

MEDIA RELEASE



31 August 2021

Statement from HIA regarding ongoing lockdown and safety

The ACT Government has taken the decision to reopen commercial and civil construction sites in Canberra from lockdown, yet ignored residential building – to the detriment of many thousands of small businesses in the Territory.

The Housing Industry Association (HIA) fundamentally rejects this approach, as we argue that detached housing construction and renovations have operated safely across the nation and responded quickly to the risk of COVID last year. I have attached for your benefit, an outline of the kind of measures that are, and have been in place in other jurisdictions, and that we proposed to the ACT Government in week 1 of this lockdown.

We don't accept the characterisation by the Chief Minister that the current approach is based on risk, as residential sites have proved their capacity to operate safely throughout the pandemic. Last week the ACT Government released a set of guidelines for the reopening of sites. In it, the government has made the following statement:

'Large and complex building and construction sites present a greater risk of coronavirus (COVID- 19) transmission in the event of a confirmed case on site. Larger sites involve more workers on site, high volumes of workers working in reasonably close proximity to one another, or workplaces which may have difficulty in confining workers and teams to specific areas of the site, site amenities and other common areas.'

This statement clearly shows the difference between a large commercial site and detached housing. HIA is not arguing that it is a choice of one sector or another – all sites need to manage the risk of COVID and housing sites present a much lower risk of transmission on site with much fewer workers.

We are stating simply that it can't be justified that one sector is 'safer' than another, and should therefore be given preferential treatment to reopen. Home owners and home builders need certainty now about when they can get back on site.

HIA calls on the ACT Government to reopen all sites on Friday 3 September.

For further information please contact:

Greg Weller, Executive Director ACT/Southern NSW

0438 846 752