

TOWN PLANNING APPEALS TRIBUNAL

Statement by Minister for Planning and Infrastructure

MS A.J. MacTIERNAN (Armadale - Minister for Planning and Infrastructure) [12.10 pm]: I am pleased to advise the House that the Planning Appeals Amendment Bill 2002 has been proclaimed and that the new Town Planning Appeals Tribunal has been open for business since Easter. The new tribunal is already showing every indication that it will be an effective institution.

New appeal regulations have been gazetted and the inaugural president of the tribunal, Mr Peter McGowan, has developed new rules. From next week, the president will hold the position full time. Joining the tribunal are two full-time senior members; namely, Ms Belinda Moharich, who will be the principal registrar of the new tribunal; Mr Jim Jordan, who was previously the director of the appeals committee office; and a pool of five sessional senior members and three sessional ordinary members.

Point of Order

Mr P.D. OMODEI: I cannot hear what the minister is saying.

The SPEAKER: That is because members are talking among themselves. It is often difficult to hear what members are saying from certain parts of the Chamber. If members desire to speak to one another, they must do so without interfering in the speech of the member who has the floor.

Statement Resumed

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN: The new tribunal is proving to be more flexible and effective than the current tribunal. Most appeals have fallen into the simple or class 1 category, and are therefore being heard by single members, enabling resources to be freed up and appeals to be listed more quickly.

Given that ministerial appeals were abolished upon proclamation, I have referred a total of 75 appeals to the new tribunal, which will be listed for their first hearings between 20 May and 10 June. Ten new appeals have been lodged since proclamation, and all are listed for case management conferences over the next week when it is expected they will be listed for hearing. The first full class 1 appeal hearing will take place on 22 May 2003.

Of the appeals inherited from the old tribunal, the more complex class 2 appeals, the parties to which are ready to proceed, have been listed for hearings between now and September. The rate of listing will increase further when more hearing rooms become available in September.

For the time being, the registry of the tribunal will remain in the Kings Building, which is located at 517 Hay Street. However, in mid June the tribunal will move to new premises at 12 St Georges Terrace. These new premises are intended to become part of the premises of the State Administrative Tribunal.

The president of the new tribunal is committed to the tribunal operating in a manner that resolves appeals more promptly and fairly than the current dual system. Over the coming months, I expect that the tribunal will continue to improve its procedures in response to the needs of its users. I am confident that by the end of the year, it will be recognised as an effective and valuable institution, the proven merits of which will be inherited by its successor, the State Administrative Tribunal.