

Panels may bypass councils

Planning

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The new NSW Planning Minister, Anthony Roberts, could set up "independent panels" to expedite approvals on housing projects and bypass local councils as he nominated new solutions to boost supply.

In one of his first speeches in the job, Mr Roberts told a Property Council lunch yesterday that the way to beat high house prices in NSW was to increase the supply of housing, cut red tape and to innovate.

He said "independent experts can make technical decisions on whether projects are in line with rules" while local councils focus on local strategies.

"Increasing supply puts down the prices of housing. We need more houses and we have to make simpler and faster," Mr Roberts said.

"We encourage and adopt panels at the local level via a single clear framework ... this framework will set basic rules and the make up of the panels...a draft bill will allow the planning minister to direct local councils to use these local planning panels."

A spokesperson for Mr Roberts said the government has not made a decision on whether panels would override local council approval process or work in tandem with councils. The government was still "assessing responses to the consultation process".

Planning reform in NSW has been in discussion for NSW but industry groups such as Urban Taskforce have called for "bolder" measures to reduce the time taken to approve projects, a move that can quickly increase supply and reduce price rises.

Sydney prices have doubled since 2009 and have reached the highest rate of growth since 2010, CoreLogic said. In the year to March, Sydney house prices have risen 19 per cent.

While the average gross time taken to approve a development application in NSW is 71 days but including rezoning and planning proposals some projects have taken five years to become approved.

The government will also allow developers and builders to submit development plans 24/7.