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Planning roadblocks identified
We know what the obstacles are; it’s now time to act

Today’s release of the Productivity Commission’s report *Performance Benchmarking of Australian Business Regulation: Planning, Zoning and Development Assessments* showcases the need for urgent action on planning reform.

The Property Council of Australia and the Residential Development Council strongly endorse the Commission’s broad findings and call upon the Federal Government and COAG to make an immediate commitment to step-up and address the challenges outlined in the report.

“The Productivity Commission’s report shows what the industry has long been arguing - that there are far too many roadblocks in the planning system hindering delivery of housing. We have long called for consistency of planning across all states and we are pleased that the report adds another voice to the choir,” said Property Council of Australia CEO Peter Verwer.

“If we are serious about creating future sustainable cities and affordable housing for all Australians it is clear that the time has come for reform.”

“Unnecessary planning delays and high levels of uncertainty in the outcomes mean that developments take far too long to deliver affordable housing and sustainable cities. This not only adds tens of thousands of dollars to the overall cost of a home, but does nothing to improve housing outcomes.”

This report identifies seven leading practices which mirror those of the National Development Assessment Forum, which supports the need for structural reform of development assessments as well as national strategic planning principles.

“Coupled with these leading practices are the forthcoming *National Urban Policy* and the recently released *Sustainable Australia - Sustainable Communities* strategy.

“The planning system is the lynchpin in the implementation of these policies. It is time for governments to take charge and introduce drastic reforms to rectify our current planning catastrophe,” he said

Another key Commission finding is the need for a fundamental shift to a more strategic approach to planning rather than focussing on specific deliverables.

“By taking a long-term, strategic approach to planning, the industry will be better placed to secure strong economic growth for our cities and communities,” said Mr Verwer.

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Caryn Kakas, Executive Director, Residential Development Council, said it is pleasing to note the Productivity Commission report also looked at the rampant use of fees, charges and levies to pay for vital community infrastructure.

“Residents of new communities are forced to pay for an ever-growing list of infrastructure items such as major arterial roads, public transport and even facilities such as libraries and community centres when in many instances these amenities will provide benefits across a whole city or even region.”

“The issues are outlined here, but do not provide the model for payment that assures nexus and equity of these charges,” said Ms Kakas.

The report also calls for community engagement to be made ‘early and in proportion to likely impacts’.

“The report makes the case for active up front community engagement followed by resolute implementation of strategic plans, preferably led by a single urban or metropolitan authority.”

“This Productivity Commission report emphatically reinforces the need for planning reform. To do this we need political leadership and housing policy that includes planning reform. If the States and Federal Government are serious about creating sustainable communities and affordable housing now is the time for this new level of management supported by an unshakeable willpower to implement vital changes the planning systems.”

“By streamlining and modernising Australia’s planning process we will position ourselves in a substantially stronger environment from which we can successfully deliver housing and key infrastructure for our growing population,” said Mr Verwer.

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