

MEDIA RELEASE

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“Delta lockdown” gives NSW Planning a second chance to get Housing Approvals going

The only good news about the COVID-19 Delta strain sweeping our State is the opportunity it gives the NSW Planning system to turn their performance around.

The Prime Minister says we will start to have significant numbers with full vaccination by Christmas.

The NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE) has been given a second chance. This lockdown offers a rare opportunity before Christmas to drive Councils, drive the Local Planning Panels, drive the Regional Planning Panels, drive the Independent Planning Commission, to deliver approvals fast so when the economy returns to full operation, the construction industry can do what it has always done and lead the economy out of the current slump.

The strategic planning framework is finally done and the planning system can now get on with its job – assessments and approvals. Councils have finished their Local Strategic Planning Strategies, and many have now finalised their new Local Environment Plans and Local Housing Strategies.

Now is the time for the State Government to take the lead on major projects which will deliver some big numbers to reverse their approvals malaise.

Last week’s housing completions data was again disappointing for Greater Sydney, with new home completions falling well short of the Greater Sydney Commission and NSW Housing Strategy 2021 targets. The Housing Strategy shows we need at least 40,000 approvals for Greater Sydney every year for the next 20 years. In the year to March – there were on 29,500 new home completions despite the construction industry going flat out during 2020 and the first COVID wave.

This drop comes directly as a result of the Government taking its eye off the ball pre-Covid when approvals fell to levels not seen since the GFC. Unfortunately, then COVID-19 hit and approvals stayed too low. We now have a crisis in housing supply and new home affordability.

Those involved in the planning system are all familiar with working from home. The period in the lead up to Christmas 2021 must be seen as an opportunity to catch up.

The NSW economy needs planners to lead and drive housing supply, particularly in urban areas, to avoid even greater rises in new home prices.

The Strategic Plans are complete. What is needed now is political will and public service drive towards more new dwelling approvals.

End.

The comments above can be attributed to Tom Forrest, CEO, Urban Taskforce.

*The **Urban Taskforce Australia** is a property development industry group, representing Australia's most prominent property developers and equity financiers.*

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