



The Independent Retailers of NSW & ACT

LOCAL SHOPS SAY PROPOSED NEW RETAIL PLANNING POLICY WILL RUIN THEM

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In a show of the growing community concern about the potential for a proposed State Government planning policy to rip the heart out of local shopping centres, shop owners are asking their MPs to help and take up the fight.

This week, under the banner *Love Your Local Shops* independent retailers launched full-page ads plainly addressing local politicians, including the Member for Balmain and Minister for Education, Verity Firth. The ad's message reads: "Verity Firth MP we need your help - State planning policy will ruin us". A similar ad sends the same message to Drummoyne MP, Angela D'Amore.

Mark Crutcher who heads up the *Independent Retailers of NSW & ACT Inc* says that if the Draft Centres Policy is introduced it will mean open slather retail development by the major players like Woolworths and Coles, which will increase their dominance. Currently across NSW the two majors enjoy a share of around 80 percent of the dry grocery market.

"Shopkeepers and small businesses through the suburbs including Balmain, Breakfast Point, Leichhardt and Annandale have seen right through this flawed plan, and grocers, butchers, hardware retailers and other small business people are getting together to let their MPs and the Government know how they feel", added Crutcher.

"The policy being contemplated would mean that new centres would be developed, ignoring the impacts on existing retail and commercial premises. It stands to ruin existing neighbourhood shopping centres and, effectively, small businesses and communities", said Crutcher.

"There is already compelling evidence of how unchecked growth of shopping centres away from existing centres can turn vibrant places into ghost towns. We've documented the damage in a mini documentary called *Ghost Towns* - in places like Bexley and Maitland.

You can find it on www.loveyourlocals.com.au, he said.

Local councils across the State, including Leichhardt Municipal Council, have serious concerns about the policy. In a report in April the Council said that Draft Policy did not address the complexities of development in centres.



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“Effective Centres are places which are the focus of community activity and which achieve a good balance of employment, social, retail and residential opportunities supported by good transport links”, the report said.

Drummoyne MP, Angela D’Amore, who has taken a keen interest in the vital detail of the *Draft policy*, said she agreed with the Independent Retailers’ solution to the policy’s obvious flaws.

“There is clearly a need for an effective competition test to be included into the centres policy.

“This would ensure major retail chains don’t take an even greater market share and enables others to join the market, while providing independents with an opportunity to maintain their share”, commented Ms D’Amore.

In short the Policy:

- Encourages the oversupply of commercial floor space which favours the preferred operational models of the two major players at the expense of independent businesses
- Gives big developers and the large retail chains the ability to drive rezonings through the planning system without proper regard for communities
- Deregulates the planning system so that new shopping centres can be built on all land, including residential land
- Does not encourage competition in the retail sector even though this is an express aim of the policy.

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