

November 2021

Regional Housing Taskforce

This document answers frequently asked questions about the creation and operation of the Regional Housing Taskforce.

Why was the Regional Housing Taskforce created?

- The NSW Government wants to ensure that all residents have a safe space to call home, no matter where in the state they live.
- The way we live, and work is changing. Strong regional economies mean more people are choosing to stay in the regions because they can work close to where they live.
- The COVID-19 pandemic is also causing a shift in people swapping cities for a sea or tree change by moving to the regions.
- These factors are putting pressure on the supply and affordability of homes in the bush and on the coast. Dwelling prices have jumped by 27 per cent in regional NSW over the 12 months to the end of September 2021 compared to a 24% rise in Sydney for the same period.
- Rental vacancy rates in regional NSW have halved to an average of less than 1% in the past year.
- The Minister for Planning and Public Spaces Rob Stokes announced the Regional Housing Taskforce in July 2021 to investigate regional housing issues and the planning barriers people are experiencing in buying, renting and building a place to live in the regions.

What has been the focus of the Regional Housing Taskforce?

- The taskforce has focused on four housing issues: supply, affordability, diversity, and resilience.
- The focus of the Regional Housing Taskforce has been to:
 - identify and resolve barriers in the planning system to housing supply and affordability
 - provide recommendations on ways to speed up the delivery of new homes in regional NSW
 - find ways to encourage the building of new houses on appropriately zoned land.

What has the Regional Housing Taskforce done so far?

- During July and August 2021 the taskforce consulted widely with councils, the development sector, not-for-profit housing providers and community groups.
- The taskforce prepared an independent [Findings Report](#) that summarises the key issues identified through the consultation, engagement and research that was released on 1 October 2021.
- The Findings Report contains feedback and insights from 168 submissions and more than 500 people who participated in 11 virtual meetings, one-on-one sessions and other events the taskforce presented at during consultation.

- The taskforce has closely considered all feedback and submissions in the preparation of a second independent [Recommendations Report](#) that it provided to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces on 29 October 2021 with recommendations on how the Government can better use the planning system to address housing needs and stimulate supply in the regions.
- The NSW Government is considering the recommendations and will decide which recommendations to put in place based on the information provided in these reports.

What has the Regional Housing Taskforce recommended to the Government?

- The Taskforce found that the challenges in delivering an adequate supply of diverse and affordable housing that meets the needs of regional communities are many and varied.
- The task for Government and the planning system is not simply to increase the supply of housing generally, but to provide a diverse range of housing that supports the full spectrum of housing needs in regional communities now and into the future.
- The Recommendations Report identifies eight principles to serve as a foundation for decision-making and guide reform of policies and processes to increasing housing supply and improve housing outcomes across regional NSW:
 1. Invest in upfront, place-based strategic planning to improve decision-making, provide certainty and enable more efficient assessments.
 2. Provide a more transparent and certain supply pipeline and activate latent supply by addressing infrastructure requirements and resolving site constraints.
 3. Strengthen collaboration by the NSW Government with the Federal Government, local governments, and industry to improve the identification, funding, and delivery of infrastructure to support priority housing.
 4. Ensure new housing is appropriately located, well-designed, fit for purpose, and better provides for the diversity of housing needs, including strengthening planning and approval pathways for innovative typologies and tenures.
 5. Consider social and affordable housing as essential social and economic infrastructure.
 6. Facilitate the delivery of diverse housing that meets demonstrated need through targeted use of government land.
 7. Build the capacity of local government and local industries to plan and deliver housing in the regions.
 8. Enhance monitoring and evaluation of policy and housing outcomes.
- The Taskforce has made five key recommendations for Government and 15 supporting targeted interventions that relate to the recommendations.

The five key recommendations are:

1. Support measures that bring forward a supply of “development ready” land.
2. Increase the availability of affordable and diverse housing across regional NSW.
3. Provide more certainty about where, when and what types of homes will be built.
4. Investigate planning levers to facilitate the delivery of housing that meets short term needs.
5. Improve monitoring of housing and policy outcomes and demand indicators.

Who is on the Regional Housing Taskforce?

- Garry Fielding is the Government-appointed Chairperson who leads the taskforce.
- Based in Newcastle, Mr Fielding is a qualified town planner with more than 40 years’ experience in State and local government and the private sector.
- He has worked at senior executive levels with the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment and also as head planner with Newcastle, Woollahra and Maitland Councils.
- Mr Fielding is a Life Fellow and former NSW President of the Planning Institute of Australia.
- He is the State-appointed Chair of the Western Regional Planning Panel and recently retired from development and planning group City Plan.
- The taskforce also includes NSW Government executives with expertise in planning, development, and housing. This includes staff from the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, as well as the Department of Regional NSW.

What happens next?

- The NSW Government is closely considering the Recommendations Report to determine how best to improve housing supply and affordability in regional NSW and will release a response to it before the end of 2021.

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