



NEWS RELEASE

The Hon. Kristina Keneally MP

Member for Heffron
Minister for Planning
Minister for Redfern Waterloo

Wednesday 29 October 2008

PLANNING REFORM TO KEEP DEVELOPMENT AND NEW SOUTH WALES MOVING

The Rees Government will **speed up the time it takes for land to be rezoned and released for new housing** under widespread reforms announced today in NSW Parliament.

Planning Minister, Kristina Keneally, said she has directed a restructure of the planning agencies which report to her, with \$3 million in savings to be reinvested into the Department of Planning so they can hire a team of specialist project managers who will:

- Manage the rezoning of land across the state so it can be provided more quickly for housing, commercial or industrial use; and
- Speed up the processing of development applications for major projects which are assessed by the state government.

“The time it takes to assess major development projects has increased in the last few years, which is unacceptable given the current economic climate,” Ms Keneally said.

“During these tough economic times we need to keep the economy of Sydney and NSW moving. To do this we need to make sure development of land for housing and commercial use is not held up by red tape in the planning system.

“The average time it takes for a major project to be assessed is **155 days, or nearly six months, and that can blow out to eight months** for complex projects such as applications for commercial or manufacturing industries, or where major land rezoning is required.

“**These turnaround times need to be improved and that’s why I’ve decided to overhaul the way major development applications and rezoning applications are processed,**” Ms Keneally said.

“The new managers within the Department of Planning will be responsible for early identification of any issues relating to land release or major projects, and will double up as a one stop shop for inquiries from applicants, developers, and local government.”

Ms Keneally said the project managers will work to shorter deadlines with:

- **85% of major project approvals to be finalised within three months, 95% to be finalised within five months, and no project assessment to exceed eight months;**
- Major Local Environmental Plans (LEPs) (land release or urban renewal) prepared within 6-12 months and minor LEPs (spot rezonings, policy) prepared within 3 months; and
- An overall percentage reduction in LEP timeframes of at least 50%

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Ms Keneally said a complete overhaul of the land release process is needed to cut red-tape and keep development across the state moving in the right direction.

“The Growth Centres Commission has been useful in kick-starting planning and development in Sydney’s north west and south west, but it’s only helping to provide 28% of Sydney’s land supply,” Ms Keneally said.

“The expertise of the Growth Centres Commission will be unlocked by merging it with the Department of Planning.

“The Department of Planning will be restructured to have a stronger focus on the state-wide accelerated release of land in Greenfield areas and the redevelopment of existing urban areas.”

Ms Keneally said improving the efficiency of the way land is delivered in NSW is critical to meeting the state’s housing targets.

“The long-term plans for NSW, the metropolitan and regional strategies, state that we need to build **over 1 million new dwellings in NSW over the next 25 years**,” Ms Keneally said.

“More than 400,000 of these new houses will be in Greenfield areas, and the balance will need to be provided in parts of the state which are already developed.

“The changes which I am announcing today will put us in the best position to deliver on housing targets for Sydney and NSW, and to help businesses in this state grow.

“I’ve instructed the Department of Planning to review their plans for land supply, and make sure Greenfield land release is not stalled by delays in the rezoning and development assessment process.

“That review is to include the removal of any redundant processes which hold up new residential or employment land being brought to the market.”

Media Contact: Phil McCall – (02) 9228 5811 or 0438 619 987



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SUMMARY OF PLANNING PORTFOLIO REFORMS

- The Department of Planning will take on all planning and land release functions of the Growth Centres Commission, Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority and the Office of Strategic Lands.
- Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority will retain its venue and place management functions.
- The remaining functions of the Office of Strategic Lands will merge with the State Property Authority.
- The Redfern-Waterloo Authority continues operation until 2011-12 at which point it will be reviewed, either for termination or to be incorporated into other agencies.
- Landcom will be retained and continue to operate in its current capacity
- \$3 million in savings from the agency restructure will be redirected to the Department of Planning to support more efficient major project assessment and rezonings, including the new project managers.
- Project managers will take responsibility for managing numerous projects simultaneously, and resolve issues arising from the assessment process. Project managers, unlike assessment teams, will coordinate and facilitate the assessment process across Government, bringing a proactive approach to the assessment task.

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