

Apartment design guide sets appropriate standards for Sydney's future growth

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The Apartment Design Guide released by the NSW Minister for Planning has resolved many concerns raised by the industry at the draft stage and now sets appropriate standards for apartments, says the Urban Taskforce.

"At a time when Sydney's spiralling housing costs are causing concern it is important that government rules do not increase costs," says Chris Johnson CEO, of the Urban Taskforce. "It is pleasing to see that concerns raised by the Urban Taskforce about potential increased standards at the draft stage of the Apartment Design Guide have been considered and changes made to the final Design Guide."

"It is also pleasing to see that the new document is clearly defined as a "Guide" and that the document clarifies that decision making bodies such as councils must understand this. Some standards have been included in the legal instrument, State Environmental Planning Policy (SEPP) 65 that are binding minimums and these are appropriate to give certainty to the industry and communities. These minimums include apartment sizes, ceiling height and car parking."

"The change to solar access requirements from 3 hours to 2 hours in urban areas recognises the reality of denser environments and the need to resolve orientation to views and to the sun. Solar access is required to living rooms and to balconies which can cause difficulties in some locations leading to balconies being located off bedrooms."

"A recent survey by the Urban Taskforce of over 1,000 apartment dwellers found that the balcony is the most important 'must have' in an apartment."

"NSW is leading the country in the number of apartments built in our urban areas and the trends are very strong for many more apartments to be built. It is therefore important that a reasonable balance is struck between design quality and affordability. The new SEPP 65 requirements and the Apartment Design Guide continue most of the current apartment standards but the new documents have clarified areas of confusion and changed what was a 'code' to the status of a 'guide'."

"The Urban Taskforce is concerned about how separation between a commercial building and an apartment building is measured as many commercial buildings are being recycled as apartment buildings in urban areas. We believe that the Guide's provisions for setbacks may restrict mixed use development in Sydney."

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

Media Enquires: Chris Johnson, Chief Executive Officer, Phone: 0412 258 283.

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