. If the project is not feasible, it will not be built.

The proposed new policy, with its additional regulatory burden and unjustifiable taxation on construction, will make it increasingly difficult for developers to deliver new housing in The Hills Shire.

Urban Taskforce therefore urges Council to reject both the proposed crane tax and the draft policy.

Should you wish to discuss any aspect of this submission further, please contact our Policy, Planning, and Research Analyst, Paul Waterhouse, on 0411-875-366 or via email paul@urbantaskforce.com.au

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tom Forrest', with a large, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Tom Forrest
Chief Executive Officer