STREAMLINED PROCESS TO IMPROVE DA TURN-AROUND TIMES

The NSW Government today unveiled proposals to streamline development application processing, which has the potential to reduce costs to applicants by hundreds of millions of dollars a year and slash up to six weeks from decision times.

Minister for Planning, Tony Kelly, said a draft updated Environmental Planning and Assessment (EP&A) Regulation had been placed on public exhibition until November 5 for public comment.

“The entire regulation is being reviewed, in line with State law, and carry important improvements to the Part 4 assessment system predominantly used by local councils to process 85,000 development applications a year,” the Minister said.

“The big winners are families wanting to build a new home or retailers and small businesses looking to establish new premises.”

These improvements will:

- Require councils to only ask for additional information from an applicant once during the assessment process, within 21 days of lodgement;
- Require State agencies to respond to requests for their support or advice in relation to a development application within 21 days;
- Revise deemed refusal timeframes to take into account the above measures and to reflect the complexity of the proposed developments;
- Require consent authorities to apply the State’s sea level rise planning benchmarks if they are considering sea level rise issues when assessing DAs;
- Change classes of designated development;
- Improve planning certificates (often examined by prospective land purchasers) to address their complexity and length; and
- Provide greater certainty to councils and landowners as to when work is deemed to have commenced.

Mr Kelly said under the changes, councils will continue to be able to reject proposals that do not contain adequate information or include relevant fees.

“The regulation change in particular targets the 40% of applications currently subject to the practice of ‘stop the clock’ which, on average, is adding 64 days to processing times,” the Minister said.

“Some of these applications are being put on hold indefinitely, while a consent authority seeks additional information on a number of occasions.

“An independent analysis of our changes shows they have the potential to slash processing times for the majority of applications by up to 36 days and cut $316 million a year from landowner holding costs.

Details on how to make submissions can be found at www.planning.nsw.gov.au