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Focus on Affordability, not Design: Proposed Design & Place SEPP Abandoned by New Planning Minister

This insight is an addition to our series on the Design & Place framework. With the framework being abandoned, you might be wondering what the implications are for you.

On 5 April 2022, the NSW Government announced that it has abandoned its plan to introduce its proposed State Environmental Planning Policy for Design and Place (**DP SEPP**). The decision comes following "extensive consultation with industry and stakeholder groups".

The proposed changes under the proposed DP SEPP were detailed and placed regulatory pressure on developers to respond to changing societal attitudes towards our built environment. However, the proposal were met with criticism that the changes did not reflect the current housing needs in NSW. Therefore, the abandonment of the DP SEPP signals a change in direction for the NSW Planning System. The renewed focus is on affordability of homes, not quality design.

> *"We want to make it easier to build quality, affordable homes – not harder. As I've said before, my focus is on changes that help us pave the way for more homes in liveable communities."**[1]***

To bring about this goal, the new Planning Minister, Anthony Roberts, has expressed his intention to update the BASIX standards "help people build homes that are more comfortable, save people money on their power bills and contribute to our net zero target".[2]

While this decision will surprise some, it is important to note that this is not the only major decision the Planning Minister has made in recent weeks.

On 14 March 2022, the Planning Minister revoked the 'Minister's Planning Principles' forged by his predecessor. Again, the message was boosting the supply of new homes and housing affordability. Housing affordability has become the NSW Government's clear objective for the planning system.

With the discontinuance of the DP SEPP and revocation of the Planning Principles, there is much uncertainty regarding the plan to consolidate the State Environmental Planning Policies (**SEPPS**). It appears that plan has been put on hold because the 14 consolidated SEPPS were intended to reside under an umbrella of the respective planning principles.

These changes represent a shift away from a principles-based approach to planning, although it may provide respite in the perceived housing crisis.

If you are unsure how these changes will affect you, contact us and we will be happy to meet with you to discuss.

This insight has been written for general educational purposes only and is not to be taken as legal advice.

[1] https://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/News/2022/More-homes-and-liveable-communities-for-NSW.

[2] Ibid.