

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

Submission No: 7
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Publication:
Attachments:
Submitter Comments:

30 October 2023

Committee Secretary
State Development and Regional Industries Committee
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Via – SDRIC@parliament.qld.gov.au

To Whom It May Concern,

SUBMISSION TO THE HOUSING AVAILABILITY AND AFFORDABILITY (PLANNING AND OTHER LEGISLATION) AMENDMENT BILL 2023

Overview

Q Shelter welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the Housing Availability and Affordability (Planning and Other Legislation Amendment) Bill 2023 (the Bill). Q Shelter supports the intent of the amendments because the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning framework have a significant impact on the speed with which homes can be delivered. These amendments also help to improve the affordability of delivering homes through important system improvements.

The amendments respond to widespread support for improvements to the health of the whole housing system where supply meets population needs.

We support interventions proposed such as:

- the ability for the planning minister to acquire land and create an easement for critical infrastructure to unblock development in the right locations and at the right time
- a new and streamlined state-led assessment process to facilitate development that is a priority of the state, for example affordable housing delivery
- a new zone to help local governments better sequence development and allow for detailed land use planning to occur.

Q Shelter also supports amendments to achieve the following:

- modernising the operation of Development Control Plans within the planning framework and ensuring existing approvals are valid
- streamlining the Planning Minister's direction powers for local government planning schemes
- for a temporary period, removing the requirement for developers to obtain a development approval for particular development
- modernizing public notice and submission requirements
- reduced regulatory burdens for State and local governments by improving processes.

We continue to support all efforts to unlock additional land for affordable housing supply. This includes improving the assessment process to create greater certainty and increased speed of delivery, to match the current need being experienced for Queenslanders.

This submission focuses on the mechanisms specifically designed to assist government in facilitating the construction of housing, as well as new dwellings within existing urban areas (infill development). In addition to these two areas, we have provided some very brief commentary on other related areas to the Bill.

1. Acquiring land or creating easements for planning purposes.

Access to affordable land in well-located areas is one of the largest barriers to developing affordable housing.¹ This is further compounded by fragmented land ownership and the inability of community housing providers (and private developers) to obtain land of a sufficient size suitable for redevelopment, or to provide the necessary infrastructure (e.g., roads, utilities, and the like) to service the development.

Despite infill development targets (and now, proposed social and affordable housing targets) being embedded within statutory planning instruments in Queensland, these planning instruments have in the past not adequately accommodated the economic factors of redevelopment, including site acquisition, site feasibility and the scale of proposed development. We support the Queensland Government's draft SEQ Regional Plan (Shaping SEQ) 2023, which acknowledges these barriers and Q Shelter views this amendment as one mechanism for overcoming some of these.

Traditional redevelopment approaches have low levels of state intervention. There are also very few mechanisms for authorities to assemble land in Australia (except by compulsory acquisition), whereas European nations such as France, Germany and the Netherlands all have public authorities with a range of powers that allow them to overcome ownership constraints and assemble the necessary lots for redevelopment, even if that means selling the land to community housing providers or private developers once the lots are reconfigured.² This amendment will place Queensland on a similar level to other jurisdictions, with the proviso that all attempts to negotiate with landowners are made first. Some jurisdictions that play a more active role in housing provision have experienced lower levels of rental inflation (and rental stress) compared to Australia.³

We support this amendment and add that if the infill development targets in the draft SEQ Regional Plan (and other regional plans) are to be met, more guidance, at a state and local government level, is required to outline how developers should approach infill development, particularly in existing residential areas.

2. State facilitated development application process.

Like many Australian jurisdictions, the Queensland Government has several departments and agencies engaged in some aspect of social and affordable housing.

If passed, this process will add to a suite of powers that the Minister responsible for the *Planning Act 2016* and *Economic Development Act 2012* has to override both local government planning schemes and the State Development Assessment Provisions. We suggest that the need to have such powers speaks to wider systemic issues. In relation to the proposed amendment however, Q Shelter agrees with the utility in having a streamlined approach to development assessment for both affordable housing and infill development, to ensure that planning benchmarks are both consistently and efficiently applied. We recommend that there are clear parameters around what the State considers a 'priority', as there may be a risk that the scope is broadened beyond addressing housing supply.

¹ Palm M, Raynor K, Whitzman C. (2018). Project 30,000: Producing social and affordable housing on government land. *The University of Melbourne*. https://msd.unimelb.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/2876008/Project-3000-Producing-Social-and-Affordable-Housing-on-Government-Land.pdf

² Louw, E. (2008). Land assembly for urban transformation – The case of 's-Hertogenbosch in the Netherlands. *Land Use Policy*, 25(1), 69–80.

³ Trading Economics (2023). Rent Inflation by Country. <https://tradingeconomics.com/country-list/rent-inflation>

Other areas of interest, emerging from the draft bill:

- **Urban Investigation Zone** - the current system is premised on applicants lodging development applications which trigger negotiations with local governments for the delivery of required infrastructure. There have been some challenges with this practice, with developments in new growth areas sometimes proceeding in an *ad hoc* and uncoordinated manner. In principle we support proposals that allows local governments to undertake proper structure planning before new housing is commenced. However, the timeframe for the zone's use should be limited to the specific period required to plan for delivery of housing on that site, such as a two-year period, subject to extension.
- **Review of Queensland's infrastructure delivery regime** – further to the above point, Steps must be taken to ensure that the zone is not a 'holding pattern' to be used for extensive periods, and we also reiterate the recommendation in our [submission](#) to the draft *Shaping SEQ 2023 Update* regarding the need for further consideration of Queensland's infrastructure charging regime, or a new regime to ensure the most efficient means of delivering social and / or affordable housing.
- **One housing agency for plan-making development assessment and delivery functions** – there has been some progress made on the consolidation of state functions, including the newly established Queensland Department of Housing and the updated remit of Economic Development Queensland (EDQ). Other jurisdictions, such as Vancouver in Canada, have one agency tasked with leading reform, and, as a result, has been able to significantly scale up housing delivery for very low-income households.⁴ The current approach with a variety of departments, agencies and levels of government involved in the decision-making process is still somewhat complicated and, in our view, could make it difficult to deliver the 20% social and affordable housing target proposed in the draft SEQ Regional Plan (Shaping SEQ) 2023.

In summary, we commend the efforts being undertaken by the Queensland Government to improve housing affordability and supply in Queensland. These amendments are consistent with Q Shelter recommendations for planning system reforms contributing to a healthier housing system.

Q Shelter supports the Bill, including:

1. **The State playing an active role in facilitating the development of affordable housing, including by acquiring land or creating easements to facilitate new dwelling construction.**
2. **A streamlined approach to assessment of development applications relating to affordable housing and infill development.**

For further details about this submission, please contact Manager of Policy and Strategic Engagement at Q Shelter (07) [REDACTED] or at [REDACTED].

Yours sincerely

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⁴ Whitzman C, Raynor K, Palm M (2017). Ten lessons from cities that have risen to the affordable housing challenge. *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/ten-lessons-from-cities-that-have-risen-to-the-affordable-housing-challenge-102852>