

Urban renewal of pre 1990 sub-standard flats essential to house Sydney's population growth

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The recent interim report by the University of NSW titled '*Renewing the Compact City*' demonstrates the importance of ensuring planning rules encourage the renewal of ageing substandard buildings, says the Urban Taskforce.

"The study by the City Futures Research Centre at UNSW into flats constructed prior to 1990 indicates that a large number of these buildings are of substandard design and quality could be demolished and replaced with mid-rise apartments," says Urban Taskforce CEO, Chris Johnson. "The Report suggested that 8,000 buildings throughout the Sydney Metropolitan Area could be replaced by modern state of the art apartment buildings, incorporating newer, better building technologies, and creating dwellings far more comfortable and cost effective for their inhabitants in terms of maintenance, repairs and savings in energy and water bills."

"While the study suggests that redevelopment is most feasible in the eastern and northern suburbs of Sydney this will depend on the amount of density uplift that could come with redevelopment. Studies undertaken by the Urban Taskforce indicate that many of the precincts with pre 1990s flats are currently around a 1 to 1 floor space ratio and that these could be replaced by 6 to 8 storey apartment buildings with a 3 to 1 floor space ratio. Our studies showed that more open space was provide with improved apartment amenity while the scale of buildings was kept below the tree canopy."

"To achieve renewal as promoted by the '*Renewing the Compact City*' report will need strong support from the NSW government to change the existing strata scheme laws and amendments to the NSW planning system to give mid-rise apartments a fast tracked approval process. The *Strata Schemes Management Act 1996* currently requires 100% of owners in a strata titled building must agree before a strata scheme can be terminated yet other countries like Singapore only require 75%. It is important that this legislation is modified along the Singapore lines or strata owners will find they have to contribute excessive levies to maintain their ageing buildings if one owner holds out for a windfall profit."

"The other change that is required is to make mid-rise apartments part of the NSW Housing Code that allows fast tracked approvals for projects that comply with a strict set of rules. This would send a strong signal to the market place that the government is encouraging 6 storey apartment buildings."

- The Urban Taskforce has produced a publication on Faster Approvals for Mid-Rise Apartments that can be accessed [here](#).
- The *Renewing the Compact City: Interim Report* can be accessed [here](#).

The full report on *Renewing the Compact City* is anticipated to be ready later this year.

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

Media Enquires: Chris Johnson, Chief Executive Officer, Phone: 0412 258 283.

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