

28 November 2016

Department of Planning & Environment
Environmental Impact Assessment Improvement Project

sent via email: EIAproject@planning.nsw.gov.au

Business
Council of
Australia



Dear Director, EIA Improvement Project

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission in relation to the Department of Planning & Environment's Environmental Impact Assessment Improvement Project. This is a very important area for regulatory reform. Getting planning systems right will improve Australia's global competitiveness and attract investment in the major projects that our economy needs to grow national income and improve living standards.

The Business Council strongly supports efforts by the New South Wales government to improve its environmental impact assessment processes. An effective Environmental Impact Assessment framework should make it easier to invest in major projects, while maintaining high standards for environment and community protection.

On Friday 25 November, the Business Council released a report titled 'Competitive Project Approvals' report which lays out a set of recommendations for improving development assessment and approval. The report urges all jurisdictions to move in a coordinated way towards adopting a best practice model that emphasises the following key elements:

- More use of strategic planning to weigh up decisions about land use permissibility and conditions, allowing streamlined assessment of individual project applications.
- Strengthened consultation, with the community engaging meaningfully in decision making at the strategic planning, pre-application and project assessment phases.
- A dedicated assessment track for major projects applying a single application, single assessment framework and managed by a lead agency. An umbrella timeframe applies.
- Standardised and risk-based approach to project assessment, with timely provision of technical information by proponents so agencies can complete their responsibilities.
- A single project approval made by a minister, with judicial review only available to proponents and those directly affected by the decision.
- Standardised, targeted conditions of approval with streamlined compliance reporting.
- Ongoing planning system performance monitoring and improvement.

The Environmental Impact Assessment Improvement Project discussion paper puts forward a range of sensible recommendation that closely align with the reforms we have advocated for in our best practice model. In particular, the Business Council strongly supports the initiatives that aim will aim to:

- drive earlier and better engagement with affected communities
- improve the quality and consistency of EIA documents
- develop a standard approach for applying conditions to projects

- provide greater certainty and efficiency around decision-making, including assessment timeframes
- improve the accountability of EIA professionals

We encourage the New South Wales government to closely consider the best practice model put forward in the Business Council's 'Competitive Project Approvals' report, which is attached to this letter.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Westacott', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jennifer A. Westacott

Chief Executive

Attachment/s: Business Council of Australia's Competitive Project Approvals report