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GUIDELINES SHED NEW LIGHT ON APARTMENT DESIGN, BUT STILL IN THE DARK ON HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

“The release by Minister Wynne today of the *Better Apartments for Victorians Design Standards* is the culmination of a lengthy consultation process with the community and industry to improve design standards of apartments for Victorians and to ensure minimum livability requirements like daylight and ventilation,” Master Builders Association of Victoria CEO Radley de Silva said.

“With the rate of population growth in Victoria exceeding that of every other state, and facing the likelihood of increased densification, we need guidelines for the design of Victoria’s apartments to ensure quality and livability standards in our housing stock,” Mr de Silva said.

“We’re encouraged by the Government’s willingness to seek extensive feedback on the draft guidelines and to make pragmatic changes to improve their flexibility and workability. In particular, we are pleased that alternative, flexible solutions have been found, rather than strict standards in respect of apartment sizes or setback requirements.

“However, we don’t wish to see the new rules impede continued investment in, and development of, apartments. We urge councils to treat these guidelines in the spirit in which they are intended – to ensure the policy objectives of the guidelines can be met whilst allowing for flexibility and innovation for continued development and investment in our state.

“Master Builders continues to hold reservations about the impact of the guidelines on housing affordability, particularly considering the cumulative impact of the broad range of provisions that include private open space, accessibility requirements, room sizes and storage requirements. We have consistently argued for a cost-benefit analysis and evidence of demographic needs in order to determine the viability of the guidelines and to prioritise the requirements. The absence of this critical information makes it very difficult to assess the impact these guidelines will have on the cost of building and, ultimately, housing affordability.

“In addition, without clear demographic information, it remains difficult to understand how some of the policy objectives were developed. How, for example, can the need for communal open space for 40 or more apartments or a 50 per cent requirement for accessibility, be justified without understanding where people are going to live now and in the future?

“We call on the Government to monitor the impact of these guidelines on housing affordability and on innovation, and be prepared to make necessary alterations over time, to ensure they operate for the benefit of the Victorian community and the building and construction industry as a whole,” Mr de Silva said.



“Master Builders understands these standards will take effect on 31 March and trust there will be adequate time for projects already underway to incorporate the new legislation,” he said.

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