

MEDIA RELEASE

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Construction industry Closedown was based on politics and must be reversed

Urban Taskforce today called on the Berejiklian Government to urgently reassess the closedown of the construction industry following Dr Kerry Chant's declaration at today's media conference that the closedown of construction was not based on Health advice.

With the Olympics to start in Tokyo on Friday, the construction industry is begging for a backflip from the Premier on this one.

From the very start, the Berejiklian Government has been praised for basing all decisions relating to COVID-19 on health advice. Today, the NSW Chief Medical Officer, Dr Kerry Chant, supported by the Minister for Health, Brad Hazzard, confirmed that this was a decision taken by Ministers.

This decision will cost the economy billions of dollars and is already costing hundreds of thousands of Greater Sydney families their livelihoods. The closure of construction sites flows through the entire economy.

This hasty decision taken on the weekend, without consultation with the industry, wreaks of a government in panic following their indecision and lax attitude to the Eastern Suburbs Delta strain outbreak. It is now clear that the closedown of construction in NSW is a political over-reach following pressure from journalists at the media conference last Thursday.

There is simply no published evidence to support the decision to close down the entire construction industry – 100%. There is certainly no health advice – based on what Dr Kerry Chant said today.

Even in the peak of the Victorian closedown, the construction industry stayed open on a scaled back basis. At its worst, Victoria limited numbers on construction sites to 25%.

This political miss-step needs to be corrected to enable the construction industry to progressively re-open. The construction sector is used to dealing with risks to health and safety. They have remained open in NSW since the pandemic started with extremely low case numbers recorded and no significant transmission events. This has been critical to the economic success story the Government likes to boast about.

Construction worksites are more secure than hospitals. All workers are identified at the entry and are logged onto site.

Construction worksite staff are required to safe social distance (with reduced workforces as required). Face masks, hand sanitiser, QR code check-ins, temperature checks (on large work sites), staggered start times, morning tea breaks, lunch breaks, and finish times are already in place. All construction sites have daily "tool-box talks" to talk about safety management on site. Further, most of their work is outdoors.

The NSW Health exposure sites web page shows that negligible transmission has occurred on construction sites. Why has the construction sector been targeted in NSW? Today we found out that the reason was a political one. The Urban Taskforce will continue to work constructively with the NSW Government to safely re-open construction sites as soon as possible.

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.*

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