

Recent initiatives

The Government has already taken a number of steps to streamline the planning permit process. These initiatives suggest a range of ways that planning schemes could be changed to make the system simpler and more efficient. They include:

- Refocusing the Heritage Overlay so that a single dwelling application no longer needs to be assessed under Rescode
- Removing and modifying referral requirements in 46 rural planning schemes
- Changing seven overlays to exempt certain applications from advertising
- Reducing the number of permit triggers under a Special Building Overlay
- New rural zones that remove the permit requirement for farm dams and for minor alterations and extensions to buildings
- Certification of residential subdivision standards

What else has been happening?

A range of other reforms have recently been made to improve the Victorian planning system.

Better Decisions Faster

The *Better Decisions Faster Discussion Paper* was released in August 2003. The paper outlined a range of ways to streamline and improve the efficiency of the planning process including promoting better prepared applications, speeding up decisions on planning permits, improving the processing of planning scheme amendments and strengthening enforcement procedures.

The Government adopted the initiatives in April 2004 and committed \$3.1 million to implementing a number of *Better Decisions Faster* initiatives in *Victoria: Leading the Way*.

21 of the 30 initiatives are now completed and nine are currently in progress.

Local government initiatives

Local government is also undertaking a range of initiatives to deliver speedier decisions, some in partnership with the Government. These initiatives focus on improving:

- management systems
- planning approach and culture
- information and education
- quality of applications
- fast tracking certain permit applications
- advertising.

These examples suggest a valuable role for sharing of good practice initiatives by local government.

More Information

www.dse.vic.gov.au/planning
e-mail: planning.systems@dse.vic.gov.au

Markus Terjung
Phone: 03 9637 9590
e-mail: markus.terjung@dse.vic.gov.au

Lisel Thomas
Phone: 03 9637 9585
e-mail: lisel.thomas@dse.vic.gov.au

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Streamlining the Planning Permit Process Summary

November 2005



Minister for Planning, Rob Hulls MP and Elaine Carbines MLC, Parliamentary Secretary for Planning, launch the review at the planning offices, City of Port Phillip, 11 Nov 2005.

Streamlining the Planning Permit Process

Cutting red tape

Over the next 12 months, the Government will be focusing on streamlining the planning permit process to:

- Reduce the number of matters that require a planning permit, such as shade sails, fences and cubby houses.
- Tailor assessment processes to suit the size and complexity of proposals.

This will deliver:

- More timely planning permit decisions.
- Better use of local government resources.

Improving the Victorian planning system is an on-going process. In recent years, the focus has been on making planning schemes more strategic and more consistent as well as making better decisions faster by improving the approvals process.

These improvements, together with the release of *Melbourne 2030 – Planning for sustainable growth*, have given the Victorian planning system a strong strategic foundation for good decision-making and planning. However, there is still more that could be done.

There is growing concern that the Victorian planning permit process is long and complex, adds to development costs and uses up valuable local government resources.

The way forward

The Minister for Planning has requested that Parliamentary Secretary for Planning, Elaine Carbines, lead a review to identify ways to cut through the planning red tape.

Terms of reference

The review will identify and implement opportunities to streamline the planning permit process through:

- Reducing the number of permit requirements.
- Introducing more simple assessment and approval processes.
- Working with local government to examine ideas and opportunities for improving the operation of the Victorian planning system.
- Promoting innovation and best practice by local government.
- Engaging with stakeholder groups and the community to identify what needs to change and how to make these changes.

Some initiatives will be put in place immediately, while others will require broader consultation and development.

An initial review of current ideas and opportunities will be presented to the Minister for Planning by the end of June 2006.

What needs to change?

The Government is continually talking to councils, peak organisations and community groups about how the Victorian planning system can be improved. Although the perspective of these groups can be quite different, the general perception is that the planning permit process is frequently complex and inefficient.

The main frustrations with the process are:

- Timeframes for making decisions on permit applications can be long.
- Too many permit requirements.
- Many permit applications are poorly prepared.
- Inconsistent decision-making.

These perceptions are supported by the results of the annual Community Satisfaction Survey 2005, prepared for the Department for Victorian Communities. This survey found that 'town planning policy and approvals' is a key driver of resident satisfaction with the performance of local government.

While 68% of those surveyed assessed local government performance in the area of town planning as 'excellent, good or adequate', 32% indicated that it 'needs improvement'. Many survey respondents felt that there was a need for better planning policies and more efficient, faster approval processes.

