



The Hon Brad Hazzard MP

Minister for Planning & Infrastructure

Minister assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW

MEDIA RELEASE

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DEVELOPMENTS THAT DESTROY COMMUNITIES STOPPED

The NSW Coalition Government today dumped Labor's laws that allowed private developers to override local communities' planning controls under the guise of 'affordable housing'.

"Getting affordable housing delivered is critical but Labor's laws were just a backdoor deal for small-time developers to make a fast buck," Minister for Planning, Brad Hazzard said today.

"Labor's promise to deliver affordable housing through private developments turned into nothing more than an opportunity to deliver overdevelopment, out of character with local areas.

"Communities have expressed concern about this issue right across the state."

"The Liberals & Nationals made a promise to address community concerns and today we have delivered.

"Under Labor's policy, 20% of each development was supposed to be leased to middle income workers at below market rates.

"There is no evidence that the butchery committed on communities has resulted in housing being made available to those in need.

"There is evidence developers were using this Labor law as a backdoor method to make vast amounts of money out of overdevelopments.

"The Liberals & Nationals Government has therefore stopped all new private development applications while an Affordable Housing Taskforce is established to reform the failing system.

"For existing applications there will now be a requirement that developers build in accordance with the existing character and landscape of neighbourhoods.

"Developers will also be stopped from producing a few small units to satisfy the 20% affordable housing rule, while delivering 80% as large money making housing.

"This is a clear message that the Liberals & Nationals Government is serious about delivering affordable housing but stopping developers destroying local communities in the process," Minister Hazzard said.

Changes to Affordable Rental Housing policy

Under the immediate changes to the Affordable Rental Housing SEPP:

- Villa, townhouse and apartment complexes, which are proposed by the private sector and contain an element of affordable housing, will no longer be allowed in low-density residential areas where councils have prohibited this sort of development;
- These forms of developments will still be allowed to be proposed in areas where permitted by local councils, but will need to meet tougher public transport access and local character compatibility tests;
- Boarding houses proposed under the SEPP in low density residential areas will now need to be located close to public transport and provide off-street parking; and
- Low-rise villa and townhouse developments proposed and assessed by Housing NSW will now need to be consistent with local council notification policies and will have prescribed off-street parking levels.

Importantly, the most popular provision in the SEPP – which allows people to get approval for new granny flats – will be retained along with existing provisions requiring developers to make payments to mitigate the loss of affordable housing.

An Affordable Housing Taskforce would be established, with:

- Social housing experts and community housing providers;
- Key local government representatives;
- Other relevant government agencies; and
- Department of Planning and Infrastructure.

The taskforce will provide input to help guide the development of a new Affordable Housing Choice SEPP, which will replace the existing amended Affordable Rental Housing SEPP.

Furthermore, the NSW Government will work with local councils – including at a regional level – to help them develop their own Local Affordable Housing Choice Strategies.

Once councils have developed such strategies and they have been confirmed as being able to adequately meet local affordable housing needs, the relevant council would be exempted from the new Affordable Housing Choice SEPP.

Mr Hazzard said there was a need for a more strategic and locally inclusive approach to providing more affordable housing in NSW.

“In February 2010, there were 47,413 people in NSW on waiting lists for suitable accommodation and 1,500 households had been waiting for more than two years,” he said.

“Of the 188,806 tenable dwellings, almost 7,000 were overcrowded and 12,300 were underutilised due to being in a state of disrepair.

“The proportion of low income private renters who are experiencing housing stress is expected to continue to grow, which is why we need to work with local councils and other stakeholders to more effectively address this issue.”

Mr Hazzard said a review of the Affordable Rental Housing SEPP, commenced last year, had prompted 230 public submissions.

“What was clear from that feedback was that there is general community support for a state planning policy to encourage the development of more affordable rental housing, but we need to work more closely with the community on this issue,” Mr Hazzard said.

Mr Hazzard said transitional provisions would allow existing applications to still be dealt with under the previous SEPP with a requirement that they be compatible with the local character of the area in which they are proposed.