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## “KNOW YOUR COUNCIL” WEBSITE TAKES GOOD STEP IN IDENTIFYING PLANNING BENCHMARKS

“Master Builders welcomes the Andrews government’s initiative towards making local councils more transparent through the introduction of the “Know Your Council” website, highlighting the importance of benchmarking planning performance, which is of particular concern to the building and construction sector,” Radley de Silva, CEO of Master Builders Association of Victoria said.

Businesses lose around \$180 million each year from unexpected delays in the planning process according to the Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission 2010 report *Local Government for a Better Victoria: An Inquiry into Streamlining Local Government Regulation*.

“We are in favour of enhanced transparency when it comes to residents being able to judge their council’s performance in the service areas on which our communities rely, and we are pleased the website includes the ‘statutory planning’ category,” Mr de Silva said.

“Planning time frames are critical components when it comes to managing costs associated with building,” Mr de Silva said. “Building proposals that are allowed to languish in bureaucracy and become entangled in red tape add unnecessary costs for everyone.”

“Lack of timeliness and prolonged delays continue to be major contributors to worsening housing affordability,” he said.

“Councils cannot be let off the hook for excessive time taken to make a planning decision and adhere to planning strategy for Victoria,” Mr de Silva said. “Planning delays are getting longer, and local issues are prioritised over the needs of the state.”

“Master Builders has been a vocal advocate for eliminating red tape in the planning approvals process; it sticks to everyone and serves no one,” Mr de Silva said.

Only 67 per cent of the total 56,411 planning permit applications received were decided within the statutory time frame according to data from the Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure’s *Planning Permit Activity in Victoria Annual Report 2013-2014*.

Master Builders Victoria also welcomes the news that the Fair Go Rates System was passed through Parliament last night as another step in making councils more accountable to their constituents.

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