



the voice of the industry

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MEDIA RELEASE

HIA CAUTIONS GOVERNMENT OVER NEW RESIDENTIAL ZONING REGIME

HIA the voice of Australia's residential construction industry has called for the Victorian Government to have a major rethink of its proposed new residential planning zones before it brings them into force.

Commenting on the zone proposals, Victoria's Regional Executive Director Gil King said that young homebuyers and downsizers wishing to purchase a new home or unit in existing suburban areas might be disappointed. "Elements of the proposed zones appear to be aimed at restricting design and redevelopment opportunities in the suburbs" he said.

Labelling the residential zones as a backward step for housing affordability, Mr King said that many people in the market for smaller subdivided lots and housing will find less might be available once the new zones are in place.

This is going to be largely down to Councils which have responsibility for allocating where the three new residential zones will go.

"Hypothetically a Council could recommend to the Minister that a large proportion of its municipal area is covered by the most restrictive "Neighbourhood Residential Zone", making it particularly difficult to implement any redevelopment of existing housing stock in these areas."

This is a large risk that the Minister will need to manage and the State Government needs to ensure a balance is struck between the opportunity to continue to renew existing housing stock or extend homes and protecting significant neighbourhoods.

Giving a major part of the allocation of the zones in the hands of Councils is a recipe for disaster as it could see all areas zoned for minimal change – which is not a representative outcome for the community Mr King said.

"Adding to this is that there is little information on transition to the new zones and what will happen to development proposals underway during the proposed 12 months Councils have to allocate the zones to their area." he said.

The new zones also give greater ability for Councils to vary the standard provisions of ResCode.

Mr King said that the whole idea of ResCode was that it makes most planning schemes generally in alignment with one another and with the building regulations.

"ResCode generally provided a clear approach to residential development for builders and communities."

But this is far from the case with the new zones allowing Councils the ability to increase the number of issues that can be varied at a Council level via separate zone schedules for individual neighbourhoods and areas.

This could be in addition to other variations already in the planning system such as overlays and unincorporated polices, plans and strategies again making Victoria's planning requirements for housing more complex.

HIA today tabled with the Victorian Government its concerns around the newly proposed zones for Victoria, recommendations to improve the proposed zones and strike a better balance between councils and the building industry. Mr King concluded that he hoped that the good work the Government has done to introduce a more systematic approach to planning through its VicSmart initiative will not be undone by this proposal and he looked forward to working with the Minister to address the concerns of the industry around the residential zones.

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