

## Media Release - Minister's Office

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# HILL TOP RIFLE RANGE APPROVAL

Planning Minister, Kristina Keneally, has approved a \$5.1 million expansion of the Southern Highlands Regional Shooting Complex at Hill Top, with additional conditions to those recommended by an expert panel.

In May 2008 an independent panel consisting of former National Party MP, Ian Armstrong, a noise expert and an independent town planner was formed to assess the rifle range proposal.

Having assessed factors including public feedback, noise impacts, residential amenity, and possible environmental impacts, the panel recommended approval of the complex subject to conditions.

After visiting the site in December last year and meeting with the local community and rifle club members, Ms Keneally approved the rifle range proposal with additional conditions.

My aim was always to decide whether or not this was an appropriate development for the area, and if so limit its impact on the local community, Ms Keneally said.

Having been to the site and talked to the local community as well as the rifle club members, I decided the proposal could go ahead, but more needed to be done to limit its potential impact.

That's why I have required additional conditions for the rifle range. Those include:

- A ban on shooting in outdoor ranges before 9am and after 5pm, reducing potential operating hours by up to nine hours per week. Use of the outdoor range will be restricted to four days per week, including weekends, and will not be allowed on public holidays.
- A review of the traffic and pedestrian impacts of the development after 12 months, to consider additional work that may be required.
- The panel said outdoor shooting could be permitted from 5:00pm - 8:00pm during daylight savings but I did not approve that because I was not convinced it would not have an unreasonable impact on local residents, Ms Keneally said.
- In line with the panel's recommendations, noise limits have been imposed and independent noise monitoring and reporting will be required quarterly for the first year and annually thereafter.

Ms Keneally said that several conditions have been included to minimise the impact of the proposal on the local natural environment.

An environmental offset agreement will see two shooting clubs relocate to Hill Top and result in a net increase of 1,795 hectares of high conservation land to the State reserve system.

Of the 1,036 hectare Hill Top site, 136 hectares will be used for shooting ranges and related facilities, and 900 hectares will be protected for environmental conservation, where no vegetation can be cleared. In total 25 hectares of vegetation will be cleared for the upgrade of facilities.

The \$5.1 million redevelopment of the 1,036 hectare site will involve:

Retention of the existing 800 metre rifle range and ancillary facilities;

- An additional 500 metre rifle range ;
- A new 50 metre pistol range;
- A new combined 200 metre rifle and pistol shooting range;
- A new shotgun range;
- A new indoor air pistol range; and
- A clubhouse, internal access roads, car parking, generator and water tanks