

LYV GROUP

HOUSING DELIVERED AS INFRASTRUCTURE

A Treasury Framework for Housing Throughput

Supporting Attachment to the Productivity Commission Inquiry into Housing Supply Regulation

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Australia's housing challenge is commonly framed as a shortage of homes.

As a result, policy discussions typically focus on increasing housing supply through planning reform, infrastructure investment, land release, housing finance initiatives and construction productivity improvements.

These interventions remain important.

However, they share a common assumption.

That increasing activity within individual components of the housing system will automatically increase housing outcomes.

Evidence suggests this assumption is incomplete.

Australia does not simply face a housing supply challenge.

Australia faces a housing delivery challenge.

The critical public policy question is not:

“How do we create more housing activity?”

The critical public policy question is:

“How do we improve the national system responsible for converting housing inputs into completed and occupied homes?”

This paper proposes that housing should increasingly be viewed through the same delivery lens applied to major infrastructure programmes.

Housing should be treated not only as a construction challenge, but as a national delivery challenge.

INTRODUCTION

Australia's housing debate is dominated by the concept of supply.

Supply remains important.

However, supply is often treated as though it were a single activity.

In reality, housing supply is the outcome of a complex delivery system.

Housing outcomes emerge through the interaction of:

- capital
- land
- planning
- infrastructure
- approvals
- procurement
- construction
- workforce capability
- governance
- occupancy

Failure at any stage can constrain housing delivery.

The challenge is therefore not solely increasing individual inputs.

The challenge is improving the performance of the system responsible for converting inputs into outcomes.

HOUSING AS INFRASTRUCTURE

Australia routinely delivers complex infrastructure programmes.

Transport networks.

Energy systems.

Water infrastructure.

Defence capability.

Major infrastructure programmes are rarely managed solely through funding commitments or project announcements.

They are supported by:

- programme governance
- delivery authorities
- accountability frameworks
- integrated planning
- performance reporting
- delivery assurance systems

Housing performs a similarly critical economic and social function.

Housing influences:

- labour mobility
- workforce participation
- economic productivity
- regional development
- social stability
- national economic performance

Despite its significance, housing delivery is often governed through fragmented project-based arrangements.

This creates a structural difference between how Australia manages infrastructure and how it manages housing.

The proposition of this paper is straightforward.

Housing should increasingly be treated as infrastructure.

Not because housing and infrastructure are identical.

But because both require coordinated delivery systems.

FROM HOUSING SUPPLY TO HOUSING THROUGHPUT

Current housing discussions often focus on supply.

Supply is important.

However, supply alone provides an incomplete picture of delivery performance.

Governments frequently measure:

- funding allocations
- housing announcements
- approvals
- commencements

These indicators measure activity.

They do not necessarily measure outcomes.

This paper proposes an alternative measure.

Housing Throughput.

Housing Throughput refers to the rate at which housing progresses through the delivery system and becomes occupied housing stock.

Throughput focuses attention on outcomes rather than inputs.

The objective is not simply more activity.

The objective is more completed and occupied homes.

THE NATIONAL HOUSING DELIVERY INDEX

A delivery-focused system requires a delivery-focused measurement framework.

This paper proposes a National Housing Delivery Index.

The purpose of the Index is to track housing throughout the full delivery lifecycle.

Stage One

Policy Allocation

Government targets, commitments and programme design.



Stage Two

Funding Commitment

Capital allocation and financial approval.



Stage Three

Project Approval

Planning and regulatory approvals.



Stage Four

Infrastructure Readiness

Utilities, roads, water, sewerage and enabling infrastructure.



Stage Five

Procurement and Contracting

Delivery partners engaged.

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Stage Six

Construction Commencement

Physical delivery begins.

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Stage Seven

Completion

Housing stock delivered.

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Stage Eight

Occupation

Homes occupied and contributing to national housing supply.

This framework improves visibility across the housing delivery system.

Most importantly, it reveals where housing is delayed, constrained or lost.

WHY EXISTING REFORMS OFTEN UNDERPERFORM

Australia has undertaken significant housing reform efforts.

These reforms often target specific constraints.

Planning Reform

Improves approvals.

Does not necessarily improve infrastructure sequencing.

Infrastructure Funding

Improves servicing capacity.

Does not necessarily improve delivery coordination.

Housing Finance

Improves capital availability.

Does not necessarily improve delivery capability.

Industrialised Construction

Improves production capability.

Does not necessarily improve integration into delivery systems.

Workforce Initiatives

Improve labour availability.

Do not necessarily improve end-to-end programme performance.

The issue is not that these reforms are ineffective.

The issue is that they are frequently implemented as separate interventions.

Housing outcomes are determined by the performance of the entire delivery system.

Improving one component does not automatically improve the performance of the whole system.

PROGRAMME GOVERNANCE

Infrastructure sectors generally recognise that complex outcomes require governance.

Housing increasingly exhibits similar characteristics.

Large-scale housing programmes involve:

- multiple agencies
- infrastructure providers
- planning authorities
- utilities
- financiers
- delivery partners

- community stakeholders

The greater the complexity, the greater the need for governance.

Effective governance improves:

- accountability
- sequencing
- decision-making
- risk management
- programme visibility

Future housing reforms should therefore consider governance as a delivery capability rather than an administrative function.

DELIVERY AUTHORITIES

A recurring feature of major infrastructure programmes is the presence of clear delivery accountability.

Housing delivery frequently lacks equivalent arrangements.

Consideration should be given to governance models capable of providing:

- delivery coordination
- performance monitoring
- reporting
- escalation pathways
- accountability

The purpose is not additional bureaucracy.

The purpose is clearer ownership of housing delivery outcomes.

The key question is not whether coordination should occur.

The key question is who is accountable for coordination.

REGULATORY REFORM THROUGH A DELIVERY LENS

The Productivity Commission Inquiry focuses on:

- approval processes
- land availability and use
- housing-enabling infrastructure

These are critical issues.

However, each should be assessed according to its impact on housing throughput.

Approvals should be assessed according to their impact on delivery timelines.

Land reforms should be assessed according to their ability to create development-ready opportunities.

Infrastructure frameworks should be assessed according to their ability to support housing delivery at scale.

The objective is not process efficiency alone.

The objective is delivery efficiency.

A FRAMEWORK FOR FUTURE REFORM

Future housing reform should increasingly focus on five areas.

1. Housing Throughput

Measure outcomes rather than activity.

2. Delivery Visibility

Track housing through the full delivery lifecycle.

3. Programme Governance

Strengthen accountability across major housing programmes.

4. Infrastructure Sequencing

Align infrastructure delivery with housing delivery.

5. Coordination Capability

Strengthen the mechanisms connecting housing system participants.

Together these reforms can improve the conversion of housing ambition into housing outcomes.

CONCLUSION

Australia's housing challenge should increasingly be viewed as a national delivery challenge.

Housing outcomes do not emerge from planning systems alone.

They do not emerge from funding systems alone.

They do not emerge from construction systems alone.

Housing outcomes emerge when multiple systems operate as a coordinated whole.

The central objective of future reform should therefore be improving housing throughput.

The measure of success is not the number of announcements made.

The measure of success is not the number of approvals granted.

The measure of success is the number of completed and occupied homes.

Housing Delivered as Infrastructure provides a framework for achieving that objective.

It shifts the policy conversation:

From activity to outcomes.

From projects to programmes.

From supply to throughput.

From intention to delivery.