

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **NSW planning reform welcome, but challenges ahead**

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A White Paper outlining a new planning system for NSW could change Sydney for the better, but only if it is accompanied by community engagement on a scale never before seen in Australia, according to the Grattan Institute.

“This is a bold reform,” says Jane-Frances Kelly, Director of the Grattan Institute Cities Program. “It offers the potential for long-term strategic planning, rather than having Sydney develop in an ad hoc manner, as the result of street-by-street battles over particular projects.”

The White Paper proposes streamlining development approvals so that 80 per cent of applications get the go ahead within 25 days. Residents will be informed, but not consulted about these projects.

“This might sound like it’s denying residents a say” says Ms Kelly, “but if the proposals are implemented successfully, then residents should get more influence, not less”.

“As things stand, the only way residents can shape their neighbourhoods is by objecting to the things they don’t like. The White Paper proposes engaging residents up front, so that they help to write rules on what can get built where.”

“If a project is to get streamlined approval, it will have to comply with local codes devised in consultation with residents. This will include the detail of often contentious issues like overlooking and overshadowing.”

Ms Kelly says that there is a great deal to be gained from speeding up project approvals. “Currently developers face long delays, which adds to the cost of housing. Faster approvals will encourage more investment and increase the supply of dwellings.”

But implementing the White Paper won’t be easy, Ms Kelly says.

“Our research shows that this approach to strategic planning can work. It has been implemented successfully in overseas cities such as Vancouver and Seattle. It will only succeed however, if it is based on community engagement of a quality and scale never before seen in Australia.”

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