

1st July, 2020

New Planning Delivery Unit - to unblock the NSW planning system

Urban Taskforce Chief Executive, Tom Forrest, today welcomed the announcement by Treasurer Dominic Perrottet and Minister for Planning Rob Stokes of the establishment of a new specialist unit within the Department of Planning to speed up assessments and deliver approvals critical to jobs growth and the post COVID-19 recovery.

“Urban Taskforce has led the push for unblocking the bottlenecks in the planning system. Today’s announcement is a game changer for the NSW planning system”, Mr Forrest said.

The NSW Productivity Commission late last year found that NSW had the slowest planning system in the nation in every single category of approval. These delays cost money. Holding costs are significant. Land tax must be paid while you wait for a development consent. The number and volume of consultant reports is vast and the many layers of approval often produces conflicting recommendations.

“The worst offenders are often **not** Council officers, but are in fact NSW Government agencies and authorities which are required to scrutinise and give concurrence to a planning proposal or a DA. The Rural Fire Service, Transport for NSW (RMS), Sydney Water, Office of Environment and Heritage, the EPA, the Department of Health and the Department of Education often give conflicting advice and take an age to give it.

“It is great to see the NSW Treasurer joining with the Planning Minister to prioritise economic recovery. Agencies which slow down the planning process will be targeted by the new PDU” Mr Forrest said.

Urban Taskforce has previously been critical of the Government for abandoning progress associated with infrastructure investment along key corridors for development.

- St Leonards – Crows Nest (serviced by both Heavy Rail and the new Metro)
- Parramatta Rd Corridor Strategy (serviced by West Connex and the new Western Sydney Metro)
- Kickstarting growth in the North West Growth Centre with greenfield developments in Marsden Park North and Schofields is good place to start.

Mr Forrest said that the next area for The Sydenham to Bankstown Corridor (serviced by the new Metro), and a greater focus on opportunities to develop abandoned and dilapidated industrial precincts in the inner ring of Sydney as industrial, warehousing and manufacturing moves out to the new industrial estates serviced by the M7 motorway and the new Nancy Bird Walton Airport. A greater focus is also needed on growing greenfield development in Sydney’s South West.

“The appointment of the former Liverpool City Council CEO Kiersten Fishburn to lead the new team of 30 specialist staff, including a number of senior specialist case managers is a great way to start. Council staff are often frustrated by the Planning system and are often blamed for delays that are not their fault. Ms Fishburn has the Government’s backing to push through these blockages and this is critical for our post COVID-19 recovery”, Mr Forrest said.

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

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