

2 April 2020



**Australian Institute of Architects**

Mr Marcus Ray, Group Deputy Secretary Planning and Assessment  
Ms Alex O'Mara, Deputy Secretary Place Design and Public Spaces  
Department of Planning Industry and Environment  
*Via email*

Dear Marcus and Alex

### **COVID-19 and Planning stimulus**

Thank you for the weekly update meetings, the Australian Institute of Architects (Institute) appreciates the involvement and in these challenging times, we are eager to assist wherever we can.

As you know, the Institute has always been dedicated to improving our built environment and the communities we call home by promoting quality, responsible, sustainable design and advocating for the benefit of all Australians. The quality of the places where we live, work and meet need to positively shape our lives.

We encourage fast tracking of the planning process but emphasise the importance of quality outcomes for both the built environment and the public domain. The decisions made now must by necessity be taken quickly, but this does not diminish the fact that the people of Australia will be interacting with the outcomes for decades to come.

Further to my comments in our meeting yesterday, I am providing the agreed clarification of the recommendations I raised after the meeting with Alex. The detail of each of these will follow, however we understand it is important that you receive the high-level ideas as soon as possible.

#### **1 Streamline Design Competitions**

We reference to the City of Sydney and City of Parramatta revised processes under consideration (please note these are draft, and the details will be released next week):

##### **A. City of Sydney (CoS):**

- Architect participation in one of four types of competitions
- Minimised Digital Presentation: (max) 30 slide PowerPoint. Deliverables to be clearly defined and limited (TBC)
- No physical models
- Limited time frame (reduced, to make them short and sharp)
- Appropriate compensation

##### **B. City of Parramatta (CoP):**

The City Architect is reviewing its Design Competition ( 25+ comps) and processes between 2015-2019.

CoP current requirements are:

- Maximum 3 entrants
- Maximum 3 Jurors incl GA office representative

- No models. 1 x CGI
  - Limited Deliverables and appropriate compensation
- C. We recommend the GANSW Design Excellence Competition Guidelines adopt the same streamlined process. We also suggest other LGAs adopt this streamlined process, however, they will not have sophisticated support systems and processes in place such as those in City of Sydney and City of Parramatta. We believe the same streamlined process can be achieved by other councils with the assistance of an appropriate Design Review Processes. Refer item 2 (A).
- D. We recommend participation prioritises local practices, as per a Buy Local policy.

## **2 Speed up the Planning Approval Process**

- A. Assign efficient and effective Design Review Panel assistance to the underpowered Local Government Authorities.
- The Government Architect of NSW (GA NSW) Design Review Panel process facilitates effective and timely reviews which can assist by speeding up the planning system while also delivering a quality-built environment outcome.
  - This could be facilitated by the allocation of a GA NSW resource on a weekly rotation to each relevant LGA to assist with their reviews.
- B. SWAT teams allocated to LGAs to fast track / triage existing Planning Proposals or Development Applications stuck in the system. The Institute can assist in identifying relevant projects.
- A system of red/amber/green assessment, set up at the LGA in concert with DPIE to assess these applications. We recommend the GA NSW may assist where resources permit, supplemented by external Planning Companies.
- C. SWAT teams to centralise development assessments for all projects over a certain value (\$10 million?)
- The planning framework is available online and can be applied by skilled professionals preparing determinations in template form for the LGAs (so the decision making remains with the LGA). We recommend the GA NSW establishes and oversees this, supplemented by external Planning Companies, and appropriate Architects (the Institute can assist).
  - The Minister to direct a Council cannot overturn a recommendation from planning staff unless there is unanimous or minimum 75% support of Councillors.
- D. Land and Environment Court backlogs of up to 12 months
- Identify projects to fast-track which are 'shovel ready' with funding and have an appropriately risk rated developer / builder.
  - Prioritise projects which are health, social, aged care, education, key worker, affordable, boarding houses, male or female refuge facilities and co- located to transport corridors.

## **3 Fast-track projects with a Socially responsible housing mix: 30/40/30**

Comment: The present 70/30 model does not adequately cater for key workers. The development of a framework at a national level bringing together federal, state and local funding with initiatives to drive the much needed supply of social and affordable housing is required.

These projects to be part of the Streamlined Design Competition process and we recommend:

- affordable (key worker) 30%
- private 40%
- social 30%.

Government owned sites next to a working Metro which would be appropriate include:

- Kellyville 1,600-1,900 dwellings
- Bella Vista 2,900-3,800 dwellings
- Waterloo 5,500-5,800 dwellings

4 **Create a fast-track 'Place based' taskforce**

Comment: 'Precincts' and the built environment need to contribute to 'Place.' Green space, parks and significant public space is needed now more than ever.

- Identify potential public space, greenspace and parks adjacent to metro / roads / rail nodes.
- These could be turned around quickly (compared to major items of built infrastructure, and would be visibly beneficial to the public )
- The taskforce should include Architects, Landscape Architects, Planners and Urban Designers. It needs local strategies for places through co-design processes that involve local communities. Once set-up the taskforce can continue to engage with the LGA, reporting directly to the GM and engaging directly with the elected members to educate them in design and assisting in the formulation of briefs etc.

5 **Green stimulus**

The impact on the environment and transitioning to a more sustainable economy must be considered in tandem with any planning stimulus

- Mandate new development proposals / competitions must embrace a regenerative economy
- Identify Greenstar and Nabers requirements

To maintain quality outcomes in relation to the above, we recommend that GA NSW expands the pre-qualified design review panels, with an emphasis on fast-tracking the application and interview process to increase the qualified persons on the panels. To deliver all items above we will need additional resources in place as soon as possible. The Institute can assist in this process.

In proposing these measures, we understand and strongly support the need for immediate action while recognising that we must endeavour to ensure that the quality of built outcomes remains as high as possible.

Please do not hesitate to contact me for any assistance which the Institute can offer.



Kathlyn Loseby FRAIA  
**NSW CHAPTER PRESIDENT**  
**AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS**

cc: The Hon Rob Stokes MP – Minister for Planning and Public Spaces  
Michelle Weiss – Director Strategic Projects, Cluster Priorities, DPIE  
Abbie Galvin FRAIA – Government Architect NSW