



Planning Reform

Policy Background

- Technical standards used for the construction of housing across Australia operate through a national building code. Yet each State and Territory presently operates under planning legislation which is not nationally consistent.
- The impact of state based planning legislation and local housing policies and codes on the housing sector is becoming increasingly evident.
- The cost of delays and the growing gap between the demand for, and the supply of, housing is in many cases directly related to inefficiencies in planning systems.
- State and local governments are seeking to address emerging issues, including some technical construction aspects, through their planning systems, rather than seek changes to the national building code.
- Improvements in the planning system can significantly reduce approval delays and therefore improve the supply and delivery of housing to the market at an affordable price.

Policy Issues

- Planning systems around Australia are characterised by complex and varied zoning controls, definitions and requirements in different council areas.
- The planning process is increasingly becoming complicated and unpredictable with varied requirements for housing, depending on its location.
- Growing planning systems are characterised by their complexity, lengthy approval times and requirements for design compliance at significant cost to industry and the home buying public including:
 - a significant increase in the number of proposals that now require planning approval;
 - greater opportunity being afforded to third parties to influence the decision making process;
 - an increase in the number of referral agencies and an increase in the time taken to process referrals;
 - a myriad of "additional" issues imposed through local policies and codes coming into play-which at best are subjective and un-costed;
 - government's continued monopoly in undertaking all development assessment work, accompanied by a shortage of skilled planning and associated staff, particularly at the local government level; and,
 - the rigid application of development standards that generally discourage housing mix and choice and limits the ability of the market to deliver accommodation types that suit demand.
- If the housing industry is to operate successfully in Australia, red tape and bureaucratic differences in the planning system need to be slashed.
- The core of reform should be based around predictability with the ability to clearly demonstrate that a proposal meets performance guidelines, legislated standards or codes.

HIA's Policy Position on Planning Reform

HIA supports:

- Consistent planning regulation, with standardised approaches to planning scheme layouts, appropriate levels of assessment for development types and clear frameworks for the introduction of changes which affect building fabric and design.
- Planning performance being subject to a continual benchmark program that binds all levels of government to ongoing and consistent planning practice improvements - including the potential for them to be tied to national competition policy payments.
- Mandatory Regulatory Impact Statements including a comprehensive cost benefit analysis with a particular emphasis on housing affordability by any level of government seeking to introduce new planning regulation, recognising that there are can be economic, social and environmental benefits from a proposal, the cost benefit analysis must be positive for the new planning laws to be introduced.
- Housing affordability as an object in all state planning legislation and as an objective in all local and regional planning schemes.
- Streamlining of planning systems which includes the use of standardised planning requirements, prescribed third party notification and processes for referrals, as of right approvals on complying residential approvals and the involvement of the private sector in the planning approvals process including necessary engineering approvals required following planning approval.

HIA does not support:

- Technical regulation introduced through planning systems in particular, prescribed minimum requirements, which should be applied through the BCA or which are in conflict with existing standards in the BCA and Australian Standards.