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OUTCOMES OF NATIONAL FORUM ON PLANNING

The Development Assessment Forum (DAF) has met in Canberra to pursue its agenda on development assessment and planning reform.

The Forum is an independent think tank of planning experts from Federal, State and Local Government and the development industry. Formed in 1999, it provides a unique opportunity for all levels of government to come together in conjunction with the development industry.

DAF Chair, Kristin Brookfield, said that the Forum has been actively working over the last decade to highlight the need for reform in the planning system and the key role for the Commonwealth in achieving this.

“The Forum came together in Canberra and was unanimous in their view that development assessment underpins good strategic planning,” said Ms Brookfield.

“These two aspects are inextricably linked, therefore should both be a focus for the Commonwealth in relation to improving Australia’s planning system.”

The Forum agreed to develop a new work program for 2012-2013 which will focus on:

- Publishing a series of leading practice examples based on actual reforms undertaken by state and local government that incorporate elements of the *DAF Leading Practice Model for Development Assessment* – this work will highlight reforms introduced by the ACT, South Australia and Queensland, along with a focus on the implementation of e-DA and e-planning by several states and territories;
- Developing model codes for ‘Code Assessable’ and ‘Complying Development’ pathways to suit low risk developments – this project will build on the work undertaken by COAG in 2009-10 and will focus on offering states looking to get out of the detail in planning an option; and,
- Reviewing the DAF Leading Practice Model to incorporate new issues that may have impacted on development assessment over recent years, such as planning for adaptation and mitigation and natural hazard management.

“Work is underway on a project to highlight the opportunities to increase the level of private sector involvement in the planning process and establish a set of national guiding principles,” said Ms Brookfield.

The *DAF Leading Practice Model for Development Assessment* has become a model for all states and territories to considering when developing reforms to their planning system, said Ms Brookfield, which has been a key achievement of the Forum.

“The Forum has most recently finalised new Guidelines for Effective Referral of Development Applications, to support the Leading Practice Model,” said Ms Brookfield.

Despite the importance of the Forum, DAF members have expressed concern over the possibility for the Commonwealth to reduce their support for the Forum.

“The Forum has had strong support from the Federal Government to pursue these endeavours and contributed greatly to its work,” concluded Ms Brookfield. “We sincerely hope that the Federal Government will remain a stakeholder in this critical aspect of planning for our cities.”

*Kristin Brookfield is the Senior Executive Director - Building, Development and Environment at the Housing Industry Association and the current Chair of the Development Assessment Forum.
For further comment Kristin can be contacted on (02) 6245 1314 or 0424 106 707.*