

# Plan A for families

By CLARE MASTERS Political Reporter

WORKING families will be the winners in the radical overhaul of the planning system, which includes having some home renovations rubber-stamped within just 10 days.

The changes were outlined yesterday by Planning Minister Frank Sartor with the much-anticipated release of the discussion paper, which proposes 83 possible reforms of the state's planning laws.

The initiatives include expanding e-Planning across the state so that home owners — and angry neighbours — can track the progress of local development application on line.

The reforms also include a proposal to circumvent a lengthy council development approval process by increasing the number of developments that can be ticked off by a certifier.

Mr Sartor said developments ap-

## Building approvals to be easier and faster

proved under compliance certificates totalled just 11 per cent of the 100,000 developments approved each year but he was planning on boosting that to 50 per cent within four years.

The prospective changes were welcomed by weary residents and industry stake-holders yesterday who criticised the current system as being too cumbersome.

NSW Urban Taskforce chief executive Aaron Gadiel said it was quicker to conceive and give birth to a child than have a simple home renovation approved by local council.

"Development applications often

take up to nine to 12 months to get resolved. Some even take years to get sorted out," he said.

"The extra costs imposed by the delay can add up to 15 per cent of total project costs."

Leichhardt home owners Sally and Peter Rogers have spent thousands of dollars in rented accommodation as they wait for council to approve their renovation.

"We moved out in May and three months later it was still a flat site," Mr Rogers said.

"It has been so frustrating."

But the biggest planning changes in

nearly 30 years were not welcomed by all, with Mr Sartor's press conference gate-crashed by locals objecting to plans to develop Callan Park.

And Local Government Association of NSW president Genia McCaffery said the changes threatened the ability for families to have a say on what is built in their neighbourhood.

"Increased powers to building certifiers and the implementation of regional panels would reduce council planning powers and the ability for mums and dads to have a say on what is being built next door," she said.

More than 100,000 development applications were determined by local councils between 2005 and 2006. Almost half were for minor renovations or additions to homes.

The proposed changes are open for public consultation until February 8, next year, before a Bill is introduced to Parliament in March.