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Planning Minister gets tough with Government Agencies on planning approvals

Urban Taskforce Australia CEO, Tom Forrest, today said the move by Planning Minister Paul Scully to hold State government consent authorities to account for their delays in dealing with development applicants was a significant step towards speeding up the NSW Planning system.

The NSW Government will now publish a league table which will show what proportion of applications are being dealt with by each agency in accord with their legislated timeframes.

The next step is to drive agencies to out-perform their legislated targets.

Shining a light on the performance of government agencies is important for driving cultural change and improved agency performance. However, there needs to be consequences for consistent poor performers.

In Queensland, the Government has a long-established concierge service which assists applicants obtain agency consents. The Queensland Government takes it upon itself to co-ordinate and deliver these consents.

Urban Taskforce welcomes the flurry of new, positive initiatives to speed up planning approvals. There is a lot of reform filtering through, but the real test will be in the numbers: the number of approvals; the number of commencements (which reflect the feasibility of the approvals as granted); and the number of completed dwellings.

The NSW Housing Taskforce, led by the CEO of Infrastructure NSW Tom Gellibrand and Secretary of the Department of Planning, Kiersten Fishburn, is now clearing the bottlenecks but has not yet adopted this more pro-active approach.

The Minister for Planning and Public Spaces refers to the Housing Taskforce “unblocking” 1,985 cases which represent a massive 31,800 new dwellings, resulting in a 94% DA approval rate. We will be watching carefully this week (Wednesday) for the ABS monthly dwelling approval data because this significant boost should be flowing through.

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

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