

Monday, 20 February 2012

### **Rural Housing Code streamlining approval process for homes in rural areas**

The NSW Government is streamlining the planning process for farmers and rural landowners wanting to build a home, shed or farm building on their property, making it easier to gain approval in as little as 10 days.

For the first time, rural landowners can now access step by step information online, to guide them through the process of having a house or farm building approved as complying development.

The new Rural Housing Code User Guide, which has just been released by the Department of Planning and Infrastructure, sets out the steps to follow and the criteria for an application to qualify as complying development, helping to walk rural landowners through the process.

Eligible rural landowners have been able to apply for 10-day planning approvals from their local council or a private certifier, rather than the usual development application process, since the Rural Housing Code came into operation in February 2011.

Department Director-General Sam Haddad said the NSW Government wanted to simplify the process for approving new homes and farm buildings in rural areas, as it had for new houses in suburban areas.

“It makes sense to have a more flexible approval process for landowners wanting to build a home on their rural property,” Mr Haddad said.

“If you think about a 40-hectare property, a house built on that property will generally have far less impact on the neighbours than it might in a suburban area where block sizes are smaller and houses are closer together.

“What this new user guide does is put all the key information in one place, to make it easier for landowners to work out whether their building proposal is likely to be exempt or complying development, or if it will need a development application.

“I hope that it will help encourage more landowners in rural areas to use the Code to obtain a fast-tracked approval and reduce the development assessment burden on small rural councils.”

In general, the Rural Housing Code can be used to build a house or undertake alterations and additions to a house on rural land zoned ‘Primary Production’, ‘Rural Landscape’ or ‘Primary Production Small Lots’, as well as lots of more than 4,000 square metres zoned for ‘Large Lot Residential’. However the proposed house must be:

- No more than 10 metres (two storeys) high, and is at least 5 metres below the highest ridgeline of any hill within 100 metres of the house;
- Set back from the front boundary of the property by at least 15 metres, and in some cases 30 metres or 50 metres; and

- Set back at least 10 metres from the side boundaries, and 15 metres from the rear boundary.

In these rural zones, there is no maximum floor space area for the proposed house or minimum car parking, landscaping or open space requirements, as the large land area makes those standards unnecessary.

Development in the 'Large Lot Residential' zone on lots less than 4,000 square metres in area can qualify as complying development under the General Housing Code, however different rules and development standards apply.

"These rules provide a streamlined planning approval process for low-impact developments which tick the necessary boxes, while still protecting the character of rural areas," Mr Haddad said.

"In areas with significant landscape features, the height limits that apply under the Code are there to safeguard the views of significant ridgelines and make sure complying development does not result in the loss of views for other neighbouring residents.

The Rural Housing Code User Guide is available on the NSW Housing Code website at <http://housingcode.planning.nsw.gov.au/>

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