

4 March 2011

Mr Brad Hazzard, MP
Shadow Minister for Planning
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Mr Hazzard

RE: Draft Centre Design Guidelines

Yesterday the NSW Government placed the draft *Centre Design Guidelines* on public exhibition for three months. This document is 90 pages long and sets out 396 new principles to further regulate urban development.

The development industry is staggering under the weight of a never-ending wall of regulation.

The *Centre Design Guidelines* will come on top of the existing 1,060 Department of Planning policy documents regulating development in the state (the full list, as produced by the Department of Planning, is attached for your information).

It's surprising that the NSW Government would propose 396 new planning principles without rescinding even one of the 1,060 existing policy documents. Only last week, the Productivity Commission released a report saying that planning rules in NSW and Queensland were the most difficult to find and use.

No-one in our industry would ask for an unregulated environment. However, the level of regulation we face is mammoth and much of it is completely unnecessary. Many of the new rules proposed in the *Centre Design Guidelines* require developers to do things that they would want anyhow. Formalising them as principles will mean more consultants will need to be hired, to show compliance by generating more mountains of paper.

Some principles would make it easier for planning authorities to refuse development applications, even when proposals complied with zoning controls and height limits.

Unfortunately, NSW planning is in such a state of disarray that proposals like guidelines such as these are regularly used to block proposals that comply with a zoning plan and development standards. In the NSW planning system, a "guideline" is normally applied rigidly. These guidelines will deliver another layer of rules and, in many cases, will prevent legitimate and sensible proposals from proceeding.

As you are aware, NSW property development has been in serious decline since 2002. In the last financial year, for every dollar spent by builders in NSW, \$1.20 was spent in Victoria. While NSW accounts for 33 per cent of the population, it makes up just 24 per cent of Australia's building activity. In the last financial year, work started on 52,000 new Victorian private

sector homes, while in NSW work started on only 26,000 homes. We are astounded that the NSW Government might think this situation could be improved by even more regulation.

The document is now on public exhibition for three months, and its future will need to be considered by the incoming government. While we do not expect you to take a position on this matter now, we do think a future Coalition Government would be wise to reject it in its entirety.

Yours sincerely

Urban Taskforce Australia

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Aaron Gadiel". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Aaron Gadiel
Chief Executive Officer

Encl.