

## TECHNOLOGY KEEPS PARTICIPATION IN PLANNING SYSTEM DURING COVID-19

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The NSW planning system will keep moving throughout COVID-19 to keep people in jobs and the economy moving, with all public hearings and meetings to be held online during the pandemic.

The Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2000 has been amended today to set out the minimum requirements for all planning panels holding public hearings and meetings using telephone and video conferencing.

Planning and Public Spaces Minister Rob Stokes said the amendment is vital to clarify the legal requirements for public hearings and meetings during the pandemic and ensure planning bodies can continue to operate without delay.

“A fundamental part of the planning system is ensuring people can have their say and be listened to, and we’re using technology to ensure that continues during the pandemic,” Mr Stokes said.

“We are also committed to ensuring decisions on development applications and planning proposals don’t come to a halt during the pandemic so we can keep our economy moving and keep creating new jobs.

“It’s important we are flexible during these unprecedented times and these changes will ensure the public’s voice continues to be heard on planning matters during this crisis.”

The Department of Planning Industry, and Environment; the Independent Planning Commission; Sydney district and regional planning panels; and local council planning panels will all benefit from the new process for electronic hearings and meetings.

Mr Stokes said the amendments to the Regulation also aligns with the broader digital transformation agenda of the NSW Government.

“This is another example of how we are modernising the planning system and using technology to make it easier for everyone to get on with business,” Mr Stokes said.

“We know our planning system will be a key lever in driving investment in NSW as we come out of this crisis.”

The move follows the announcement of the NSW Government’s new Planning System Acceleration Program, which will support jobs and economic growth during the COVID-19 pandemic. It includes fast-tracking project assessments, a new one-stop shop for industry to progress proposals stuck in the system, clearing the backlog of cases stuck in the Land & Environment Court and investing \$70 million to co-fund vital new community infrastructure in North West Sydney.