

Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal

Review of reporting and compliance burdens on Local Government

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Review of reporting and compliance burdens on Local Government

The Urban Taskforce has reviewed the IPART Review of reporting and compliance on Local Government – Issues Paper. We have provided a number of comments for your consideration.

1. *The Urban Taskforce supports the review of reporting and compliance burdens on local government*

The Urban Taskforce is generally supportive of IPART's review. The review recognises the need to remove unnecessary regulatory burden imposed upon local government. We represent many of the property developers who are interact with local government on a variety of planning and compliance issues. Our comments are outlined below.

2. *Complex planning systems lead to complex reporting requirements*

It is widely recognised that the NSW planning system is excessively complex. Les Stein, international planning expert and Scholar in Residence at the Centre of Environmental Law, Pace University School of Law, was brought to Australia by the Urban Taskforce in 2014 to address the planning industry. He indicated that through his studies of the planning systems throughout the world, and in particular when preparing his report for the NSW Department of Planning 'A Review of International Best Practice in Planning Law' that he believed that NSW had the most complex planning system in the world. The Urban Taskforce has also hosted workshops to examine the potential for on-line lodgement of development applications. During these workshops a number of our members who develop property throughout Australia indicated that the NSW planning system took twice as long to lodge and process a DA any other state. The development of a simpler, streamlined planning system, with standardised documentation, would significantly reduce the amount of reporting councils are required to undertake.

3. *Multiple plans leads to excessive and multiple reporting requirements*

Within the Sydney metropolitan area there are 41 councils, each with their own planning documents (Local Environmental Plans and Development Control Plans) and planning processes to assess development applications. The reporting of performance occurs 41 times. The Urban Taskforce believes that strategic planning should be done on a subregional basis, with one local environmental plan for each subregion with a total of 6 subregions for the Sydney metropolitan area. This does not necessarily involve the amalgamation of councils. Subregional 'Centres of

Excellence' could be established which amalgamate the strategic and statutory planning and assessment functions of councils, but allow councils to remain separate organisations.

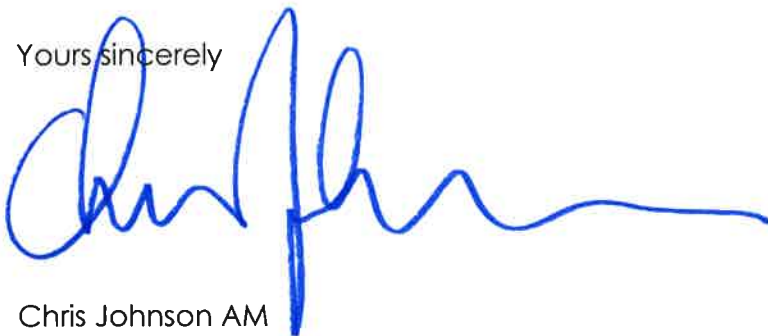
While the NSW Government has sought to standardise planning instruments there is still significant local variation. With the NSW government investing \$20 million in the 2015-2016 budget for the development of E-planning tools to streamline planning processes, there is significant potential to simplify the assessment and reporting system. As part of the development of an online planning system there is scope for the real time collection of data that gives immediate snapshots of a councils performance in delivering housing and measurable. This can only occur with a centralised reporting system.

4. **Performance reporting should only occur once**

Currently the Department of Planning and Environment collects data from each council and produces an annual report on council performance with regards to development application processing times and other performance indicators. The Office of Local Government also requires councils to report against a variety of plans and deliverables. Reporting of data to the state government should only occur once, through one state agency as opposed to multiple agencies and departments. For example, The Department of Planning & Environment collects data from councils regarding housing completions and approvals. Sydney Water also collects similar data. This data collection and reporting process should be undertaken by one centralised agency.

In summary, the Urban Taskforce is supportive of the review and is happy to continue working closely with the Government to provide a development industry perspective on this issue. Please feel free to contact me on telephone number 9238 3927 to discuss this further.

Yours sincerely



Chris Johnson AM
Chief Executive Officer

Urban Taskforce Australia