

MEDIA RELEASE

29 October 2019

EPBC REVIEW CAN FULFIL PROMISE OF STREAMLINED ASSESSMENT

The original promise of a single, streamlined environmental assessment for major projects is within reach, according to the Urban Development Institute of Australia (UDIA).

The Commonwealth Government has today announced details of its proposed review of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act. The review has been welcomed by UDIA's National Executive Director Connie Kirk.

"The Government has sensibly prioritised the removal of needless red tape and the review has the potential to reduce regulatory costs that are baked into the price of new housing," Ms Kirk said.

"The EPBC Act has not fully delivered on its stated objective of having a single point of assessment. We instead live in a world where major projects are faced with double or triple jeopardy via separate environmental assessments at federal, state and local government.

"The inconsistent and incoherent rules placed in front of proponents have stalled projects, cut housing supply and baked additional red tape costs into homes that squeeze through the system.

"The industry fully believes in the value of a well-designed legislative and regulatory system to preserve nationally-significant flora and fauna.

"However, there is an overwhelming case to ensure environmental assessments are conducted at the appropriate time in the development cycle to provide certainty.

"There are clear goals that should define the review and are consistent with the Government's objective of reducing excessive red tape and costs.

"These include establishing a timeline for completing outstanding bilateral agreements and strategic assessments, as well as updating existing bi-lateral agreements.

"We also need to see an audit of progress against the 'one-stop shop' premise that underpins the EPBC Act and absorbing lessons from existing processes which work well."

Other priorities for the review include:

- Resolving flaws in the process of strategic bio-certification to remove delays
- Considering statutory timeframes for responding to applications
- Producing a simpler and more effective regime for offsets
- Lifting the quality, consistency and transparency of guidance
- Ensuring proposed listings of matters of national environmental significance are underpinned by clear evidence and science.

"The review will fit neatly with the Commonwealth's broader focus on housing affordability if it seizes the opportunity to reduce needless red tape and costs in new home production," Ms Kirk said.

"That is why we would also urge the Government to ensure the review canvasses the level of cost recovery imposed on proponents."

Media: Connie Kirk | 0412 244 988
www.udiapriorities.com.au