On 29 November Victorian Minster for Planning – Matthew Guy announced government plans to establish a Victorian Building Authority (VBA) combining the functions of the Building Commission, Plumbing Industry Commission and Architects Registration Board.

“The functions of the Building Commission, Plumbing Industry Commission and the Architects Registration Board will be absorbed into the new authority, which will provide a single point of governance for builders, plumbers and architects.

These and other measures are designed to deliver consistency of outcomes for consumers, focus on dispute prevention rather than dispute resolution, raise safety and technical standards as well as practitioner capability and improved regulation enforcement.”

This announcement also confirmed that Government has accepted all findings of the 2011 Victorian Auditor Generals Office’s (VAGO) report which identified significant concerns regarding the application and administration of Victoria’s building approval system.
Government acceptance of the recommendations was supported by FPA Australia as our members are involved in design, installation, inspection, commissioning and maintenance of fire protection systems and equipment and rely heavily on consistent application of regulatory requirements for these activities.

Improvements in education and enforcement of requirements throughout industry are essential to realise health, safety and amenity objectives for the community and responding fire fighters. FPA Australia welcomes the Governments reform agenda which focusses on these aspects.

FPA Australia seeks the opportunity to engage with Government and provide submissions to the planned industry consultation regarding the implementation of these proposed changes. FPA Australia CEO, Scott Williams stated that:

“FPA Australia welcomes the establishment of the VBA and governments acceptance of the recommendations in the Victorian Auditor General Office’s report, however stakeholder consultation on the implementation of these reforms must include the fire protection sector which represents a significant portion of regulated building activity.”

“Activities undertaken by FPA Australia’s Victorian members are currently influenced by both the Building Commission and the Plumbing Industry Commission and accordingly the Association is well placed to provide meaningful input to the formation and focus of the proposed Victorian Building Authority.”

Mr. Williams further added that, “Fire protection requirements included in the current regulations are numerous and complex. FPA Australia considers that any enforcement and auditing actions proposed to be applied by the VBA must go beyond auditing of administrative activities and investigate compliance with technical requirements targeting high risk elements in order to deliver true reform outcomes.”

Victorian Ombudsman –Own motion investigation into the governance and administration of the Victorian Building Commission – December 2012

The Victorian Ombudsman report dated 10 December 2012, has highlighted concerns regarding the registration process administered by the Building Practitioners Board and, governance and administration and recruitment activities of the Building Commission.
FPA Australia considers that the report by the Ombudsman documenting his investigation, has revealed a range of activities that indicate that the reform agenda proposed Government is necessary to restore industry and community confidence in the administration and governance of regulatory requirements in this industry.

The Association remains supportive of strong leadership from the regulator(s) and expects that the use of public funds, particularly those received from the building permit levy system, should be used appropriately to support compliance through enforcement focussed on education and consistent understand and application of the core regulatory requirements and not used for complimentary initiatives or simply transferred to consolidated revenue.

FPA Australia expects to provide input to Government in support of the focus of the proposed VBA and to identify the key issues of concern impacting on community safety in the built environment in Victoria.

More detailed information about the new arrangements and to Ombudsmans report is available from the following websites:

Department of Planning and Community Development


Victorian Ombudsman


ENDS

MEDIA ENQUIRES

For interviews with FPA Australia CEO Scott Williams please contact Joseph Keller, FPA Australia Communications Manager.

T 03 9890 1544 E joseph.keller@fpaa.com.au  M 0419 173 485