

Media Release



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BLANKET COASTAL SETBACKS FAR TOO RIGID: UDIA

The Urban Development Institute of Australia (UDIA) is concerned that the latest state government revision to the coastal planning policy is too rigid and unnecessarily prescriptive in respect to coastal setbacks.

“The revision released yesterday arbitrarily lifts the horizontal setback for new development on sandy coast from 100m to 150m,” UDIA CEO Debra Goostrey said.

“UDIA believes that more flexibility for developers is required to ensure that land is not unnecessarily sterilised for any form of development.”

“While we don’t disagree that sea level rise needs to be addressed,” Ms Goostrey said. “We do think that there are best practice solutions that could be considered other than just a blanket set back.”

“Alternatives such as sea walls could be implemented in some cases to protect development from a potential rise,” Ms Goostrey said.

“Worldwide new technologies and engineering solutions are popping up all the time and it is important to acknowledge that there could be other ways of protecting new development,” Ms Goostrey said.

“Ultimately it’s the balance that’s important, and whilst we agree that sea level rise should be taken into account, sensible development that relies on good interaction with the coast should not be unnecessarily pushed back by blanket application of a policy,” Ms Goostrey said.

“While the policy does acknowledge that new development applications will be considered ‘on merit’, we are very concerned that planning officers will just look at the numbers and apply the set back at all times,” Ms Goostrey said.

“It would also make sense to consider allowing alternative uses for the sterilized land other than residential uses,” Ms Goostrey says.

“If a developer chooses to use the land for recreation facilities or restaurants, and they are aware there is a risk that in 50 or 100 years that area may be affected by sea level rise, it should be up to them to take that risk, as long as information is provided up front to any future users or lessees of those facilities,” Ms Goostrey said.

“Finally, we do welcome a state policy on sea level rise and the Department of Planning must take a leadership role in implementing it to avoid multiple agencies applying different requirements.”

“We hope that with some fine tuning and flexibility introduced, the policy will also be applied across local governments,” Ms Goostrey said “Currently local governments, even in existing areas, are stymieing development along the coast on an ad hoc basis due to fears in respect to sea level rise.”

“We need a state level consistent approach to development along WA’s coastline.”

End.

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