



Victorian Local Governance Association

MEDIA RELEASE

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Pricing Planning Objections Not The Way To Go

VLGA President, Cr Rose Iser has expressed concern at any proposal to charge objectors for opposing developments at the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT).

“ Not surprisingly, this proposal has been warmly embraced by the usual developer’s lobbying bodies. But these lobbyists do their members and the community a disservice with such antagonistic proposals, Cr Iser said.

“ Putting a cost on people’s rights to comment on developments in their area is an undemocratic means of managing differences. These developer’s lobbyists should remember the old saying that ‘a quick fix is not always the best fix’.

“ There are still several reforms that could be fast-tracked now to help fix planning delays, but these reforms are sitting in a go-slow queue. There is still ‘unfinished business’ from several earlier State Government reviews to address bottlenecks in the planning system, and these should receive more of our collective focus.

“ Pushing radical and antagonistic ideas to the front of the queue, without any hard evidence that they will work is just not good enough.

“ Fairer means of addressing issues must be considered as a priority such as higher planning application fees for more complex applications, providing more resources to VCAT, or recognising and addressing the serious shortfall of planning staff in Local Governments?

“Most objectors do not enter into VCAT appeals lightly. There are already costs associated with any objection, and some objectors face paying significant legal costs.

“ The days where VCAT was packed with thousands of vexatious claims are mostly behind us. Objections must be on planning grounds, and strengthening this threshold is important.

“ Conversely, developers build community consultation and appeal costs into their margins, so both parties know the rules and the consequences.

“ While Victoria has one of the most generous appeal rights in the world, this is not in and of itself a bad thing, as the developer’s lobbyists simplistically claim. Maintaining high standards of building and development outcomes in Victoria is a priority.

“ It’s time for the developer’s lobbyists to do the hard yards, to move beyond the quick fix. Antagonising the community will ultimately backfire, “ Cr Iser concluded.

For further information or comment, contact Cr Iser on 0414 959 427.