

3rd April, 2020

New Planning Reforms – a *great leap forward* for jobs & investment

Urban Taskforce CEO, Tom Forrest, strongly welcomed the announcement by the Treasurer, Dominic Perrottet, and Minister for Planning, Rob Stokes, the cut red tape and drive the planning system through a series of fast-track reforms.

“Urban Taskforce has been calling for greater Ministerial accountability on projects of State and Regional Significance. Today’s announcement represents a *great leap forward* for jobs, housing supply and the NSW economy”, Mr Forrest said.

“NSW currently has the slowest DA approval system in Australia. This has driven up housing prices – even before COVOD 19. We are starting from a low base in terms of housing approvals which have fallen to 2012 levels. But this announcement lays the foundations for changing that and creating a pipeline of investment and construction work which will provide jobs, housing and will drive the economy through and beyond the current crisis”, Mr Forrest said.

Mr Forrest said that the additional funding to the Land and Environment Court for additional Acting Commissioners is very welcome. It is sad to say that for many projects, the fastest way to get Councils to comply with the law and with the policies of the Government is to take them to Court.

“We have been calling for a fast-track system for assessments of big projects for six months. The proposal for a ‘one-stop-shop’ for projects stuck in the system is very welcome indeed. Hopefully this ends the ‘*one step forward, two steps back*’* approach which has prevailed since mid-2017. Today’s announcement addresses the calls of our members”, Mr Forrest said.

Mr Forrest said that the rezoning of land is the first step and there is much more to be done in this space. The second step is to ensure that the land that is re-zoned is serviced by infrastructure. The third step is to ensure that land holdings are consolidated (not fractured not many owners) so significant development is possible and the infrastructure investment is worthwhile. The final step is to drive through the DA process so works can commence.

Urban Taskforce submitted to Treasury a list of over 70 projects on a range of different project types, with construction value worth tens of billions of dollars, all stuck in the planning system. This is money that is not flowing through the NSW economy and creating jobs. Each of them requires specific attention to free up investment and create a pipeline of private sector funded construction projects. Some are immediately shovel ready and just require a permit to be signed off. Others are multi-billion projects which have not been progressed because they don’t sit in neatly with Strategic Planning documents. We now have a pathway to drive these projects forward.

“Urban Taskforce is not taking about abandoning quality of architectural or urban design; we are determined to maintain and improve design and construction quality. There is no agenda to reduce public amenity. Each of the examples provided to Government represent administrative assessment blockages and a single-minded adherence to Council strategic plans and GSC strategic plans. Today’s announcement represents the start of the changes we have been calling for”, Mr Forrest said.

* With apologies to Billy Bragg

The **Urban Taskforce** is a property development industry group, representing Australia’s most prominent property developers and equity financiers.

Media Enquires: Tom Forrest, Chief Executive Officer: 0429 460 863

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