



Residents to lose objection rights in new planning laws

Matthew Moore

URBAN AFFAIRS EDITOR

NEW "bold and daring" planning laws will end the practice where complaints from individual residents can block or modify proposed new developments, the state government has revealed.

Within weeks the government will release a revolutionary overhaul of the 33-year-old planning act that the Planning Minister, Brad Hazzard, said will end uncertainty faced by developers who buy land not knowing if their plans will be approved when they submit development applications.

Mr Hazzard said he was determined to end the current practice where individual development applications turn into "site-specific planning wars" and introduce a system where communities agree in advance on building types, heights and densities for a whole area. Once such agreements were reached they would not be varied and developers could get on and build.

"The government's direction will be around giving communities a voice upfront in the stra-

tegic planning of their areas but, having done that strategic planning, it will be a case of full steam ahead," Mr Hazzard said.

With new home construction rates at 50-year lows, Mr Hazzard told a Housing Industry Association breakfast the new laws would give developers the certainty needed to build.

With public trust in the planning system shattered by the previous government, he agreed that it would be a challenge to get enough residents involved in discussions that would determine what developers could build where under the new system.

"We will have to make sure communities switch on at a much earlier stage, make sure they actually listen to the fact there's a strategic plan going on in their area but, having done that, those who provide the housing, those who provide the offices, business spaces should know that if they provide this particular parcel of land they can get on with it," he said.

Developers welcomed Mr Haz-

zard's plans but agreed it would be difficult to get enough community members involved early.

"The core thing the industry is calling for is certainty," the NSW executive director of the association, David Bare, said.

"I agree [getting community involvement] is a challenge, but it's one we have to try to address. I don't claim to have all the answers on how you do it, but the minister also made the point people need to stand up and take notice."

Mr Hazzard said two former NSW government ministers, Tim Moore and Ron Dyer, had given their report to him on the planning system but the government only agreed with parts of it and had decided to delay releasing it until it had finalised its position.

"And I can tell you that when we release both the independent review and the government's response to that it will be bold, it will be daring and in my view make a major difference," Mr Hazzard said.