



Candidate Information

Commissioner, NSW Independent Planning Commission



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ABOUT THE COMMISSION

The Independent Planning Commission of NSW was established as a standalone agency under Part 2, Division 2.3 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 on 1 March 2018. The Office of the Independent Planning Commission (OIPC) is the staffing agency for the Commission and was established as such under the GSE Act on 1 July 2020.

The Commission operates independently of other government departments, including the NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI), and has an important role to play in building community confidence in the decision-making processes for major development and land-use planning state-wide.

The key functions of the Commission are to:

- determine certain State significant development applications, including where there is significant opposition from the community
- conduct public hearings for development applications and other planning and development matters, or
- provide independent advice on planning matters when requested by the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces or Secretary of the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure

Before a proposed development comes to the Commission for determination, the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI) will conduct a whole-of-government assessment of the application on behalf of the Commission.

Once a development application is assessed by the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI) and provided to the Commission for decision, the Chair of the Commission will appoint a panel, typically comprising between one and three Commissioners, who will:

- hold targeted meetings with the developer, DPHI, the local council, and others
- hold a public meeting where appropriate, or a public hearing if directed by the Minister
- take and consider written public submissions on the proposed development
- make a determination based on legislation and policy to either refuse or approve the development (including conditions to be imposed on approval)
- publish a Statement of Reasons explaining its decision.

The Commission makes decisions in an open and transparent manner and determines each application on its individual merits and based on legislation and government policy.

There are some things we don't do.

The Independent Planning Commission's primary role is to determine complex and contentious State significant development applications. It also provides advice on planning matters when requested by the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces or the Planning Secretary.

In exercising our functions, there are certain things we don't do:

- **Make policy**

The Commission has no policy-making function and the scope of its decision making is bound by legislation and guided by government policy.

- **Consider the reputation of an applicant or whether they are a 'fit and proper person'**

The Commission's determination only relates to the proposed use of the relevant land.

- **Undertake whole-of-government assessments**

This is done by the Planning Secretary on behalf of the Commission. This arrangement is recognised by the Minister in the Statement of Expectations for the Commission.

- **Enforce conditions of consent**

This Commission has no role in enforcing conditions but will always aim to impose conditions that work in practice.





MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION

Members of the Commission are appointed by the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces under s2.8 of the Act based on their decision-making skills and expertise in a range of planning-related fields:

(3) Each member is to have expertise in at least one area of planning, architecture, heritage, the environment, urban design, land economics, soil or agricultural science, hydro-geology, mining or petroleum development, traffic and transport, law, engineering, tourism or government and public administration.

(4) In appointing a member of the Commission, the Minister is to have regard to the need to have a range of expertise represented among the Commission's members.

The following list of desired skills of Commissioners was identified in the 2019 Productivity Commission Review of the Independent Planning Commission:

- a solid understanding of planning legislation and policies
- a strong understanding of what constitutes the 'public interest' and frameworks for decision-making in the context of competing interests
- an ability to read and understand large volumes of technical information quickly
- an ability to identify the key issues and efficiently, ethically and pragmatically decide whether further advice is required
- an ability to effectively manage public hearings with a broad range of stakeholders
- substantial experience in weighing up complex technical issues that are often highly contested, and
- experience and expertise in making (and explaining) difficult decisions.

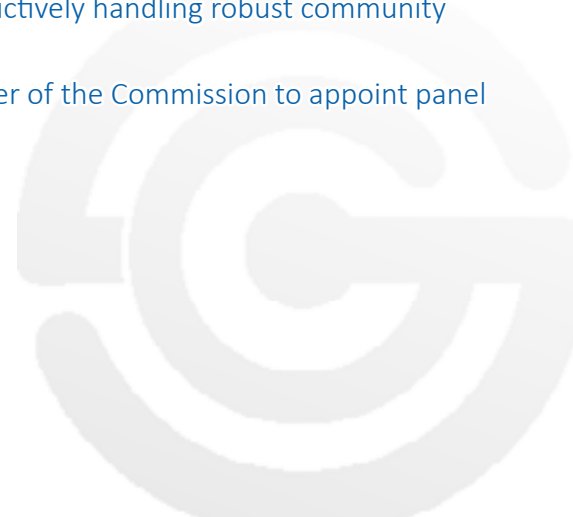
There are currently 19 Commissioners. Members are appointed to the Commission for a maximum period of 6 years, typically as two 3-year appointments. The total pool of Commissioners is expanded regularly to account for the departure of Commissioners who are reaching the end of their terms.

Appointment of Commissioners to panels

The Chair of the Commission appoints members to constitute the Commission for any case.

Although Commissioners have experience and expertise in various specified fields, they do not sit on panels as subject matter experts. Commissioners must be confident in making decisions across a range of technical matters, drawing on and trusting the advice and information provided to them. The ability to manage public hearings and other community consultation events — including constructively handling robust community engagement — is an increasingly important part of the role.

The Chair of the Commission is authorised to nominate another member of the Commission to appoint panel members for any case, and may do so if necessary, for any reason.





MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION

Terms of appointment

Commissioners are appointed for terms of up to three years, with the opportunity to be considered for reappointment for a further three years (maximum six years total).

Remuneration: Commissioners sitting fees are paid at an hourly rate of \$285, up to a maximum of \$2,000 per day. Members are also entitled to be paid certain out-of-pocket expenses directly relating to the attendance of meetings and other official duties.

Superannuation and tax: Superannuation is facilitated through the payroll system. Remuneration is subject to pay-as-you-go (PAYG) withholding tax.

Expected caseload: Panel appointments are at the Commission Chair's discretion (see 'Appointment of Commissioners to panels') as informed by the background, experience and availability of members. Over the past 12 months the Commission finalised 36 cases of varying panel sizes, which averages out as four cases per Commissioner.

Requirements for Commissioners: Commissioners must have:

- The confidence to make sound decisions on complex, contentious and sometimes technical matters — drawing on and trusting the advice of others
- Demonstrated high standards of integrity and professional conduct
- Exceptional oral and written communication skills, including the ability to manage public consultations and constructively handle robust community engagement
- Background in one or more of the nominated areas of: planning, architecture, heritage, the environment, urban design, land economics, soil and agricultural science, hydro-geology, mining and petroleum development, traffic and transport, law, engineering, tourism, government and public administration (there is no requirement that a candidate's background in one of these fields is as a practitioner – a relevant academic or research background, for example, could meet this requirement).

Selection Process

This recruitment and selection process is intended to provide the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces with a list of potential candidates for consideration, with appointments to be made at the discretion of the Minister with the approval of Cabinet.





APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

To apply, you must complete a Cover Letter outlining your skills and experience specifically relevant to the desired list of skills of Commissioners in this document AND a Curriculum Vitae/Resume to: michael@searchlightgroup.com.au

If you have any questions please contact Michael Holdway on 0400 006 513.

Recruitment process and key dates:

- Applications close at midnight on April 22nd 2026.
- All applications will be acknowledged by email within 48 hours of receipt.
- Preliminary conversations/interviews with Searchlight Group will commence as suitable applications are received.
- Long-listing will take place in mid April 2026
- IPC Panel Interviews will be held late April/early May 2026
- Interviewed candidates to be provided to the Minister for his consideration for appointment will be contacted and advised of next steps and timeframes.
- Reference, qualification and probity checks of preferred candidate(s) will take place if you are recommended to the Minister for consideration..
- Candidates will be required to disclose any interests that may affect their ability to perform in the role. Candidates will be updated on their status at key decision points during the process.

Useful Links

NSW Independent Planning Commission website

<https://www.ipcn.nsw.gov.au/>

Commission Strategic Plan

<https://www.ipcn.nsw.gov.au/about-us/strategic-plan-2024-2027>

Commission Timeframes/Performance

<https://www.ipcn.nsw.gov.au/about-us/our-performance>

Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 203

<https://legislation.nsw.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/act-1979-203#statusinformation>

NSW Independent Planning Commission Policies and Guidelines

<https://www.ipcn.nsw.gov.au/about-us/policies-guidelines>

For more informa

tion on Commission cases: <https://www.ipcn.nsw.gov.au/projects>

Commissioner profiles: <https://www.ipcn.nsw.gov.au/commissioners>



