

## Housing Availability and Affordability (Planning and Other Legislation) Amendment Bill 2023

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# Submission to the State Development and Regional Industries Committee by Rhys Bosley – Independent Candidate for Algester

## Housing Availability and Affordability (Planning and Other Legislation Amendment) Bill 2023

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission on the *Housing Availability and Affordability (Planning and Other Legislation Amendment) Bill 2023*. I have the following observations:

- Since we have a housing crisis in Queensland, the Queensland Government should commit to treating it like a crisis and be prepared to take what action is necessary to end it. This is critical as this situation is a humanitarian disaster for the many people living in insecure accommodation, cars and tents, as well as being very difficult for those facing rising rents and for first home buyers.

I propose that all parties in the Queensland Parliament commit to ending the housing crisis and return to normal vacancy rates, by the 2028 election. This would provide a performance measure against which the electorate hold whoever wins in 2024 to account.

- Affordable housing is mentioned 130 times in the legislation and 60 times in the explanatory memorandum, but only in the title, it does not feature in a substantive manner in any clauses. Unless the bill is amended to include practical measures to address housing affordability, the name should be changed to one reflecting the general changes to planning instruments that it actually is. This is important to give the public confidence that the government is committed to addressing the housing crisis, rather than using this bill as a smokescreen for lack of effective action.
- The Deputy Premier in his capacity as Minister for State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning, mentioned population growth as a primary driver of the housing crisis in his speech and has recently stated that the Queensland Government cannot influence migration to Queensland, a sentiment recently echoed by the Premier. This is a false narrative, there are plenty of ways for the Queensland Government to influence population growth, both in relation to people migrating to Queensland and within the state. I have listed a number of measures to address population growth in **Appendix A**, that might be considered, either as a complement or alternative to the bill.
- In his first reading speech, the Deputy Premier makes the following statement:

*The bill includes a new alternative development pathway to deliver development that is a priority to the state, known as a state-facilitated application—for example, unlocking an increased supply of infill development that includes diverse and affordable housing.*

Section 106D is the relevant clause of the legislation, which “only” allows the state-facilitated development pathway to be used for an urban purpose that is a priority for the state. This appears to mean that the Minister can override local government development applications, on any urban development that the minister wants to.

There is no guarantee that a government would use this power to provide affordable housing. It could just as easily be used to deliver more projects like Toondah Harbour, which is highly contested on environmental grounds, and which is likely to only house wealthy interstate and overseas sea-changers.

Such developments aren't going to resolve the housing crisis, they are likely to make the problem worse, as they soak up building industry resources, which are needed to build affordable housing. I suggest that since the bill is supposed to be about affordable housing, that the Minister's power to establish a state-facilitated development pathway, be limited to the delivery of affordable housing developments.

- There is no Regulation Impact Statement for the bill, with the analytical basis from the explanatory memorandum being limited to the following statement:

*The parts of the Bill to optimise the planning framework's response to current housing challenges have been informed by learnings from the trial structure planning process in Caboolture West. In addition, the Bill has been informed by DSDILGP's review of 75 underutilised urban footprint sites in South East Queensland (sites which are intended for residential development but which are not realising their development potential) and barriers identified on these sites which are slowing down the delivery of housing. Consultation with key stakeholders also shaped the Bill provisions.*

The state facilitated development pathway overrides local government and therefore the democratic will of local communities. It also affects property rights, for example by allowing the state to take and develop land easements. Therefore, I believe that a comprehensive Regulation Impact Statement is justified, to provide a strong analytical basis for the proposed reform.

I note that the Office of Productivity and Red Tape Reduction has recently released its new Better Regulation policy<sup>1</sup>. The policy states that agencies:

*Agencies should be willing to add to their analysis further feasible options that emerge from consultation.*

I recommend the measures proposed in Appendix A, as options as options for inclusion in the RIS.

Regards,

Rhys Bosley - Independent Candidate for Algester

<https://rhysbosleyforalgester.au/>



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<sup>1</sup> <https://s3.treasury.qld.gov.au/files/Queensland-Government-Better-Regulation-Policy.pdf>

## Appendix A

Measures that the Queensland Government could take to reduce population growth and therefore housing affordability in Queensland include:

1. Cancelling the Woolloongabba Gabba stadium rebuild and the Brisbane Arena projects, allow money and building resources to public housing and supporting infrastructure projects.
2. Prioritise public expenditure on public housing. This is critical to protect the most at risk of homelessness, as public housing is the only type of housing that can be allocated exclusively to Queenslanders. Prioritising development of it is the only way to ensure that a vulnerable Queenslanders who needs a house gets into one, rather than an interstate or overseas migrant.
3. Extend the first home buyer's grant to existing housing in regional locations, to encourage uptake of underutilised housing stock by people from overcrowded population centres, as recently suggested by Robbie Katter, the Member for Traeger, who is on your committee.
4. Invest in regional Queensland communities to make them attractive locations for people to live and work in. The priority should be to attract South-East Queensland residents who are keen and able to make a contribution to those regional locations through better infrastructure and lifestyle options. An example of how this could be achieved is to improved access and utilisation of Queensland's vast areas of public land for recreational activities, which are likely to attract energetic people to regional Queensland.

At present the people who are being pushed out of South-East Queensland by house prices are likely to be the poorest, who are forced to live there unwillingly. I have worked in regional Queensland public hospitals and seen the consequences of regional localities having to accommodate a disproportionate number of people from lower socioeconomic groups, who cannot afford to live in the city. It is bad for those people who are forced away from networks of families and friends to places where there are less services than in the city, as well as being bad for the citizens of the affected regions, which have to share scarce services with a larger, more disadvantaged population.

5. Review all other planned major government infrastructure projects to ensure they meet a high level of urgent community need and cancel those that do not.
6. Ensure that all proposed major private sector construction projects meet housing and infrastructure needs of Queenslanders. Projects such as hotels and luxury apartments such as the Toondah Harbour development, that will primarily meet interstate/oversea migrant needs, should not be approved. Regulate to limit use of housing as short-term holiday accommodation, to prevent spillovers from non-approval of hotels.
7. At the annual Australian Government review of the number of migrants to come to Australia, the Queensland Government would call for overall migration rates to Australia to be reduced.
8. State Government agency Migration Queensland to review the state-nominated visa program, to reduce the program to the minimum number of migrant workers necessary for essential industries and locations.

9. Migration Queensland should stop promoting Queensland as a desirable migration destination to interstate and overseas migrants.
10. Increase investment in education and training to ensure that Queenslanders can outcompete interstate and overseas candidates for work in Queensland.
11. Support business to invest in and develop productivity enhancing technology, especially in industries that rely heavily on migrant workers, to reduce labour demand while increasing the numbers of good, long-term jobs in technology-enabled industries for Queenslanders and sustainable investment opportunities for business.
12. Finance any shortfall in capital to build affordable housing through government guaranteed investment financing measures such as a new owned state bank (as advocated for by the Member for Traeger for rural development), or Queensland Government backed bonds for direct investment or for superannuation funds.
13. Call for the Australian Labor Government to replicate the Queensland Labor Government's developer donation ban at Federal level, to reduce the potential influence of developers on immigration rates and on federally funded infrastructure spending in inappropriate locations.
14. Lead in National Cabinet to lead a national discussion on population policy for Australia. Notable leaders such as former NSW Premier Bob Carr<sup>2</sup>, Former Hawke government economic advisor Professor Ross Garnaut<sup>3</sup>, Entrepreneur Dick Smith<sup>4</sup> and Environmental Scientist Tim Flannery<sup>5</sup>, have all called for Australia to limit or end population growth.

Professor Garnaut's short term solution of easing off immigration rates to reduce housing demand is relevant, as is Mr Smith's longer-term target of holding Australia to below 30 million people.<sup>6</sup> At our current population of around 26 million, the 30 million target it would afford us time for economic adjustment and to distribute our population to meet the aspirations of regional and rural Australia.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://population.org.au/about/people/the-hon-bob-carr/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.macrobusiness.com.au/2023/05/garnaut-cut-immigration-and-build-dwellings-to-fix-rent-crisis/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/video/2017/aug/15/dick-smith-launches-ad-calling-for-australian-immigration-cap-video>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.australiangeographic.com.au/topics/science-environment/2011/01/population-how-much-istoo-much/>