

Willoughby Environmental Protection Association



From: Dr Meredith Foley, on behalf of WEPA

To: Mayor and Councillors, WCC

Re: **Willoughby City Council General Meeting 20 April 2020 - Agenda item 16.1 Planning Decisions**

Date: 19 April 2020

I am writing on behalf of Willoughby Environmental Protection Association (WEPA) in support of the motion on notice on Planning Decisions by Councillor Saville which is Agenda Item 16.1 on the Council agenda for the meeting on 20 April 2020.

Councillor Saville rightly raises concerns with the COVID-19 amendments made to the *Environment Planning and Assessment Act 1979*. These amendments are in place for six months and can be extended up to twelve months. The legislation makes it clear that these amendments override any existing planning controls. Concern has arisen about the applications of legislation applying to developments other than hospitals, ICUs, morgues etc because of the broad wording of clause 10.17(5)(b) regarding “works necessary to protect the health, safety and welfare of members of the public”.

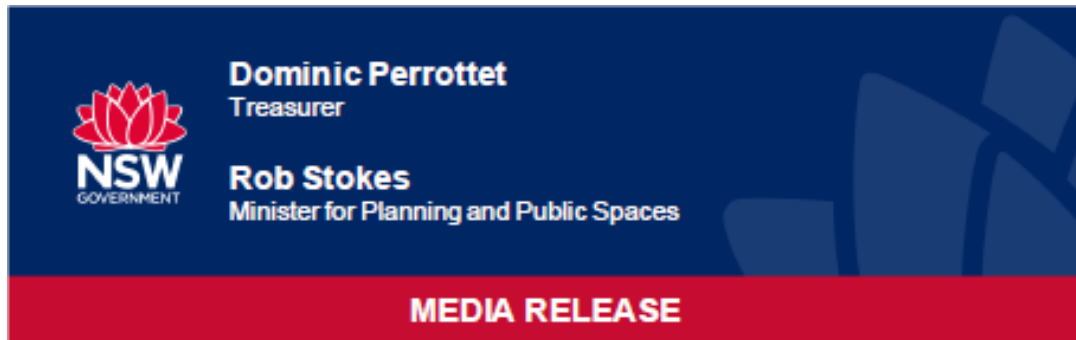
Concerns about the usage of these clauses has been exacerbated in recent weeks by the Minister for Planning’s announcement (3 April) of a new **Planning System Acceleration Program** which will fast-track assessment of State Significant Developments, rezonings and development applications and, in particular, “introduce a ‘one stop shop’ for industry to progress projects that may be ‘stuck in the system’”. The announcement suggests that more decisions will be made by the Minister if required. (see attachment A below).

This has coincided with NSW Treasury’s recent approach to the Urban Taskforce requesting a list of ‘shovel-ready’ projects which can be fast-tracked that are currently ‘stuck in the system’. Urban Taskforce in response provided a list of some of the most contentious projects across the Greater Sydney region (see attachment B below).

WEPA acknowledges that there is a need for construction and other projects to be started to address the economic problems and hardships bought on by the current lock-down. However, we believe that the pandemic should not be used as a way to fast-track controversial projects which have not proceeded to date because they are the subject of legitimate planning and community concerns.

We would urge Council to support Councillor Saville’s motion and, if necessary, to refer in its letter to the Minister to the intent evident in the attached documents.

Attachment A



Friday, 3 April 2020

JOBS BOOST THROUGH FAST-TRACKED PLANNING SYSTEM

The NSW Government will cut red tape and fast-track planning processes to keep people in jobs and the construction industry moving throughout the COVID-19 crisis.

Planning and Public Spaces Minister Rob Stokes said the construction and development sectors will be vital in keeping people in jobs and supporting the State's economic recovery.

"We are fast-tracking assessments to keep people in jobs, boost the construction pipeline and keep our economy moving," Mr Stokes said.

"Our economic recovery will in many ways be longer and harder than the health one and it's essential we do everything we can now to keep our State moving forward and allow work to continue wherever possible in line with the best medical advice."

The Planning System Acceleration Program will:

- Create opportunities for more than 30,000 construction jobs in the next six months;
- Fast-track assessments of State Significant Developments, rezonings and development applications (DAs), with more decisions to be made by the Minister if required;
- Support councils and planning panels to fast-track local and regionally significant DAs;
- Expedite the COVID19 planning response by expanding the list of works that can be carried out without the need for planning approval, or under the fast-tracked complying development pathway;
- Introduce a 'one stop shop' for industry to progress projects that may be 'stuck in the system';
- Clear the current backlog of cases stuck in the Land & Environment Court with additional Acting Commissioners; and
- Invest \$70 million to co-fund vital new community infrastructure in North West Sydney including roads, drainage and public parks to unlock plans for the construction of thousands of new houses.

Treasurer Dominic Perrottet said the property and construction industry is one of the key drivers of jobs and investment in NSW, employing one in four people in the State.

Attachment B

Urban Taskforce AUSTRALIA

31st March 2020

Michael Gadiel
Executive Director
Economic Strategy Division | Economic Strategy & Productivity Group
NSW Treasury
PO Box 5469
Sydney NSW 2001

cc. Jim Betts, Secretary, DPIE (by email)

Dear Michael

Commercial in Confidence

I write with this further updated submission in response to your request for Urban Taskforce members to provide a list of "shovel-ready" projects that have been caught up in the any area of the NSW planning system, that could assist with getting the NSW economy through the COVID 19 economic recession and the post virus recovery. *Please discard previous versions of this document.*

This list represents a consolidated set of projects.

As discussed with you, we have been overwhelmed by submissions from our members. There is clearly significant pent-up frustration with the extent of the slowdown in the NSW planning system over the past two years.

The COVID 19 induced slow-down is an opportunity to push through some important economy saving reforms. This is a chance to re-set the mind-set and get our planning system focused on economic growth, employment and housing supply.

We have roughly categorised our projects into a three-tier ranking system.

Ranking A – projects which a currently stuck in the planning system and if the problem identified was resolved or cleared, the project could be started within 6 months.

Ranking B – projects which could start on the ground in 6-12 months and be a significant contributor to a post virus pipeline of economic and construction activity.

Ranking C – projects which have merit but have been substantially delayed (often at PP stage) and require some concerted effort to free up to deliver a substantial pipeline of work. These projects could start on the ground in 12-24 months and also be significant contributors to a post virus pipeline of economic and construction activity.

The Urban Taskforce would like to thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this important process. We also acknowledge the work you have done to highlight the need for planning reform. We are delighted that DPIE and the Minister for Planning has taken a strong lead on these reforms. Urban Taskforce welcomes the opportunity to work with the Government further on this important economic imperative for our State.

Yours sincerely



Tom Forrest
Chief Executive Officer
Urban Taskforce Australia

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