

AUSTRALIAN LEGAL NEWS

Key Findings Suppressed in NSW Toll Roads Review, Report Co-Author Claims

Former ACCC head Allan Fels has accused the NSW government of suppressing critical parts of his review into Sydney's toll roads, particularly financial modelling revealing toll cost growth.

Bureaucrats blocked the release of this information, citing legal risks. The review, commissioned to lower toll prices, recommends government control of toll pricing. Meanwhile, rising toll costs have prompted truck drivers to avoid toll roads, increasing congestion in suburban areas.

Victorian Government Plans to Fast-Track Regional Housing with Fewer Appeal Rights

The Victorian government plans to fast-track housing construction in regional areas, aiming for 425,600 new homes by 2051. Housing Minister Harriet Shing suggested limiting appeal opportunities to speed up development, granting the planning minister more decision-making power. Concerns have arisen about local communities losing their rights to object, with critics citing inadequate planning resources as a bigger issue. The plan also targets higher-density development in regional centres and activity hubs across Melbourne.

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NSW Introduces Landmark Reforms to Protect Renters' Rights

NSW has passed the Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill 2024, banning no-grounds evictions and requiring landlords to provide valid reasons for ending leases. The bill also limits rent increases to once per year, allows renters to request pets (with specific refusal grounds), and prohibits background check fees. The Tenants' Union of NSW welcomed the changes but warned of potential landlord loopholes.

Media Concerns: New Privacy Laws May Limit Public Interest Journalism

Australian media groups warn that proposed Privacy Act amendments could restrict public interest journalism by limiting disclosures on high-profile figures. Despite aiming to protect privacy, the laws may hinder reporting on important political and social issues. The coalition "Australia's Right To Know" is pushing for broader exemptions to prevent misuse of the laws for silencing criticism.