GREATER TRANSPARENCY IN LOCAL REZONING DECISIONS

Planning Minister Rob Stokes today announced the government will replace the Pre-Gateway review process with a simpler, faster and clearer rezoning assessment.

The current process, known as the Pre-Gateway review, allows a review where a council refused or failed to respond to an application to amend local planning rules.

Reforms for the new rezoning review process include:

- Strengthening the test for the review of an existing zoning to ensure rezonings only proceed where they exhibit clear strategic merit;
- Review requests to the Department of Planning will be referred to Joint Regional Planning Panels or the Planning Assessment Commission within three days;
- Ensuring the council is aware a rezoning request has been sent to the Department within five days of receipt;
- Increasing the independence of the process by the Panel or the Commission, carrying out the assessment and determine the rezoning; and
- Making the Panel or Commission the Relevant Planning Authority where a council refuses a request to act as the Relevant Planning Authority, or does not respond to that request within 42 days.

“We’ve listened to community concerns about unexpected rezonings undermining confidence in local planning. That’s why we will reform the process of reviewing a council’s decision with a presumption against rezoning unless there is a compelling reason for change,” Mr Stokes said.

“While it’s appropriate that council decisions can be tested before an independent panel, this opportunity needs to be transparent and balanced.

“We need a planning system that supports sustainable growth in a timely, independent and orderly process, which is exactly what this reformed rezoning review is designed to achieve.

“These reforms will stop the revolving door of planning proposals going back and forth between councils and the community by strengthening the test for a review, making the process faster, simpler and clearer.”

To view the report, go to www.planning.nsw.gov.au/onexhibition