

Back off, Hulls told

PETER ROLFE

STATE Planning Minister Rob Hulls has pulled rank on Boroondara Council and threatened to put his own stamp on key developments in the city.

In a dramatic move, Mr Hulls has stepped in to personally review important development decisions made in Boroondara.

The action has been attacked by Boroondara Mayor Jack Wegman who said the State Government should back off and stop "making a mockery" of local government.

But Mr Hulls warned that the council's refusal to accept assistance would be to the detriment of the city.

"I will not abrogate my planning responsibility on behalf of Victoria just because the



Rob Hulls has moved to assert his authority on planning issues.

N15MS205

Boroondara Council won't work co-operatively with the State Government," Mr Hulls said.

Mr Hulls has appointed separate priority development panels to oversee two of the largest projects in Boroondara. They have been directed to scrutinise the council's treatment of the Toorong Village site and a landmark Camberwell Junction building previously occupied by Honda.

Mr Hulls said they would also report to him on other "key strategic developments in prominent locations".

The appointment is sure to stretch the already strained relationship between the council and the government, which are embroiled in a battle over the multi-million redevelopment of Kew Residential Services.

Cr Wegman said Boroondara was receiving unfair attention from the government and Mr Hulls was becoming increasingly interventionist.

Labelling the government action a "disgrace", he said the council would rally community support and strongly oppose it.

"This is being done, in my view, against the wishes of the community," Cr Wegman said. "This is a travesty of the process."

Boroondara Council last year had the largest number of appeals before the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal but planning director Phillip Storer said the council valued its planning powers.

"We're of the view that council is the local planning authority and it ought to be left to undertake the planning issues that affect its own community," Mr Storer said.



Appliance thefts

NEW and renovated Boroondara homes are proving a happy hunting ground for opportunistic burglars, who are stealing whitegoods and electrical appliances before owners move in. Acting Det Sen-Sgt Campbell Mill said there had been a resurgence in the crime. "Everything that is installed prior to people taking occupancy is being taken," he said. "They hit the whitegoods and around this area they are most often quality goods, so it can get into the big dollars."

Choir auditions

AUDITIONS for the Australian Boys Choir will be held in Surrey Hills. Boys aged between 7 and 10 can try out for the choir on November 5. Ashburton's Daniel Bertolini and Balwyn's Morgan Taylor joined the choir on a singing tour of Indonesia recently. Phone Fiona Gavens on 9888 4948 for more information and audition bookings.

Annual report talks

BOROONDARA Council's 2004-05 annual report will be discussed at a meeting at Hawthorn Town Hall on October 27. Mayor Jack Wegman said residents could ask questions about the council's performance last financial year and its direction for the future. The meeting will be held from 6pm at 360 Burwood Rd.

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