Tuesday, 26 November 2013

**Have your say on updated planning controls for Port of Newcastle and other ports**

Feedback is being sought on updated planning controls which reflect the fact that the Port of Newcastle is transitioning to a private long-term lease operation.

“We encourage the community to have a say on these proposed changes which will bring certainty and consistency to planning for the port’s future under its new private operation,” NSW Department of Planning and Infrastructure Acting Director-General Richard Pearson said.

Mr Pearson said the changes would ensure there was a full merit-based assessment for significant projects such as new berths and large-scale dredging.

“At the same time, they support a streamlined planning process for commonplace port infrastructure such as cranes, storage silos and conveyer belt systems, allowing for efficient port operation,” he said.

NSW Treasury is currently seeking expressions of interest for a 98-year lease for the port, with $340 million from its proceeds to be spent on revitalising the Newcastle CBD including construction of a new light rail line.

Mr Pearson said the proposed new controls will require port projects valued at more than $100 million, and capital dredging involving over 100,000 cubic metres of excavated material, to be automatically subject to a rigorous merit-based assessment by the NSW Department of Planning and Infrastructure.

“For development under $100 million, there would be a number of different planning pathways including:

- Being exempt from approval for very minor matters (such as railings, catwalks and ladders)
- Approved as complying development (such as cranes, storage silos and conveyer belt systems)
- Self-assessed and approved by the private operator for operational issues (such as navigation and emergency response facilities and maintenance dredging)

“Additionally, any facilities handling potentially hazardous goods will be exhibited and assessed by the NSW Department of Planning and Infrastructure.

“The controls propose appropriate approval processes for infrastructure in areas set aside for port purposes.”

Mr Pearson said minor changes are also being proposed for Port Botany and Port Kembla. These will help create a consistent planning regime covering all three ports.
The draft State Environmental Planning Policy (Port Botany and Port Kembla) Amendment (Port of Newcastle) is on public exhibition until Monday 16 December, 2013 and can be viewed at www.planning.nsw.gov.au/proposals.

Submissions can be made via the above website or by writing to the Director, Assessment Policy and Systems, NSW Department of Planning and Infrastructure, PO Box 39, Sydney, 2001.

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