

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **NSW Government sudden cuts to construction hours - a blow to property industry, housing prices and jobs**

The NSW Government has today announced that the extension to construction hours announced at the start of COVID-19 will cease in **two weeks from today**.

Urban Taskforce strongly opposes this sudden, unexpected announcement of a return to “normal hours of construction work”. The reasons are many:

- This Order has been a significant initiative in ensuring that the construction industry remained operational, resulting in the maintenance of jobs and underpinning the NSW economic performance.
- This is particularly significant for high rise construction – where special separation guidelines prevail. This is significant in slowing down the fit-out of buildings. Spatial distancing also limits access to high rise construction through the limitation of the operation of the hoists. Social distancing is one quarantine failure away from returning any time.
- While Urban Taskforce acknowledged that there may have been some complaints in suburban locations, we emphasise that in commercial zones, retail zones, industrial zones, greenfields locations and all CBD core areas (in particular); and for all high-rise construction, maintaining these provisions is critical.
- The Productivity Commission has made abundantly clear that the NSW Planning System is holding back the economy of this State. This is the NSW Treasury detailing the need to remove restrictions and red tape. This change will wind back this important pro-jobs, pro-economy initiative while we all know that COVID restrictions could be re-applied any day.
- The existing order already prevents high noise generating activities (rock smashing and pile driving etc) during the extended hours. If the problem has been Council’s failing to police the order, the Minister for Planning should take that up with them – not punish the entire property and construction industry. A return to “normal” will stop or slow construction activity which is currently occurring on Sundays – including Certifier inspections, paint work and low noise internal fit out works.

Urban Taskforce members have been let down by the Department of Planning and the Minister for Planning, Rob Stokes.

DPIE has had 12 months to develop a policy to allow for an expansion of construction hours where there is no impact (or very little impact) on local residents. CBD high rise construction; work in commercial, retail and industrial zones; greenfield building development locations on the outskirts of Sydney – there is an infinite number of options between “on and off”.

DPIE’s failure to identify options for Government has forced a binary choice. With no sensible “middle ground” options on the table, the Government has chosen to go with “switch off the extension of construction hours option”.

Urban Taskforce calls upon the NSW Government, the Minister for Planning and the Treasurer, to urgently develop a “middle ground” option which supports jobs, supports industry, supports the production of new housing and new employment centres.

This decision will slow the delivery of new homes and increase upward pressure on housing prices.

This decision flies in the face of the NSW Productivity Commission recommendations to reduce red tape, increase productivity and remove the hand brake applied by the NSW planning system to jobs and investment.

This decision flies in the face of the recent CBD summit which sought to promote jobs in the CBD. Rather than pursuing flexibility, the planners and local Councils have re-asserted regulation – but without thought for the impact or consideration of alternatives.

There is time for a re-think – and on this occasion, a re-think is urgently needed.

End.

The comments above can be attributed to Tom Forrest, CEO, Urban Taskforce.

*The **Urban Taskforce Australia** 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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