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Hobsons Bay City Council submission: Reforming the Victoria Planning Provisions - a discussion paper

Thank you for providing the opportunity for input into proposed reforms to the Victorian Planning Provisions (VPP). Council broadly supports the intent of the proposed reforms and initiatives that aim to improve the function of the VPPs, to clarify planning controls and to improve the useability of the planning scheme for all users.

However, Council has specific comments relating to the proposed reforms to various provisions which are provided in the online survey response. The most significant proposals for Council are:

- a simpler VPP structure with VicSmart assessment built in
- an integrated Planning Policy Framework (PPF)
- potential removal of planning permit triggers for licenced premises and gaming machines

Further integrating VicSmart provisions within the zones and overlays is supported for ease of use. Council does have concerns about how more complex types of development will be conceptualised under a fast track assessment process. Also whether the resourcing implications on Council’s planners of verifying all supporting information has been fully considered.

The creation of an integrated PPF is supported in principle as it will better align and strengthen the role of local policy. However, further details of the process of refining and separating out existing local planning policy content to fit with State policy themes has not been explored in detail. A greater understanding of the likely timeframes and guidance to be provided regarding the implementation aspect of this reform is required.

The potential removal of planning permit triggers for licenced premises and gaming machines is also of significant concern to Council. Council disagrees that existing permit triggers for these uses represent a regulatory duplication and does not support their removal. Council, along with many other municipalities, has adopted policy that aims to guide the permitting of these uses to minimise social harm. Any proposal to remove these provisions from the planning scheme would not be supported.
The discussion paper states that these reforms are aiming to improve the efficient operation of Victoria's planning system and address "complexity, duplication, delays and uncertainty". Council is supportive of these goals. However, the implementation of these reforms and the impacts they might have on Council's planning function could be significant.

It is important that the Victorian Government partners with local government to tailor the operation of the modified provisions to ensure that local policy is strengthened and improved. And that resourcing impacts resulting from these reforms are minimised. As such, Council looks forward to further engagement on the implementation process for these reforms.