

The proposed building height controls also exceed what is considered reasonable or likely in rural or regional towns. For example, the Substantial Change Zone requires a minimum height of four storeys if Council wishes to specify a maximum building height. This may be suitable for locations in Melbourne, but is clearly not appropriate in residential areas of the Shire where a double-storey height is often the desired maximum. Setting such height limits could also potentially lead to a loss of diversity in built form and a repetitive streetscape.

Implementation of the new residential zones

Council suggests that greater detail and clear definition is needed on the level of strategic justification required to implement or translate into the new zones. This should form part of the draft final zones report, which is to be released for further public comment.

The DPCD should make certain that appropriate assistance is provided to all Councils, especially rural and regional Councils that often lack resources, to implement the new zones into planning schemes. It is considered that funding assistance should be provided and clear timelines set for implementation. This is critical to Council's budget process and to enable implementation of the new residential zones in a timely manner that does not significantly affect Council's strategic planning programme. This would also ensure improvements are made on the process undertaken by Councils that were required to translate into the new rural zones.

The DPCD should consider making a presentation and undertaking consultation in every rural shire to explain the purpose and implementation process of the new zones. Councils would be able to support these activities by providing a venue and assisting with dates, invitations and promotion.

Proposed notice and review provisions

Council has significant concerns with the proposed removal of notice and review provisions in the new residential zones. The proposal to exempt from notice and review at VCAT any development that meets specified ResCode standards is not supported. On the surface this may be seen as a way to streamline development approvals and the planning process. However, Council has concerns that this will create further tension in the community and difficulties in implementation and planning permit assessment.

The performance requirements of ResCode, such as neighbourhood character, are often quite subjective and open to interpretation. It is therefore difficult to see how the exemption system will be workable for Council and the community.