

1 May, 2026

Senator Barbara Pocock
Chair
Select Committee on Intergenerational Housing Inequity
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Sent to: housinginequity.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Senator Pocock

Intergenerational Housing Inequity

I write in relation to the Senate Select Committee's inquiry into intergenerational inequity when it comes to housing.

Urban Taskforce Australia welcomes the current review as an important investigation into the current housing crisis and its impacts on various segments of society.

There is undoubtedly intergenerational inequity in relation to housing, both for purchasers and renters. This inequality is a direct consequence of decades of systematic under-supply.

This failure of government at all levels in all jurisdictions around the nation is too often exacerbated by the voices of existing residents drowning out those of new, would-be neighbours. The worst manifestation of this self-indulgent NIMBYism has been writ-large through the Eastern Suburbs, Inner West and North Shore of Sydney, often encouraged by politicians and willingly embraced by public service planners.

Developments aiming to create homes in established neighbourhoods are regularly blocked or delayed by local councils (and a small cohort of vocal residents) for an array of reasons – heritage, the environment, amenity, changing local character, traffic congestion, or just plain old opposition for its own sake.

This not-in-my-backyard attitude makes it harder to deliver new housing. It increases the cost of housing for all. It is a very real reason why housing is increasingly becoming less affordable in the face of growing demand.

The planning system must provide for and address the needs of future residents, not merely existing ones. We need to grow the size of our population to support the aging population known as the baby boomers. Ironically, it is these same boomers who demand quality government aged care and health care, who form the basis of the NIMBY movement that opposes the housing supply which will accommodate the growing population. Even a momentary glance at any of the Federal or State Intergenerational Reports plainly makes this case.

Housing supply impeding planning and taxation policies are often supported by local MPs and councillors, whose re-election is dependent on being seen to support their existing communities, despite the clear impact that NIMBYism has on those yet to enter the housing market, or those struggling to afford rent.

It is a philosophical two-step-shuffle: calling for housing to be more affordable while pumping up the taxes on development, pushing for cheaper rental housing while removing the concessions that allow investors to keep rents reasonable, bemoaning the lack of housing available for children and grandchildren while opposing any local development that may solve the problem.

Some politicians and too often entire governments have fallen into the trap of complaining about housing prices for which they themselves are in part responsible. That is the situation we face today.

The National Housing Accord was a penny-drop initiative, led by the Commonwealth.

It drove many of the recent reforms to speed up housing approvals and support increased housing supply.

There continues to be a false and self-defeating view that housing project developers can simply absorb the vast array of new housing taxes. Even when the crisis is caused by a failure of government regulation and policy, or a shortage in trunk infrastructure investment, the temptation is always to slug the development community with the costs of redress.

The reality is that the cost of housing construction, fees, taxes and charges cannot be covered by the sale price in many areas of Australia, but this is at its worst in Western Sydney and in regional communities across the nation.

In the face of bankruptcy, developers have no choice but to pass on the costs to homebuyers or their projects risk being unfeasible – and if they can't make the numbers stack up, they won't be able to build because the financiers will not make the funds for construction available.

Anti-housing activists also frequently criticise investors and seek to make it harder for them to own properties, in the simplistic assumption that fewer investors will lead to more homeowners. Fact is, fewer investors means fewer new homes, and this will drive prices and rents up, not down.

Without investors, the number of rental properties declines. With fewer rental properties, the very people that some on this Committee may seek to support will have nowhere to go. The sad reality is they end up living with friends or worse, living in their car, or all too often, on the street, a park or a beach.

Pump priming (financial handouts aimed at alleviating housing costs) from governments seeking to support home buyers is the wrong solution. In fact, it exacerbates the problem. Such policies are often electorally popular in the short term, but they simply increase competition for a limited number of houses. Rather than growing the size of the pie (or number of houses), they simply push up the price of the limited number of pies (or houses) that exist.

The new housing development sector is faced with a well acknowledged plethora of planning red tape, local political intransigence, soaring construction costs, and an array of taxes, fees, and charges that make many housing projects unfeasible.

Policy initiatives should be targeted at addressing the fundamental lack of housing supply that undermines attempts to deliver the state and territory targets under the National Housing Accord.

Barriers to new development need to be removed. That includes any changes to the tax system that might have a negative impact on investment in new housing stock.

Infrastructure shortfalls – acknowledged by all, but largely under-funded by the Commonwealth Government – need to be overcome so that new housing areas can be

developed without making dwellings unaffordable. In the context of significant immigration, this is a basic obligation that helps to preserve the welcoming multicultural society that seems to be slipping away.

Without strategies to make it easier and cheaper to build, house prices and rents will continue to rise, putting them out of reach of younger Australians.

Without efforts to increase housing supply – delivering more supply to meet the growing demand for housing – very little will be achieved.

Without practical solutions to support and promote development, intergenerational inequity will persist, and worse, for a growing cohort, housing affordability will be a pipedream.

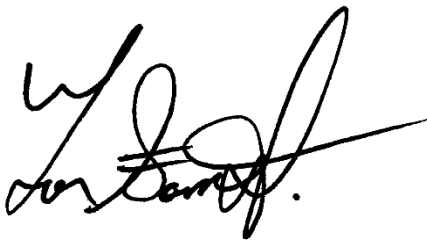
Urban Taskforce welcomes the current inquiry and encourages the Committee to take a closer look at the underlying reasons why housing is increasingly becoming unaffordable for both purchasers and renters, particularly those from younger generations.

The root causes lie not with a generational divide but have more to do with governments.

Actions to remove barriers to development will go a long way to making housing far more attainable for average Australians.

Should you wish to discuss any aspect of this submission further, please contact our Policy, Planning, and Research Analyst, Paul Waterhouse, on 0411-875-366 or via email at paul@urbantaskforce.com.au.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tom Forrest', with a stylized flourish extending from the end.

Tom Forrest
Chief Executive Officer