
24 June 2020

MEDIA RELEASE

\$20m project hurdle will create more WA jobs

Property Council WA and Master Builders WA welcome the co-operative efforts of WA's politicians who have joined forces to achieve historical planning reform.

Working together, a combination of MPs from the Government, Opposition and the crossbenches, agreed to lower the threshold for the State Government's major projects fast-tracking planning initiative from \$30 million to \$20 million. In the regions, projects worth as little as \$5 million can be fast-tracked under the scheme, which is designed to eliminate red-tape and generate job-creating projects.

Property Council WA Executive Director Sandra Brewer with Master Builders WA Executive Director John Gelavis said the improvements to Planning Minister Rita Saffioti's fast-track approvals initiative announced last month would get even more West Australians back to work quicker.

The \$20 million project hurdle was the mid-point between Premier Mark McGowan and Planning Minister Rita Saffioti's original \$30 million proposal and a lower \$10 million threshold proposed by Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party's MLC Rick Mazza.

Ms Saffioti last month announced a series of changes to simplify the planning system, cut red tape and increase support for small business.

For the 18-month pandemic recovery period, Western Australian Planning Commission will become the decision-maker for significant, job-creating projects, to create a more consistent approach to approvals.

The initial proposal was for developers of significant projects costing \$30 million or more with 100 or more dwellings or with more than 20,000sqm of commercial floor space to be able to opt-in to the WAPC process.

However, Shooters, Farmers and Fishers MLC Rick Mazza put up amendments to the legislation to lower the threshold to \$10 million and abolish the requirement for at least 100 dwellings and more than 20,000sqm or commercial space.

The \$20 million threshold for metropolitan projects and \$5 million for those in the regions was negotiated with the State Government.

"We are absolutely delighted about the outcome," Ms Brewer said.

“The lower \$20 million hurdle for projects to opt-in to the fast-track system will give even more West Australians more opportunities to get back into employment quicker.

“This delivers certainty and promotes well-designed, high-quality projects and desperately needed employment opportunities. WA’s recovery depends on ensuring there’s a clear pathway for decision-making about complex developments with design and economic merit.”

Mr Gelavis said the threshold changes were important: “They allow for greater levels of projects to be assessed in Perth and regional WA, which will go through an approval process designed to streamline processes and reduce complications.”

“A good planning system is the key to a healthy WA economy,” Mr Gelavis said

“Everything starts with a transparent, functioning and efficient planning framework, so we are pleased to see this Bill progress with the support of industry and Government, which will create important construction jobs, support many of 39,000 small businesses in the building and construction industry and contribute significantly to the State’s economic growth and prosperity.

“We look forward to advancing further reforms, particularly in the residential sector as now is the time to make the changes happen.”

Ms Brewer said despite substantial progress in reforming WA’s complex planning system, without intervention, desperately needed projects faced unnecessary delays and extra costs.

The WAPC is made up of representatives across government, including planning, water, environmental regulation, energy and transport, bringing key decision-makers together.

“This provides a structure for effective decision-making, especially if there’s conflicting advice, because differences that used to lead to long delays can be resolved quickly,” Ms Brewer said.

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