

# Shooting range approval pleases no one

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Urban Affairs Editor

THE State Government's decision yesterday to approve a shooting range in the Southern Highlands big enough to accommodate hundreds of shooters has angered residents and the Shooters Party.

Residents oppose the range proposed for land previously zoned conservation because of the noise and traffic they say it will generate and because they fear it could force property prices lower.

They and the Greens say the range is a "bullets for votes" deal with the NSW Shooters Party, which holds two of the crucial votes the Labor Government needs to pass legislation in the upper house.

But the Shooters Party is angry that the Planning Minister, Kristina Keneally, has limited the range's operating hours and prohibited the use of the outdoor range on public holidays.

A Shooters MP, Robert Brown, said the main attraction of a range such as this one, proposed by the Department of Sport and Recreation, was being able to hold regional shoots on long weekends

where participants could practise on Friday night, shoot in qualifying rounds on the weekend and hold finals on a Monday.

He said: "[\$5.1 million of ] taxpayers dollars are being spent on this but the range will sit there going to waste."

Mr Brown said independent reports had shown the noise level would be negligible but that Ms Keneally had ignored recommend-

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LEE RHIANNON, Greens MP

ations about operating hours, instead caving in to Greens' demands.

Ms Keneally said her aim had always been to decide whether the range was appropriate for the area.

"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," she said. "That's why I have required additional conditions for the rifle range."

The Greens still believe the approval is a "political fix" with the Shooters Party, which votes with the Government 63 per cent of the time.

A Greens MP, Lee Rhiannon, said: "The Shooters Party MPs have delivered reliable votes to the NSW Labor Government on critical issues such as blocking the release of government documents on the desalination plant, legislation approving the Olympic Park V8 street-car races, and stopping an inquiry into planning laws and developers.

"It is disturbing that the minister [for State Development], Ian Macdonald, announced in the NSW Parliament that the shooting complex would be built before the Planning Minister approved it," she said.

"Since he made that announcement in May 2007, the Shooters MPs have delivered their votes to the Labor Government to ensure the numbers for unpopular legislation."