



19 August 2020

Mr Andrew Barr MLA
ACT Chief Minister and Leader of ACT Labor
andrew.barr@act.gov.au

Alistair Coe
Leader of the Canberra Liberals
Alistair.coe@parliament.act.gov.au

Shane Rattenbury
Leader of the ACT Greens
Shane.rattenbury@act.gov.au

cc: Caroline Le Couteur, Mark Parton, Mick Gentleman, Ben Ponton

Planning Legislation Amendment Bill

Dear Leaders

Representing the Building and Construction sector and tens of thousands of Canberrans employed both directly and indirectly by our industry, we urgently ask that all parties block the proposed *Planning Legislation Amendment Bill* which will make significant and damaging changes to the way in which projects are approved by the independent planning authority.

The economic impact caused by the COVID-19 pandemic is causing significant national-wide economic downturn and the ACT is certainly not immune of its impacts.

As the Canberra building and construction sector faces an evaporating pipeline of projects in the residential housing and office markets, and we have already lost more than 1,000 jobs in the sector since the COVID-19 induced recession began.

For the Assembly to be considering such sweeping changes to the planning system now, is completely out of touch with the current economic climate and quite frankly, reckless. The amendments, in this period of economic downturn presents a very real risk to jobs, business and the housing needed for Canberrans.

What is needed right now for all of us to be focused on saving jobs, encouraging investment and developing an economic plan to recover through targeted and immediate stimulus measures and medium – to long term actions to grow our city, create jobs and secure our future.

Furthermore, we are extremely concerned that many of the proposed amendments will add more red tape, create further delays, create uncertainty and undermine the independence of the planning authority. It will place many critical projects needed right now at real risk.

We urge you to not debate the Bill in its current form, but instead refer all proposed provisions to the Environment Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (EPSDD).

There is currently a holistic, end to end review of the planning system and significant reforms that will result. We have all been calling for the release of that – and whilst we have been briefed on the scope by EPSDD, we note that the community will not be engaged on this review and reform process until well after the ACT Assembly Elections on 17 October.

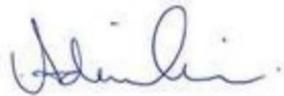
Until such time as this review is complete, all further reforms should be put on hold and provide the Canberra community with the opportunity to consider any changes to the planning system that will have such wide-reaching effects in a coordinated, timely and genuine way.

We would be happy to discuss further with your office and look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,



Greg Weller
Chief Executive Officer
Housing Industry Association



Adina Cirson
Executive Director
Property Council of Australia



Michael Hopkins
Chief Executive Officer
Master Builders ACT