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MEDIA RELEASE

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FLEXIBLE REGULATIONS WILL SEE A \$3.1 BILLION PRODUCTIVITY BOOST

An additional \$3.1 billion in economic benefits are expected to be realised over the coming decade across NSW following permanent adoption of many initiatives introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Treasurer Matt Kean said most of the temporary regulations introduced to support businesses and individuals due to COVID-19 had proven to be both popular and effective and, after consultation and evaluation, it made sense to retain them.

“From allowing greater use of food trucks and dark kitchens, to giving workers more flexibility in how they take long service leave – these measures have been providing the extra support many businesses needed during COVID-19,” Mr Kean said.

“By keeping these changes, we are allowing more paper processes to be handled digitally, more meetings to occur remotely, greater flexibility for home business operations and keeping people in jobs.

“Analysis shows the net economic benefit over 10 years, as a result of these regulation reforms, is \$3.1 billion in flexibility and time savings, with increased long service leave flexibility for workers delivering \$1.9 billion of that.”

Minister for Planning and Public Spaces Rob Stokes said the planning system had been an enabler for productivity and growth during the pandemic.

“The disruption of the pandemic allowed us to experiment with how the planning system can work better to drive productivity. We’re now securing those benefits in perpetuity,” Mr Stokes said.

“We know the pandemic has spurred new ways of living, working and playing, and the planning system must support those shifts and allow our communities to live better lives.”

NSW Productivity Commissioner Peter Achterstraat AM recommended in his White Paper this year that the temporary measures brought in as a result of COVID be evaluated with a view to being made permanent.

“Earlier this year the NSW Government agreed to extend temporary COVID-19 regulatory reforms for 12 months, evaluate the reforms and keep those shown to have a net public benefit,” Mr Achterstraat said.

“It’s now been proven many of the changes have positive impacts. This is how good regulatory reform works – having an experimental and flexible approach to regulation can bring positive change for the community.”

The temporary changes made permanent include:

- More flexibility for strata owners’ corporations, community land associations and incorporated associations to meet and vote electronically;
- Allowing digital display of planning documents;
- Allowing planning panels and the Independent Planning Commission to hold public hearings and meetings online or in person;
- Allowing lower-risk licensed venues, including restaurants and cafés, to sell takeaway and home delivery alcohol under the *Liquor Act 2007*, subject to limitations including purchase with a meal and restrictions on amount purchased;
- Greater flexibility for employees and businesses to access long service leave under the *Long Service Leave Act 1955*; and
- Allowing audio link or audio-visual link to conduct interviews and questioning remotely under the *Fisheries Management Act 1994*, *Mining Act 1992*, *Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997*, *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*, *Crown Land Management Act 2016*, and the *Water Management Act 2000*.

The NSW Productivity Commission’s White Paper can be read here: <https://www.productivity.nsw.gov.au/white-paper>

More information available here: <https://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/COVID19>

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