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## **Updated planning fees to support BASIX**

The NSW Department of Planning is proposing to introduce a small fee for the issuing of new BASIX certificates, which will go towards online, helpline and other support for this important sustainability program.

The fee is being proposed as part of the draft Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation currently on exhibition.

BASIX (short for the Building Sustainability Index) was introduced in 2004.

All new homes, and alterations and additions worth more than \$50,000, which require a development application or complying development certificate, also require a BASIX certificate.

The multiple award-winning BASIX initiative has resulted in an average 40 per cent reduction in energy and water use in new homes, compared to homes built before 2004.

The 120,000 BASIX-compliant houses built since 2004 are saving NSW some nine billion litres of water (equivalent to 3,600 Olympic swimming pools) and producing 280,000 fewer tonnes of greenhouse gases each year.

The proposed online fee, which ranges between \$20-50 for new dwellings and \$25 for alterations and additions, is far below the costs of similar sustainability tools in other States.

Households save up to \$600 per year on household energy and water bills, thanks to the BASIX initiative.

Department of Planning Corporate Governance and Policy Executive Director Donna Rygate said the fee would fund:

- Customer help, both online and to a call centre, along with online help notes, online tutorials and customer support;
- The issuing of manual off-line certificates where the online tool is not appropriate – such as with heritage buildings and alternative technology solutions;
- Web hosting costs;
- Required online system updates in response to user feedback and wider government and other policy changes.
- Meeting Commonwealth energy and water requirements, including stringency changes in the energy efficiency measures of the Building Code of Australia.

The one-off fee for online assessments is proposed to be:

- \$25 for alterations and additions;
- \$50 for a new single detached dwelling;
- \$80 for the first two dwellings and \$35 for each dwelling above this for multi-dwelling housing (other than flat buildings); and

- \$120 for the first three dwellings and \$20 for each dwelling above this for residential flat buildings.

Non-online assessments can be charged up to \$250.

Ms Rygate said BASIX was to date the only State sustainability planning tool which had a free index to calculate the ability of houses to stay warm in winter and cool in summer.

“In other States, this is generally done on behalf of homeowners by accredited professionals and costs some \$500,” Ms Rygate said.

Ms Rygate said the BASIX online system is a significant investment in software which processes about 1,000 applications each week, while its helpline deals with over 150 enquiries each week.

“Fees are in place for the processing of all applications under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act so it is reasonable to extend this to BASIX certificates,” Ms Rygate said.

The fee is expected to raise some \$1.2 million per annum – far less than the \$7.5 million the Department has spent to date developing BASIX.

Continuing the BASIX scheme will mean that by 2050, new housing in NSW will have saved a total of over 3 million megalitres of water and produced 102 million fewer tonnes of greenhouse gases – a significant contribution to the sustainable future of NSW.

The proposed BASIX fee is included in the draft Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2010, which has been placed on public exhibition until 5 November 2010.

The regulation also updates fixed planning fees to take into account increases in the consumer price index over the last decade. At this stage however, changes have not be made to other fees such as DA sliding scale fees based on the cost of development or capital investment value.

It also revises fees for modifications under Part 3A of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act to more closely reflect the level of assessment required, and sets a maximum fee for critical infrastructure projects.

**Department of Planning media contact:** Mark Skelsey on (02) 9228 6275 or 0439 931 098