



TASMANIAN HOUSING STRATEGY

Provide your feedback on the Tasmanian Housing Strategy Exposure Draft

JUNE 2023

We encourage you to read the Tasmanian Housing Strategy Exposure Draft (draft Strategy) prior to responding to the following questions. You may choose to respond to some or all questions. Completed documents can be uploaded using the submissions drop-box on the website: <https://tashousingstrategy.homestasmania.com.au/consultation>.

Question 1: 'Our way forward' identifies several levers for achieving a more equitable housing system for all Tasmanians. Are there additional or alternative more important levers that you believe should be addressed?

Provide your response here.

The levers identified in the Our Way Forward section are all supported.

Question 2: Theme one identifies the need for 'more homes, built faster'. Are there additional or alternative objectives you recommend for consideration?

Provide your response here.

Serious consideration should be given to ensuring the existing available housing stock is utilised in the most efficient manner, consistent with the "Housing First" principle. This represents a faster means of bringing more properties to the rental market in a shorter timeframe. A business as usual approach increases the risk that trends resulting in housing being removed from the rental market will continue to absorb a portion of new houses constructed.

Acceleration of planning and building approval processes is not considered to be a substantive barrier at a Council level. Approval processes in Tasmania are already some of the fastest in the nation. While improvements could be undertaken to deliver rezoning and increase land availability, priority needs to be given to incentivising the appropriate development of land already available and in appropriate zones. Land banking and permit banking creates an artificial shortage, while simultaneously creating a barrier to further rezonings via the TPC. Significant work needs to be done to ensure that infill is prioritised and at an appropriate density prior to greenfield.

Additional education needs to be undertaken to create social acceptance of increased densities in proximity to services.

Further factors in the planning space that need to be addressed to increase delivery of infill subdivision include:

- Timely infrastructure funding and delivery.
- The need for an effective infrastructure contribution scheme.
- Underutilisation of land caused by “cherry picking” layouts and densities that avoid infrastructure costs.
- Mechanisms for early engagement around road connectivity and integration in urban environments.

While the planning process has been made more efficient on a case by case basis, it lacks a wholistic approach and the mechanisms required to forward plan and fund infrastructure delivery in a manner that reduces disproportionate constraints on the next landowner down the line.

Further tempering of the DA approval process needs to be balanced with more expansive and well funded strategic planning, so that new land releases are well connected, high amenity and serviced by adequate infrastructure. Fast track processes should only be supported where the strategic work has been undertaken and the proposals are consistent with that strategic work. The opportunity to create partnerships to deliver more houses should be extended to support for Local Government to undertake strategic planning projects to allow for desirable developments and densities to occur in existing inner residential areas. Strategic planning, including specific area plans and rezoning of land has the ability to remove day to day planning barriers. For instance the George Town Structure Plan identifies a desire to increase the height of development close to the urban centre of town as well as increasing the density of dwellings. The intent is to support urban renewal at a far greater density and to foster mainland style coastal apartments. However, planning scheme amendments to inner residential and the development of a Specific Area Plan is essential to achieving this. Council would welcome a partnership to achieve this. ‘

Conflicts with the Planning Commission regarding the delivery of housing also need to be addressed. A number of Council’s have expressed difficulty in getting amendments approved due to a perceived over supply of available land. A State Gov mandate to achieve consistency in planning schemes is impacting the ability of Council’s to adopt specific area plans where there are unique situations.

Strategic planning to accommodate temporary housing for seasonal workers and project specific workers also need to be considered to ensure there are pathways available in the planning system. While there are avenues for temporary housing, they currently appear to be limited to social housing, however, short term demand for worker accommodation can result in a substantial increase in pressure on local housing availability.

While specific provisions may be considered in the planning system to support social housing, caution must be taken to not discriminate in the product that is delivered. Social housing should follow the same density and amenity provisions as for profit housing delivered by the public sector. Even though housing may be delivered as affordable housing, it will not always stay that way. Low cost low amenity housing may result in creating social stigma.

Design guidelines are certainly supported, however there must be incentives/penalties to encourage use of the guidelines.

The concept of scaling up is certainly supported, provided the correct mix of social housing and affordable housing is provided.

Question 3: Theme two centres on 'affordability in the private market'. Are there additional or alternative objectives you recommend for consideration?

Provide your response here.

This theme should be expanded to provide greater focus on accessible housing rather than affordable housing, noting that affordability is one of the barriers to making housing accessible. There are certainly other barriers in addition to affordability that need to be overcome to meet the aspirational goals of the strategy.

The strategy should also consider support for land lords in situations where they have exceptionally bad experiences with tenants, both to protect land lords from the costs of damage caused and to encourage land lords to get rentals back into the rental market. Essentially mechanisms should be considered to reduce the sting when a tenancy goes bad.

There is considered to be an inequality between benefits provided by rent assistance vs leases with Homes Tasmania which result in the most disadvantaged being financially penalized.

Question 4: Theme three places 'people at the centre' of the draft Strategy. Are there additional or alternative objectives you recommend for consideration?

Provide your response here.

Consider infrastructure delivery. Delivery of housing needs to extend beyond just lots and dwellings. Infrastructure delivery, open space networks and connectivity, for both greenfield and large scale infill development needs to be considered in greater emphasis. Appropriate strategic planning needs to occur on a case by case basis and deliver quality communities over quantity.

As mentioned above, greater mechanisms for Local Government, State Government and utilities Authorities to fund, secure and deliver sufficient infrastructure capacity to make growth both easier and more sustainable should be prioritised. The ad-hoc approach should be abandoned, however, the rate of

growth and severe lack of resources significantly undermines the desire to plan and secure infrastructure in advance of development.

Consideration should also be given to ensuring that private rental housing stock is maintained and possibly improved to a reasonable standard in order to improve the general quality of housing, contribute to occupants wellbeing and eliminate the occurrence of slums in our communities.

Partnerships to provide for assisted living or independent living facilities, such as Northbourne in Scottsdale should also be considered as an option for downsizing and reducing the number of under occupied dwellings.

In areas where social housing has been provided in higher concentrations in the past, there needs to be a substantial improvement in the delivery of wrap around support services for the existing community before further intensifying these issues with additional social housing.

Question 5: Theme four highlights 'local prosperity' as a priority. Are there additional or alternative objectives you recommend for consideration?

Provide your response here.

In addition to providing a workforce, consideration should be given to facilitating customer growth in regional communities where there is a strategic basis to do so. Population renewal and growth is often essential to maintaining services (schools, supermarkets, doctors, dentists, banks) in regional communities. Inability to provide housing for growth or alternative forms of housing for renewal contributes to decline in rural settlements.

Care must also be given to ensuring growth is not supported in areas where services and employment opportunities do not exist or are unlikely to exist.

Opportunities for local training and provision of housing is supported. Projects such as St Helens Neighbourhood House's THRIVE Build Project (in conjunction with Break O'Day Council and other providers) are strongly supported, engaging locals and providing career pathways.

Question 6: Are there other ways the government could make its actions and progress to meet the proposed objectives more transparent and accessible?

Provide your response here.

Question 7: Do you have any comment on what this draft Strategy does well?

Provide your response here.

The strategy is relatively broad and adequately recognises the scope of the issue.

It does a good job at acknowledging that there is a need for a greater mix of housing options necessary to service a diverse population. It also adequately acknowledges that there is a significant need for well designed medium and high density housing, all abilities housing, and that education, such as design guidelines are essential to obtaining a better design response than the market is currently delivering.

Question 8: Is there anything you think the draft Strategy does not cover but should, or that it mentions but could be highlighted more?

Provide your response here.

A greater emphasis on increasing confidence in alternative housing models and leading by example would be welcome. Homes Tasmania's predecessors tend to replicate the same design failures as the open market and should be granted the tools and funding to lead by example and deliver quality, well designed medium and high density housing, to inspire confidence in private investors and to obtain public confidence in the products being delivered.

In addition to providing a market leader, greater education needs to be undertaken to all stakeholders, including private developers, elected officials and the public so that there is greater acceptance of the changes in housing preferences, particularly with regard to infill and urban renewal projects where higher densities close to services are desirable.

The State Planning Provisions should also be amended to include high density and medium density provisions which encourage good design at higher densities, while discouraging poor design as well as unnecessarily conservative designs.

Incentives for densification should also be considered in areas strategically identified as being suitable for such to kick start urban renewal and provide developer confidence.

While the objectives are generally supported, the actual impacts on Local Government and the effectiveness of the strategy will be determined by the action plans. No details or examples of actual measures to be taken are provided. Council welcomes the opportunity to be meaningfully consulted on the action plans during their development.

The strategy repeatedly gives reference to high-quality housing. Aspirational high-quality homes may not be necessary in all cases. Adequate housing is acceptable in many circumstances. Focus should be reorientated to eliminate low-quality housing rather than aspire to high quality.

The strategy needs to have a greater focus on the provision of wrap around support services, including mental health services to address some of the underlying causes of homelessness and to ensure that social issues, such as drugs, alcohol and employment issues, are reduced and residents are better integrated into local communities. There may be a need to concentrate social housing in areas that are close to services and in doing so, it is essential that these services are provided at a level that ensures they are effective.

The concept of investing in communities and ensuring that the local community participates in housing projects through both employment and skills training has a substantial impact on community acceptance and pride.

It is observed that the glossary includes some terms that are not actually mentioned in the strategy document. For example – terms such as “supported accommodation” and “overcrowding”, are defined but not used in the document.

Thank you for your feedback.