

20 April 2020

Local Government supports agreement to facilitate planning assessment processes

The Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) has endorsed a set of principles to guide changes to planning systems during the COVID-19 pandemics.

The agreement was reached between ALGA, the State and Territory Planning Ministers, and the Federal Minister for Population, Cities and Urban Infrastructure, Alan Tudge, at a meeting on Friday.

This agreement sets out the Principles that will guide changes to the planning system through the COVID-19 pandemic, recognising the importance of keeping our planning systems open to support our economy and local jobs.

The pandemic has resulted in some immediate changes, with, for example, more people and small businesses operating from home, new temporary health facilities, and changes to supermarket trading hours.

Of utmost importance to local government is maintaining public confidence in all planning decisions and ensuring there is adequate community consultation.

ALGA President David O'Loughlin applauded the general consensus at Friday's meeting around the need to maintain jobs and businesses at this difficult time.

"We also want to ensure that new development in our cities and regions conforms with agreed local planning strategies and that assessment processes continue to engage with local councils and their communities to the greatest extent possible under the circumstances," he said.

To abide by social distancing guidelines, some local governments will have to transition to new technology to undertake consultation, assessment and decision-making.

For example, placing development assessment notices in local newspapers or libraries – or staging public forums – is no longer possible, so new digital platforms will be needed.

The agreement acknowledges that local councils and their communities want to be flexible but also protect and enhance what they value in their communities.

These changes have been made to State Planning Legislation, and differ across the country due the nuances between state territory legislative frameworks.

All parties agreed the principles will be reviewed in June 2020 to ensure they are still required and are fit-for-purpose to support the economic recovery phase.

Available for interview:

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