

Urban Taskforce
AUSTRALIA



Australian
Institute of
Architects



Australian Institute of
Landscape Architects



Planning
Institute
Australia
New South Wales
Division



29 May, 2020

The Hon Robert Stokes MLA
Minister for Planning & Public Spaces
GPO Box 5341
Sydney NSW 2001

The Hon Dominic Perrottet MLA
NSW Treasurer
GPO Box 5341
Sydney NSW 2001

cc. Jim Betts and Michael Pratt

Dear Minister Stokes and Treasurer Perrottet

By the end of 2019, there was a consensus that the NSW planning system should be streamlined evidenced by the fact that the number of and timeframe for planning approvals had slowed considerably. This was acknowledged by the Premier and Minister Stokes when they announced that Planning Reform would be the key policy focus of 2020.

In this context we write to express our support for the work of the NSW Government to stimulate the economy through changes to the extension of construction hours of operations; the establishment of the Planning System Acceleration Program (PSAP); legislation to deal with the impact of COVID-19 by way of extensions to commencement timeframes and, in particular, the proposed changes to development contributions charges. We also welcome the establishment of a one-stop-shop to speed up many other projects stuck in the planning system.

As an industry, we support the work of Jim Betts and support the direction that DPIE is now heading in. But goodwill alone will not overcome the impact of COVID-19

We are collectively concerned at the available resources to make all of these already announced initiatives, and future ones under consideration, happen quickly enough.

At the time of the announcement of the PSAP, Minister Stokes referred to the possibility of calling projects in from councils for determination. But we are aware that the Department is stretched regarding the planning assessment and project management resources available to it. It is clear that if DPIE are to call in projects for determination from councils, this will require significant additional or redirected resources if this whole program is to be effective.

We are also concerned that state-led re-zonings have slowed significantly alongside strategic planning reforms while resources have been dedicated to the PSAP assessment and fast-track process. This highlights the increased pressure to deliver faster approvals in an already complex planning system.

While planning reform remains our preference, the immediate term requires:

1. A significant injection of funding to support fast tracked approval activities and other worthwhile proposed initiatives
2. Additional resources to support local councils accelerate DA assessment.

Any additional funding should come with strong targets and clear pathways to achieving them. We urge you to put such accountability measures in place directly to yourselves to give industry and the community confidence that stimulus measures and planning reforms will achieve their stated aims.

An investment in planning, targeted towards delivering merit-based assessments, will unlock many times more value for the economy once the private sector investment dollars flow on to construction and associated jobs. In addition, it is necessary to maintain the long -erm supply pipeline through the efficiencies created through strategic plans and planning reform. We do not want to see these initiatives grind to a halt due to only resourcing immediate priorities.

Yours sincerely

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