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Planning reforms a major step forward for housing delivery

Business Hunter has welcomed the NSW Government's Planning System Reforms Bill, describing it as a much-needed reset for a planning system that has become too slow, too complex and not fit for purpose.

Business Hunter CEO Bob Hawes said the new legislation lays strong foundations for a faster, fairer and more functional planning system that will accelerate housing delivery.

"Affordable, available housing is essential to support our workforces across the region. The current shortage of supply has seen housing prices soar and made it harder for both buyers and renters to find homes near where they want to work," Mr Hawes said.

"This system reset promises to cut through the red tape and deliver genuine reform in the housing approval process.

"The establishment of the Development Coordination Authority, the legislated role for the Housing Delivery Authority, and new streamlined assessment pathways are real reforms, not just tweaks around the edges.

"Garnering the apparent support of the Opposition is also a significant step that should ease the pathway for the legislation – and I acknowledge the collaborative efforts of both sides of government in seeking to achieve consensus on this important issue."

Mr Hawes said key measures in the Bill included:

- establishing the Development Coordination Authority, a one-stop shop to assess planning proposals and development applications across agencies
- enshrining the Housing Delivery Authority in legislation to secure its long-term role in driving major housing projects
- expanding complying development provisions, including a 10-day timeframe for councils to approve minor variations or see them deemed approved, shifting the onus in favour of delivering more homes.

Mr Hawes said he hoped the Government's reform lens would also remain trained on expediting delivery of major commercial and industrial projects, including those integral to the energy transition.

"We know the pipeline of renewable energy projects is not keeping pace with state and national Net Zero targets and we hear from project proponents that the planning assessment process is too long and complex.

"The Treasurer has this week announced that the new Investment Delivery Authority – the industry equivalent of the Housing Delivery Authority – will begin taking expressions of interest within weeks, which is a step in the right direction.

"But we also need initiatives to help unlock industrial land and a continued focus on making planning pathways smoother for all development."

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