



15 September 2020

Anna Cronin
Chair and Commissioner for Better Regulation
Building Reform Expert Panel
Better Regulation Victoria

By email: anna.cronin@betterreg.vic.gov.au

Dear Commissioner

Submission: Victorian Building Review Early Initiatives

The Urban Development Industry of Australia, Victoria Division (UDIA Victoria) is a non-profit advocacy, research and educational organisation supported by a membership of land use and property development organisations, across the private sector and Victoria’s public service. We are committed to working with both industry and Government to deliver housing, infrastructure, and liveable communities for all Victorians.

UDIA Victoria welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback regarding your current thinking around potential early initiatives for the Victorian Building Review.

This submission is structured around the following key issues, which are discussed in more detail below the summary of key issues:

1. Establish a centralised building consumer information and support service

UDIA Victoria supports initiatives that explore the customer journey through and across Government entities, and which build an understanding of the complexity involved in what can be an overwhelming process.

We agree that, in principle, the ability to provide a centralised support function that can help or direct consumers to the right people in the right Government organisations has merit.

Some of the key issues will be ensuring that any services respond to different socio-economic and ethic mixes of customers and also differencing levels of building literacy. It is suggested that different models be explored, and we would be happy to provide further feedback as the proposals progress.

2. Introduce a new class of building surveyor

UDIA Victoria supports the proposal to introduce a new class of Building Surveyor.

We understand that the new category would cover 4 out of 5 building applications in Victoria. This proposal would reduce the barrier to entry and may help build industry capacity and reliance – particularly in regional areas.

We also understand that this has been trailed and is supported by the Australian Institute of Building Surveyors. We are confident that increased capacity will assist in ensuring delays and costs of building work are minimised across projects and across the industry.

3. Pathway to a project -based insurance in Victoria

We understand that insurance is a vexed and complex issue and we appreciate that need to develop reforms, if possible, with a sense of urgency. Optimised insurance structures are one of the cornerstones for an effective and efficient building industry in Victoria.

Given the significance of this issue, we submit that any proposals should be developed in great depth with both the building industry and the insurers. It will be important that the detailed be worked through well in advance of any potential consultation, legislative and regulatory reform.

However, there may be potential for unintended consequences. There will be a need to understand the different political, economic, legislative, regulatory and cultural contexts when exploring potential application of overseas models.

In-depth discussions with the industry will be important to tease out issues and understand potential implementation risks. That said, if an improved insurance framework can be devised, then we feel that it could be a key micro-economic reform that can boost industry capability and capacity.

4. Promoting consumer awareness about building consultants

UDIA Victoria supports this proposal in principal as it seeks to raise awareness of the role of building consultants and introduce potential for defining and regulating their role. We understand that the project will also include the development of a code of conduct for building consultants and options for registration and licensing.

Given the consequences for consumers if they experience any material issues with their building projects, often which will be their largest single investment of their lives, this seems appropriate and timely.

The consequences for consumers for any uneven standards of advice could be significant – so boosting quality and standards is appropriate. Consultation with affected parties will be paramount to ensure concepts are well developed and any rough edges or unintended consequences addressed.

5. Strengthen the role of the State Building Surveyor and clarify roles and responsibilities of building surveyors

UDIA Victoria supports the development, clarification, and improved structuring of the role of the State Building Surveyor. There is scope to create a more clearly defined role and to strengthen that through regulatory changes that formalise the role.

It is important the role and purpose are defined in more detail in consultation with stakeholders and that any potential for grey areas or where improved clarity is necessary is resolved.

It will be important to hold discussions with Local Council's also around the role of the Municipal Building Control Plan and the potential strengthening of the role of the Municipal Building Surveyor.

6. Support improvements in industry compliance

The UDIA Victoria support the proposal to introduce benchmark / standard checklists for surveyors to use on site. This should assist in achieving consistent outcomes across sites and surveyors over time and should also assist with consistent management of, and over time,



improving in quality control throughout the profession. Deep consultation with a range of practitioners would have merit so that the views of the industry on the detail of the new forms and templates are addressed in the final product.

7. Support training system reforms to increase the pipeline of building surveyors

The UDIA Victoria strongly endorses actions and proposals that can boost training, create bridging courses and general pathways into for new entrants into the industry.

Conclusion

UDIA Victoria congratulates Better Regulation Victoria for their work on the Victorian Building Review Early Initiatives project. As the detail of the projects develop further, we encourage deep and ongoing collaboration around the details which will assist to build confidence and understanding of the proposals across our industry and will also reduce the potential for unintended consequences which might create teething or other issues.

Our members provide in-depth expertise and experience in urban development, and work in an environment of ever-increasing regulation. They strive to increase the quality of urban development, infrastructure, community and livability outcomes.

Please contact me directly at danni@udiavic.com.au to arrange a suitable time to discuss this submission in detail.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Danni Hunter'. The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping underline that loops back under the name.

Danni Hunter
Chief Executive Officer

Urban Development Institute Australia (Victoria)
Level 4, 437 St Kilda Road, Melbourne, 3004
M. 0400 230 787
E. danni@udiavic.com.au