



# MEDIA RELEASE

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## Accusations of Planning Approval Delays Unfounded

The Local Government Association of Tasmania (LGAT) rejects criticism of Local Government planning authorities outlined by the Property Council and the Housing Industry Association this week.

LGAT President, Mayor Barry Easter, said apart from showing a lack of understanding of the planning reforms currently underway in Tasmania, assertions about time delays at the hands of councils are inaccurate.

“There have been some quite extraordinary claims made in relation to delays with planning approval and the consequential impact on costs,” Mayor Easter said. “There will always be anecdotal examples of approval processes that have not gone smoothly and caused frustration to the applicant. Similarly, councils could cite many examples where the delay is not of the council’s making, such as the need to follow up with the applicant where there is inadequate or incomplete information”.

Data for Tasmania does not indicate any pattern of delays in planning approvals. On average, all councils are well within the 42 day statutory timeframe. (Measuring Council Performance in Tasmania Data Collection (2008-09) - Local Government Division, Department of Premier and Cabinet).

“It needs to be remembered that the planning system is one in which third parties have extensive rights” Mayor Easter said. “Elected members in councils are subject to a level of public input in their decision-making which cannot be compared with other spheres of Government. Decisions are then open to a series of appeal mechanisms which, if exercised, can be extremely lengthy,” he said.

“Councils are sick and tired of the erroneous and unsubstantiated claims of those organisations whose members have a vested interest in obtaining a decision in their favour.”

“However, the relatively good performance, when compared to other jurisdictions, does not mean Local Government does not think there is room for improvement,” Mayor Easter added.

The Electronic Development Assessment Project (eDA Project) being piloted in Hobart City Council and Northern Midlands provides an electronic application gateway which supports applicants in providing the appropriate information, with the anticipated result being a quicker turnaround of applications.

“It is important too to realise that the Code of Conduct provisions in the *Local Government Act* allow examination only of processes as they relate to the a council’s Code of Conduct, not the planning outcome. Appeals of planning decisions sit with the Resource Management and Appeals Tribunal,” he said.

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The Local Government Association of Tasmania has developed with the University of Tasmania a short planning course for elected members and provides a number of other professional development opportunities, as do individual councils. "Councillors take all their responsibilities very seriously, including their role as a planning authority and it is unfair to keep laying criticism when the system, even as it is, is delivering good results when compared to other states," Mayor Easter said.

Ends....

**For interviews, please contact LGAT President, Mayor Barry Easter  
on 0408 334 936.**