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### MINISTER EXTENDS IPA PLANNING SCHEME DEADLINE

This week the Minister for Local Government & Planning in Queensland gave a Christmas present to local governments [announcing](#) an extension of the period of time that local governments have to prepare [Integrated Planning Act \(IPA\)](#) planning schemes:

***"Although all councils have started and most are well advanced with their planning, regrettably some will not make the original deadline of 30 March 2003.***

***"This is despite the fact that councils have had five years to fulfill (sic) their obligations under the Integrated Planning Act," she said.***

No doubt, local governments are appreciative of the extra time, but while the Minister may have been surprised that local governments have not been able to make the deadline, most people involved in planning in Queensland are not. Let's look at some of the reasons why.

- There was no consultation with local government on its ability to achieve the set date.
- There was no account taken of the particular planning position or cycle of local governments. In 1997/8, some local governments had just completed major reviews of their planning instruments, setting significant new strategic directions, only to be told they had to turn around and start again.
- There was a significant upheaval to development control procedures introduced in Queensland with the *IPA* in 1998 and considerable resources had to be put to coping with these changes first.
- There have been an extensive number of amendments to the *IPA*, since it commenced in March 1998. In fact the amending pages are now far longer than the *IPA* itself. Coping with the amendments in development control areas has taken considerable resources.
- Only 5 out of 125 local governments have completed *IPA* schemes. Indeed it will only be a handful more that complete by March 2003. One wonders why the Minister would suggest that only *some will not make the original deadline*. It could be suggested that the task might be a tad too difficult to complete in 5 years, when only 4% of local governments have achieved it so far.
- There have been comments by senior Department Local Government & Planning (DLGP) officials that local governments will not get their *IPA* schemes right the first time round and will have to commence a second process once they complete the first. Most local governments would like to do the task once and do it properly, with the clichés *more haste, less speed* and *a job worth doing is worth doing well* seemingly applicable. Local governments in Queensland are accountable to their communities not just in terms of the planning outcomes, but in terms of the financial resources they allocate to planning?
- There was substantial assistance given to one local government by the DLGP in the preparation of its *IPA* scheme. This early scheme, prepared in around 3 years has had many problems. The local government has had to shoulder not only that burden, but also the burden that the DLGP which helped prepare the scheme *disowning* the result.

Now in these circumstances, it is hardly surprising that local governments have struggled to cope. But let's look at how the state is coping with timeframes too. In mid-1999, the DLGP announced a major review of the *IPA*, acknowledging that there were significant teething problems that required address. The review was to be completed by December 1999. This date came and went. June 2000 was the new date, then December 2000, then finally substantial amendments resulting from the review were proposed by the December 2001 *Integrated Planning and Other Legislation Amendment Act (IPOLAA 1)*. But while assented to by parliament, the majority of these amendments have not commenced. In fact the Department now advises that *IPOLAA 2* is coming, replacing *IPOLAA 1*. At the end of 2002, some 3.5 years after the government announced a major review of the *IPA*, it is not complete, local governments do not know when it will be completed let alone what it will contain and Queensland has had a series of major amendments to its planning legislation sitting on the table for 12 months, now apparently to be shelved.

The reputation of the IPA currently suffers from its performance in transitional circumstances and on early versions of planning schemes produced under it. It deserves better. Rushing through planning documents to meet a fixed timeframe will not enhance its reputation. Queensland communities and the IPA deserve well-thought out planning documents that respond to the needs of communities, the environmental capacity to support development and the capacity of the state and local government to supply infrastructure. This takes time and it is pleasing to see that the Minister has at last recognised this.