



# **HIA Submission**

## **Draft North Queensland Regional Plan and Infrastructure Plan**

**DEPARTMENT OF STATE DEVELOPMENT,  
INFRASTRUCTURE AND PLANNING**

**25 SEPTEMBER 2026**



## Contents page

|                                                                            |           |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>About HIA .....</b>                                                     | <b>2</b>  |
| <b>Introduction.....</b>                                                   | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>1. Dwelling Supply Targets .....</b>                                    | <b>4</b>  |
| 1.1 Total Dwelling Targets .....                                           | 4         |
| 1.2 Limited recognition of housing choice and increasing flexibility ..... | 5         |
| <b>2. Proposed Urban Footprint .....</b>                                   | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>3. Planned and Approved Land Supply Targets .....</b>                   | <b>7</b>  |
| <b>4. Development and Land Supply Monitoring .....</b>                     | <b>8</b>  |
| <b>5. Identifying Priority Actions and an Implementation Plan .....</b>    | <b>10</b> |



## About HIA

As the voice of the residential building industry, HIA represents a membership of 60,000 across Australia. Our members are involved in delivering more than 170,000 new homes each year through the construction of new housing estates, detached homes, low and medium-density housing developments, apartment buildings and completing renovations on Australia's over 11 million existing homes.

HIA members comprise a diverse mix of businesses, including volume builders delivering thousands of new homes a year through to small and medium home builders delivering one or more custom built homes a year. From sole traders to multi-nationals, HIA members construct over 85 per cent of the nation's new building stock.

The residential building industry is one of Australia's most dynamic, innovative and efficient service industries and is a key driver of the Australian economy. The residential building industry has a wide reach into the manufacturing, supply and retail sectors.

Contributing over \$100 billion per annum and accounting for 5.8 per cent of GDP, the residential building industry employs over one million people, representing tens of thousands of small businesses and over 200,000 sub-contractors reliant on the industry for their livelihood.

HIA exists to service the businesses it represents, advocate for the best possible business environment for the building industry and to encourage a responsible and quality driven, affordable residential building development industry. HIA's mission is to:

*"promote policies and provide services which enhance our members' business practices, products and profitability, consistent with the highest standards of professional and commercial conduct."*

HIA develops and advocates policy on behalf of members to further advance new home building and renovating, enabling members to provide affordable and appropriate housing to the growing Australian population. New policy is generated through a grassroots process that starts with local and regional committees before progressing to the National Policy Congress by which time it has passed through almost 1,000 sets of hands.

Policy development is supported by an ongoing process of collecting and analysing data, forecasting, and providing industry data and insights for members, the general public and on a contract basis.

The association operates offices in 22 centres around the nation providing a wide range of advocacy, business support services and products for members, including legal, technical, planning, workplace health and safety and business compliance advice, along with training services, contracts and stationery, industry awards for excellence, and member only discounts on goods and services.



## Introduction

HIA welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the Draft North Queensland Regional Plan and Infrastructure Plan and supports the Queensland Government's ongoing review of regional plans across the State.

As is well documented, most parts of Queensland continue to face significant housing affordability and supply challenges. Low rental vacancy rates, rising housing costs and strong population growth have increased pressure on households, businesses and local communities. Addressing these challenges will be critical to supporting economic growth, workforce attraction and the delivery of major investment opportunities across the region.

Encouragingly, the Queensland Government has implemented several important initiatives aimed at improving housing supply. In particular, the Residential Activation Fund represents a nation-leading commitment to supporting infrastructure delivery that unlocks new residential land and accelerates housing development. These measures recognise the important role that development-ready and infrastructure-serviced land plays in delivering new housing supply.

HIA supports the NQ Plan's objectives of improving housing supply, coordinating infrastructure delivery and providing greater certainty about future growth. However, HIA has identified several matters which, if addressed, would strengthen the ambition of the Plan, improve its implementation, and better align the framework with the policy settings needed to improve housing supply and affordability across North Queensland.

The key matters raised in this submission include:

- 1. Dwelling supply targets** - Ensuring minimum dwelling targets require local governments to plan for increased housing delivery above recent levels of activity and address existing shortages and current demand.
- 2. Proposed Urban Footprint** - Clarifying the purpose and benefits of the Urban Footprint and ensuring it does not unnecessarily constrain residential land supply, subdivision opportunities or future investment.
- 3. Modernising the Regional Plan** - Introducing stronger monitoring of housing supply and the entire development pipeline, identifying barriers to housing delivery, and ensuring zoning and planning assumptions reflect market realities.
- 4. Implementation and delivery** - Establishing a clear implementation plan, actions and timeframes to support the Plan's objectives, particularly the significant increase in infill housing anticipated in Townsville, including addressing known regulatory barriers such as combined drain policies.

HIA considers the Draft North Queensland Regional Plan presents an important opportunity to modernise regional planning settings and move towards a more evidence-based, best-practice regulatory framework. Ensuring the Plan remains focused on enabling housing supply, supporting infrastructure delivery and removing barriers to development will be critical to improving affordability, meeting future housing demand and maximising North Queensland's economic potential.

# 1. Dwelling Supply Targets

## 1.1 Total Dwelling Targets

The Draft North Queensland Regional Plan (Table 3) identifies a requirement for an additional 20,651 dwellings by 2046. This equates to an average annual dwelling requirement of:

- 826 dwellings per annum under the medium-series dwelling supply target.
- 1,069 dwellings per annum under the high-series dwelling supply target.

Of some concern the Plan also identifies an ambition to increase housing delivery to 1,200 dwellings per annum, creating an inconsistency between the Plan's stated housing ambition and its dwelling supply targets.

However, of more concern HIA has identified that the Draft North Queensland Regional Plan establishes dwelling supply targets that do not adequately respond to the scale of the region's housing challenges or reflect recent levels of housing activity.

ABS building approval data indicates that recent dwelling approvals already exceed both the minimum and high-series dwelling supply targets identified in the Draft Regional Plan. As shown in Figure 1, dwelling approvals reached 1,227 dwellings in the most recent financial year, compared with the Plan's minimum dwelling target of 826 dwellings per annum (Table 1 of NQ Regional Plan).

This suggests that current housing demand and industry capacity are already operating at levels above the assumptions underpinning the Regional Plan. At a time when North Queensland continues to experience housing affordability and supply pressures, HIA is concerned that dwelling targets set below recent levels of housing delivery may not provide sufficient impetus for local governments to plan for the scale of housing growth needed over coming decades.

The Draft Plan acknowledges the need to accommodate approximately 60,000 additional residents by 2046 while supporting a growing workforce. In this context, HIA considers regional planning should require local governments to plan for growth beyond recent levels of activity, rather than establishing targets that have already been exceeded by the market.

In HIA's view, regional plans should set ambitious but achievable housing targets that support increased housing supply, ensure adequate land and infrastructure capacity is available to respond to future demand, and in doing so maintain affordability.



**Figure 1: ABS Building Approval Data for North Queensland vs Draft Regional Plan Target**



## 1.2 Limited recognition of housing choice and increasing flexibility

HIA acknowledges the commercial viability challenges associated with delivering infill and higher-density housing in many North Queensland markets. While high-rise apartments and other intensive apartment forms of housing will remain unviable, there remains an opportunity to encourage a broader range of housing choices, including smaller lots, dual occupancies, townhouses, terrace housing and land lease communities.

Townsville City Council has introduced infrastructure charge concessions and other incentives to encourage infill development. However, these initiatives have not yet resulted in an increase in the delivery of alternative housing forms.

HIA recommends the Regional Plan incorporate housing diversity objectives to support a greater mix of housing types over time. This would encourage local governments to review and update planning schemes to facilitate a broader range of housing products, remove unnecessary regulatory barriers, and ensure development controls better reflect market demand, changing demographics and contemporary housing preferences.

Importantly, increasing housing diversity should focus on enabling additional housing choice rather than restricting greenfield development. A more flexible planning framework can support incremental increases in alternative housing forms while continuing to recognise the important role detached housing will play in meeting future housing demand across North Queensland.

An initial step would be further reducing the minimum allotment size in the Low Density Residential Zone or the extent of the Low Density Residential Zoning in Townsville.

| Recommendations for Housing Supply Targets                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>HIA recommends:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>1. Increase the minimum dwelling supply targets</b> - Ensuring minimum dwelling targets require local governments to plan for increased housing delivery above recent levels of activity to address current shortages and meet future demand.</li><li><b>2. Housing diversity objectives</b> - Incorporate housing diversity objectives and implementation actions that encourage local governments to facilitate a broader range of housing types, including smaller lots, duplexes, townhouses and land lease communities, while recognising the ongoing importance of greenfield housing supply.</li></ol> |



## 2. Proposed Urban Footprint

HIA has concerns with the introduction of the proposed Urban Footprint and is unclear what specific issue it is intended to address in the North Queensland context.

The concept appears to be drawn from the South East Queensland Regional Plan, where the Urban Footprint plays a significant growth management role and is supported by policies that generally restrict urban development and subdivision outside the designated footprint. The Draft North Queensland Regional Plan does not propose similar restrictions, creating uncertainty as to the intended purpose and practical effect of the Urban Footprint.

At present, it appears the primary outcome may be to signal to the market that land outside the Urban Footprint has less long-term development potential. This risks influencing landowner, developer and infrastructure investment decisions without providing a clear planning, housing or infrastructure benefit. Additionally, the imposition of an Urban Footprint will influence property values via the creation of an artificial threshold on land supply. This ultimately drives up the value of land inside the footprint.

Given the ongoing housing supply and affordability challenges facing North Queensland, HIA is concerned that the introduction of an Urban Footprint will create unnecessary uncertainty around future residential land supply and growth opportunities. If it is intended as a strategic planning guide only, the Plan should explicitly confirm that it will not restrict future subdivision, residential development or the identification of new growth areas.

### Recommendations for Urban Footprint

HIA recommends:

- 3. Urban Footprint** – Remove the proposed urban footprint or clarify its purpose and how it will increase housing supply and new development opportunities.

HIA is concerned that Land Use Strategy 1.2 seeks to focus the majority of new housing within the proposed Urban Footprint and Regional Township Footprints despite little evidence of urban sprawl or other issues. Ultimately, this approach could cause approval delays or discourage new investment in housing altogether.



### 3. Planned and Approved Land Supply Targets

The NQ Regional Plan should establish clear planned and approved land supply targets to support the delivery of future housing needs. While dwelling targets identify the quantity of housing required, land supply targets provide an important measure of whether sufficient development opportunities exist to achieve those outcomes.

A well-functioning housing market requires a continuous pipeline of land progressing through the planning and development process. Without sufficient planned and approved land, housing delivery can be constrained by delays in rezoning, development approvals, infrastructure provision or servicing requirements, increasing the risk of future housing shortages and affordability pressures.

Consistent with the approach adopted in South-East Queensland, HIA considers local governments should be required to maintain a minimum of 15 years of planned residential land supply and 4 years of approved residential land supply. These benchmarks would help ensure adequate development opportunities are available to respond to future demand and provide greater certainty for infrastructure planning and investment. Facilitating multiple opportunities also ensures competition in the market place, assisting to put a cap on price growth.

Where planned or approved land supply falls below the required benchmarks, councils should be required to identify additional development opportunities through planning scheme amendments, rezonings and other planning initiatives.

| Recommendations for Planned and Approved Land Supply                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>HIA recommends:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>4. 15 years of planned residential land supply</b> - Require local governments to maintain a minimum of 15 years of planned residential land supply.</li><li><b>5. 4 years of approved residential land supply</b> - Require local governments to maintain a minimum of 4 years of approved residential land supply.</li><li><b>6. Interventions when planned or approved land supply falls below benchmarks</b> – Councils should be required to identify additional development opportunities through planning scheme amendments, rezonings and other initiatives when falling benchmarks.</li></ol> |



## 4. Development and Land Supply Monitoring

Regional plans should establish clear monitoring and accountability mechanisms to ensure housing targets and land supply objectives are achieved over time.

HIA considers that regular housing supply monitoring should form a core component of all regional plans. Governments should routinely monitor and publicly report on residential land supply at each stage of the development pipeline, including:

- Residentially zoned land (prior to subdivision approval)
- Subdivision planning approval
- Subdivision works (operational works) approval
- Subdivision completion approval
- Registration of title

Monitoring should extend beyond land supply to provide a complete picture of housing delivery performance, including housing approvals, commencements, completions, feasible housing capacity, realisable housing capacity.

Importantly, Queensland has historically been a national leader in growth monitoring through the former Land Supply and Development Monitoring (LSDM) program, which provided detailed information on residential land supply and development activity across the State. However, public reporting ceased in 2021 despite the growing importance of housing supply data in responding to housing shortages. Sadly, Queensland is now well behind other states.

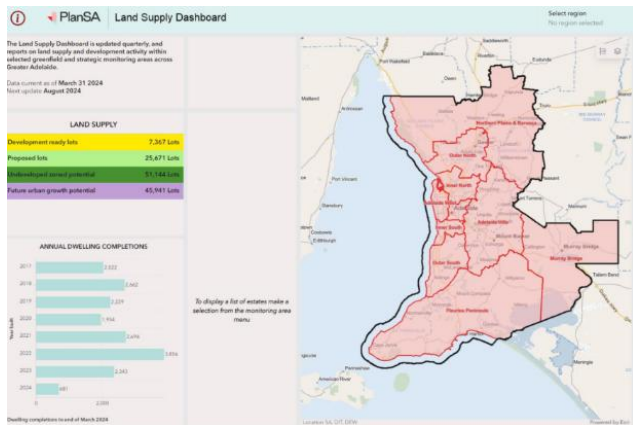
The Queensland Productivity Commission recently highlighted the lack of consistent and timely information available to support evidence-based planning and housing policy, noting that improved monitoring is necessary to identify emerging housing supply issues, improve accountability and support better planning outcomes. The Commission recommended both the release of outstanding land supply information and the establishment of a dedicated growth monitoring function.

Best-practice approaches are increasingly moving towards publicly accessible monitoring platforms, such as South Australia's Land Supply Dashboard, which tracks land availability, development activity and rezoning outcomes and assists government in identifying when additional land supply interventions are required.

### Recommendations for Development and Land Supply Monitoring

HIA recommends:

- 7. Re-establish the Growth Monitoring Program** - Establish a regional monitoring framework that publicly reports on housing approvals, development timeframes, commencements, completions, feasible housing capacity, realisable housing capacity, planned land supply and approved land supply.



**Figure 2: SA Land Supply Dashboard**

## EXAMPLE Land Supply Dashboard (SA)

**Overview:** The South Australian Government maintains a publicly accessible Land Supply Dashboard that provides regular reporting on residential land availability, development activity and rezoning outcomes across Greater Adelaide. The dashboard was established to make land supply data more timely, transparent and accessible for government, industry and the community. It supports ongoing monitoring of land supply down to an individual housing estate level and assists government in identifying when additional land release or rezoning activity may be required to support housing delivery.

**Key takeaway:** South Australia's approach demonstrates the value of maintaining a publicly reported land supply monitoring framework that tracks development activity, land availability and rezoning outcomes over time. This ensures emerging housing supply issues can be identified early and supports timely planning, infrastructure and policy responses.



## 5. Identifying Priority Actions and an Implementation Plan

One of the key limitations of the NQ Regional Plan is the absence of a detailed implementation framework identifying the specific actions with timeframes required to achieve the Plan's housing objectives.

HIA is of the view that the Regional Plan should include a dedicated implementation plan that clearly identifies both State Government and Local Government responsibilities.

This approach would improve accountability, provide greater certainty to industry and infrastructure providers, and help translate the Plan's housing objectives into measurable delivery outcomes (See Table 1, below for details).

| Housing Action                                                                                                                                                    | Responsible Agency                       | Timeframe        |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|------------------|
| <b>Improve productivity and consistency in planning frameworks</b>                                                                                                |                                          |                  |
| <b>Action 1</b> - Adopt the Queensland Housing Code and remove unnecessary local variation                                                                        | Local Governments                        | By December 2027 |
| <b>Action 2</b> – Create standardised designs for missing middle housing supported as accepted development                                                        | Queensland Government                    | By January 2028  |
| <b>Action 3</b> – Standardise planning scheme requirements for flood, bushfire, landslide and biodiversity overlays.                                              | Local Governments                        | By December 2028 |
| <b>Achieve a stable pipeline of new housing</b>                                                                                                                   |                                          |                  |
| <b>Action 4</b> – Amend planning schemes to adopt Precinct / Structure Plan for Future Growth Areas of Curra and Nikenbah Dungowan                                | Queensland Government & Local Government | By December 2027 |
| <b>Improving housing diversity</b>                                                                                                                                |                                          |                  |
| <b>Action 5</b> – Work with industry and local governments to develop a strategy to remove barriers to infill development such as combined drainage requirements. | Queensland Government                    | On-going         |
| <b>Action 6</b> – Establish a funding program to assist in resolving infrastructure constraints for the delivery of alternative housing types.                    | Local Governments                        | By December 2028 |

**Table 1: Example Implementation Plan with Actions for both State and Local Government**