

Developers join voices against city plan delays

By Anne Davies, State Political Editor March 15, 2005

Business and environmental groups have joined the chorus of concern at the State Government's 30-year strategy for Sydney, after an adviser brought in from New York, Professor Ed Blakely, expressed concern about its progress.

He told the *Herald* on Sunday that the panel he chaired had met only once this year and was being left out of consultations.

"I want to keep going and have a commitment to the task and to the people of Sydney," he said. "But I am also concerned about our progress so far, and so are other people in this city."

The Opposition Leader, John Brogden, said it was a "massive vote of no confidence in the Government's commitment to providing decent infrastructure to the people of Sydney". A Coalition government would make building a railway to Sydney's north-west a priority.

However, the Planning and Infrastructure Minister, Craig Knowles, said the plan was on track. "There have been three previous metropolitan plans and they have all failed because they have been simply a developer handbook on where to go and speculate on land."

He said the new strategy, being released in parts, was more sophisticated and would also deal with employment and funding.

The Property Council, which represents developers, has strongly advocated the need for a 30-year plan. Yesterday its NSW director, Ken Morrison, said it would be "a great disappointment" if Professor Blakely were to leave Australia.

Professor Blakely is a renowned planner who has worked on plans for cities including New York after September 11, 2001. "In terms of how the metropolitan strategy is going, he's been on the inside, so he'd know," Mr Morrison said.

The Urban Development Institute of Australia, which represents greenfields developers, said it supported Professor Blakely's call for an independent body to supervise the city's future growth patterns.

The Nature Conservation Council also expressed its reservations about the direction so far.

"NCC is extremely concerned at what appears to be reluctance by the State Government to sustainably plan for Sydney's future for fear of upsetting the property industry," said its director, Cate Faehrmann.