

13 November, 2023

### **NSW Liberals must avoid “dog whistling” over population figures**

Urban Taskforce CEO, Tom Forrest today expressed concern over recent comments by the Leader of the NSW Opposition over migration levels, stating that migration was key to ensure the housing that all Australians need is built and delivered.

The housing supply crisis did not simply appear last year – it has been a disaster that was brewing well before the outbreak of COVID. Housing supply is the answer, not killing economic growth by slashing immigration.

It was the policies of the former Coalition Governments in Canberra and in Macquarie Street that landed us in the middle of a housing supply crisis today. It would be sad if the Coalition has abandoned the business community who were front and centre in support of the boost to immigration and continue to be so.

The Leader of the Opposition is taking his NIMBY position on housing proposals in his own state seat and now applying them more broadly in an attempt to sheet blame on immigrants as the cause of all our housing ills.

As economists will tell the Opposition Leader, skilled immigrants drive productivity. They have a high participation rate. They arrive already educated. They are healthy and are a low draw on health resources. They drive economic growth.

Mr Speakman need only look around his own electorate to see we are a dramatically ageing nation – and we will need migration more than ever over the coming decades to take care of the elderly. The solution lies in housing supply. The solution comes from looking beyond the myopic self-interest of NIMBYs.

Fee paying overseas students help fund out tertiary sector, as well as filling many of the vacant jobs in the hospitality sector.

We desperately need skilled trades and labourers to build our new homes, hospitals and schools. Besides a housing supply crisis, NSW is struggling with a labour supply crisis.

Mr Speakman needs to re-consider his position on this matter. Attempting to score short term political points off such a complex issue does not bode well for someone wanting to be the next Premier of NSW. The views expressed by Chris Rath in support of housing supply on behalf of the growing cohort of younger Australians are far more considered and should be a shining light for Mr Speakman.

A former Federal colleague of Mr Speakman, Craig Kelly, himself a skilled exponent at the dog whistle, spectacularly failed at the last Federal election. This is not the way for Mark Speakman to boost his recognition rate.

End.

The comments and analysis 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.*