CONSTRUCTION RED TAPE REMOVED

A comprehensive review of red tape in the construction sector has been completed with recommendations already being put in place.

RED TAPE is estimated to cost more than $350 million every year to the construction and development sector. Executive Director of the Red Tape Abolition Squad Katrina Martin said the report had been embraced within the public sector.

“Within government there is a big degree of acceptance of the report and there is very strong backing from within to implement the report’s recommendations,” she said. “We are waiting to see what the private sector feels about this. But given they were heavily involved in the overall review we expect a high level of acceptance.”

“This was about providing more certainty for development and builders, and streamlining approvals processes.”

The Northern Territory Government established the Construction and Development Advisory Council, comprised of 10 sector representatives from across the NT, to investigate the industry as a whole, and make recommendations to government about reducing red tape in the sector.

“The construction and development sector is a prominent sector in the Northern Territory economy. In 2014 the industry contributed 21 per cent of the total value added to the Territory economy, or about $40 billion, and directly employed 15,000 people.”

One of the key recommendations was greater consistency in decision making across departments.

“We have situations where different arms of government are interpreting the same set of rules or standards differently.” Ms Martin said. “This particularly impacts on costs and timelines at the end of the construction in the certification process. We’ve established a panel with representatives from the certification sector, building sector and government to look at how we can overcome this issue.”

The report also recommended completion of priority strategic land use plans and area plans to provide regulatory and investment certainty.

Since the report’s endorsement by government, the NT Planning Commission has finalised Area Plans for the Darwin Inner and Mid Suburbs and Alice Springs, and the Litchfield Sub-Region Land Use Plan. All three Area Plans, plus the Alice Springs Regional Land Use Plan are currently being processed by the Department of Lands, Planning and the Environment as amendments to the NT Planning Scheme.

The review of building certification system and processes is expected to reduce inconsistency in advice on compliance with Code at the completion of construction. The report also recommended that in relation to WHS regulation, the sector needed to be encouraged to “get out of its own way” by removing unnecessary internal red tape and through NT WorkSafe providing education, support and advice.

NT WorkSafe recently commenced a pilot Small Business Safety Program for an initial six month period. The program is designed to assist small businesses understand and comply with their WHS obligations, and improve their capacity to manage WHS.

The tourism and non-profit sectors are the next focus with the Tourism Advisory Council and NGO Advisory Councils looking at issues including requirement to supply the same information to multiple government agencies, confusing forms, time taken in applying and renewing licences, and unclear requirements can increase the burden of doing business.

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE RED TAPE ABOLITION SQUAD KATRINA MARTIN

The Red Tape Reduction Strategy provides direction and guidance to Northern Territory Government agencies, regulators and the community about how the Government intends to reduce red tape across all agencies and sectors of the economy. The Government is committed to cutting red tape barriers to growth and productivity and achieving a competitive and prosperous economy.

Red Tape Reduction Strategy elements:

- Reduce paperwork and the number of contacts clients need to have with Government
- Make it easier to identify and understand obligations and requirements
- Improve regulator performance
- Target specific sectors

The NT Government has helped reduce land development costs in the Territory by harnessing technology to streamline its interface with the construction industry.

THE new system allows surveyors to apply, complete and submit survey data online and without paper forms or plans.

Survey Approvals Online (SAO), a web gateway developed by the Department of Lands, Planning and the Environment (DLPE), has just been launched, The capability of existing systems for development applications and land titles has been enhanced by linking the new SAO into these systems to create a more connected online land development system for the NT.

Surveyor-General Craig Sandy said the previous process had too much paperwork and was difficult for surveyors.

“We had a process that was predominantly paper based and needed to be modified,” Mr Sandy said.

“When surveyors lodge a survey we asked for 11 different documents from various government departments. This can be around 30 pages of information which surveyors had to do the footwork to gather.

“The system now obtains all the internal Government approvals and documents via the online gateway so there will be significant savings for Surveyors as a result of the reduction in red tape,” he said.

SAO is taking advantage of long term NT Government investment in the Integrated Land Information System (ILIS) to create a single source of land parcel data and link each process and transaction.

The system has built-in transparency to allow land developers to now track the progress of development application through to issue of title.

SURVEYING MADE SIMPLE

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE RED TAPE ABOLITION SQUAD KATRINA MARTIN

Surveyor-General Craig Sandy