

MEDIA RELEASE

29 July 2026

30 years of feasible housing? Great! First convince councils!

The NSW Government's initiative for councils to plan and zone for 30 years of feasible housing is a great idea – but convincing the councils themselves will be the challenge, says Acting Urban Taskforce Australia CEO, Paul Waterhouse.

And any strategy will need to be matched with a clear, funded 30-year infrastructure plan if it is to support future housing development.

Urban Taskforce Australia strongly supports the principle behind the 30-year feasible housing plans, coming out of the NSW Productivity and Equality Commission, much as we have the NSW Government's previous low- and mid-rise (LMR) housing initiatives and rezoning proposals.

However, our experience is that telling councils that something must happen and seeing it to fruition are two very different tasks.

Last time councils were asked to prepare strategic plans, some of them took 10 years to complete the work. The results were disappointing, to say the least.

You only have to look at the strident resistance of LGAs like Mosman, Woollahra, and Ku-ring-gai – who regularly and openly proclaim their opposition to any form of planning reform – to see that some direct action by the State Government might be needed if a feasible housing pipeline is to be created.

Both the Federal Productivity Commission and the NSW Productivity and Equality Commission have directly found that planning rules are the problem, echoing what industry has been saying for years. But who will continue to be responsible for many of those rules? Councils.

Requiring 30 years' worth of feasible housing capacity is a good target, and Urban Taskforce strongly supports it. A clear and identifiable pipeline, supported by funded housing-enabling infrastructure plans, is certainly needed.

Yet without some clear and enforceable direction given to LGAs – direction that cannot be challenged or undermined with court cases or “alternative masterplans” – it could come to naught.

Nimby councils have frequently made it clear that their loyalties lie with existing residents, not those yet to come. Councillors rely upon the loudest anti-development voices to remain elected. These are strong motivations to overcome.

Clearly councils cannot be allowed flexibility in the delivery of this policy. The NSW Government must take direct action to compel those resisting change to deliver.

Unfortunately, industry cannot wait for the two years identified by the Premier and the Minister for Planning before any enforcement action is taken. By then it will be difficult to get necessary change.

Policies like the introduction of the Housing Delivery Authority and the Infill Affordable Housing Bonus Scheme have shown how hundreds of thousands of dwellings can be created if government and industry work together.

Such initiatives are impeded at the local level, where existing priorities are often allowed to undermine future potential.

An upfront commitment is needed from all councils to the proposed 30-year strategic planning process. If any councils resist, if they indicate that they are not willing to participate in good faith, the Department of Planning, Housing, and Infrastructure needs to step in as soon as possible.

Long-term strategic planning through the Sydney Plan is welcome. It just cannot fall prey to the delay and obstruction tactics traditionally used by anti-development local politicians to oppose progress.

The Federal Productivity Commission found that land-use controls were being applied to prevent housing or to limit its form and called upon governments to relax these controls.

The NSW Productivity and Equality Commission found that upzoning was needed if future housing was going to be feasible.

Until such changes happen – until anti-growth councils are held to account and compelled to deliver a housing supply pipeline – new homes will continue to be increasingly unaffordable.

The Minns Government should be lauded for its efforts to change the system and to help to deliver the new housing that is so desperately needed in the current supply crisis.

However, good faith attempts to get councils to change, even with the threat of future action, have not worked in the past and run the risk of faltering this time as well, unless direct action is taken.

Long-term planning should be an ongoing obligation, as the NSW Government says. Yet it is not enough just to lay out expectations – enforcement will be needed to get all councils over the line.

Otherwise, we could still be talking about needing to help future generations 30 years from now.

End

*The comments and analysis above can be attributed to **Paul Waterhouse**, Acting CEO, Urban Taskforce.*

Media Enquires: Paul Waterhouse, Acting Chief Executive Officer: 0411 875 366

Follow us:



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