Advocacy letter

Planning scheme amendments and their impact on Knox

The following letter has been sent to these ministers:

- Premier Ben Carroll
- Minister Jackson Taylor
- Minister Daniela De Martino
- Minister Kim Wells
- Minister Sonya Kilkenny
- Minister David Southwick

7 October 2026

The Hon. Ben Carroll MP
Premier of Victoria
1 Treasury Place
Melbourne VIC 3002

By email: premier@dpc.vic.gov.au; ben.carroll@parliament.vic.gov.au

Dear Premier

Re: Concerns regarding recent planning scheme amendments and their impact on Knox City Council

I am writing on behalf of Knox City Council to express our significant concerns regarding the volume and pace of recent planning reforms notified to Victorian councils, the lack of consultation accompanying these changes, and their potential impacts on local communities, including the Knox community.

Since 1 September 2026, Council has been notified of 10 separate Ministerial Planning Scheme amendments to the Knox Planning Scheme. These amendments have varying implications for how Council assesses planning applications and, collectively, represent a substantial change to the planning framework within which we operate.

While Council recognises the importance of improving the planning system and facilitating housing delivery, we are concerned that the current approach to reform does not provide sufficient opportunity for councils or communities to understand, consider and respond to changes that may have significant and lasting consequences for local amenity and liveability.

Limited opportunity for consultation and implementation

The Minister for Planning can gazette each amendment within 30 days of its notification. This provides Council with very limited time to understand the implications of the changes, consider their local impacts and implement the necessary changes to systems, processes and resources.

Of particular concern is that these amendments have been notified without prior consultation with Council or the Knox community. This limits our ability to provide local knowledge and practical feedback before changes are introduced, despite Council's responsibility for administering the planning scheme and responding to the needs of our community.

Impacts of amendments VC319 and VC314

Two amendments illustrate the scale of the concerns facing Council.

Amendment VC319 expands the VicSmart assessment pathway to include applications for up to four dwellings on a lot in most residential zones, provided specified planning standards are met. This represents a significant change, given that developments of up to four dwellings account for approximately 77 per cent of the multi-unit applications received by Council.

While the amendment aims to streamline planning decisions, it also removes opportunities for third-party notice and appeal for applications assessed through this pathway. Eligible applications must be determined within 10 business days, and Council cannot elect to assess them through the standard planning permit process.

These changes significantly reduce opportunities for residents to have their views on developments in their neighbourhoods considered. They also place considerable pressure on Council's planning officers to assess applications within a substantially reduced timeframe. In addition, the significantly lower fees associated with VicSmart applications will reduce Council's planning revenue, despite the increased administrative demands and the need to maintain appropriate assessment processes.

Amendment VC314 changes the definition of garden area by removing the minimum one-metre dimension requirement and allowing uncovered driveways and uncovered parking areas to be included in the calculation. This further limits Council's ability to secure meaningful garden areas and green space in new developments and raises concerns about the cumulative effects on neighbourhood character, vegetation, residential amenity and liveability.

While these amendments have different objectives, both have the potential to significantly affect the quality of new residential development and Council's ability to respond to local circumstances.

Implications for the Knox community and Council

Taken together, the recent reforms raise broader concerns about the future of local planning and the balance between state-wide planning objectives and local decision-making.

The changes risk:

- reducing opportunities for residents to participate in decisions that affect their neighbourhoods;
- limiting Council's ability to consider local context and protect neighbourhood amenity;
- placing additional pressure on planning teams through accelerated assessment timeframes;

- creating financial and administrative challenges for Council, including significantly reduced planning application revenue within an already challenging rate capped fiscal environment;
- compromising Council's ability to ensure new development contributes to the long-term liveability of Knox.

Council is concerned that the cumulative impact of these reforms may not be adequately understood or accounted for in their implementation, particularly in the absence of meaningful consultation with local government and the communities it represents.

Council supports a planning system that facilitates appropriate housing and delivers timely decisions. However, these objectives must be balanced with meaningful community participation, sound planning outcomes and the practical capacity of councils to administer the system effectively.

We urge the Victorian Government to reconsider its approach to the introduction of these reforms and to establish a more collaborative process with local government, allowing sufficient time for consultation, implementation and assessment of their local impacts.

We request a written response addressing the concerns raised in this letter and outlining how the Government intends to manage the impacts of these reforms on Knox and its residents, including how the Government intends to communicate the changes to the community.

Yours sincerely



Cr Paige Kennett
Mayor

Enquiries: Jonathan McNally, Director City Liveability
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