

Further improvements can be made to WA's planning system

27 October 2020

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Worthwhile read for: Property Developers, Town Planners

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The *Planning to Prosper* report (**Report**) commissioned by the [Property Council of Australia](#) and researched and drafted by [Urbis](#), was released on 24 September 2020. The Report identifies planning and policy 'quick wins' for each state and territory. These 'quick wins' are high priority, high impact changes that, if implemented, hope to improve the country's planning systems and aid economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic by delivering up to \$5.7 billion a year in economic value and generating an additional 39,200 jobs (2,500 of those being in WA).

In this alert Solicitor [Lily Robinson](#) and colleagues outline the four 'quick wins' identified for WA.

1. Clarifying the role and appropriate level of detail required of structure plans

The Report acknowledged that decision makers often take a prescriptive stance on the application of 'due regard' documents such as structure plans. In response to this, the Report recommends that the Minister for Planning drives attitudinal change across councils and the Western Australian Planning Commission by clarifying the role and appropriate level of detail required for structure plans. This will ensure that structure plans are used as envisaged by the legislation and that applicants are not required to make unnecessary amendments to structure plans, which hinders the process of approval.

2. Expanding the role of Development Assessment Panels (DAPs) on Determinations

The Report recommends that the role of DAPs be expanded to include making determinations on:

- some structure plans;
- structure plan modifications;
- subdivisions;
- simple scheme amendments; and
- local development plans.

According to the Report, if one additional project is subject to determination by a DAP each week, an additional 951 dwellings could be delivered each year.

3. Effectively implementing a Design Review Guide

The Design Review Guide, developed by the Office of Government Architect in February 2019, was created to provide guidance to local governments to enable them to set up and operate design review processes. The Report recommends that the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage effectively implements the Design Review Guide to ensure that the design review process is functioning as intended and to remove any political or other interference from the process.

4. Broadening the scope of private building certifiers

The Report recommends that building permit application processes be streamlined through the expansion of the role of private building certifiers to minimise the circumstances in which builders are referred to local government planning departments on projects that already have planning approval, are compliant or exempt.

Comment

As reported in our previous alerts, [*Amendments to WA's Planning Regulations in response to COVID-19*](#); [*Structural changes to the WA Development Assessment Panel system*](#); [*Planning Exemptions during COVID-19 commence*](#); [*Submissions invited on proposed amendments to WA's R-Codes*](#); [*Update: Urgent legislative WA Government planning and development response to COVID-19*](#), a number of reforms have already been introduced this year in WA to simplify the planning system, cut red tape and streamline approval processes. Despite, some of the 'quick wins' having already been addressed by these reforms, the WA economy will no doubt benefit from all 'quick wins' identified in the Report being implemented.

For the full report, click [here](#).

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