

Kurt Dixon
[Redacted]
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Productivity Commission

Dear Productivity Commission:

Please find this submission in response to the Productivity Commission's Housing Supply Regulation, Interim Report recently exhibited to the public.

I am concerned about the interim report's recommendation for the removal of heritage conservation area planning controls for local councils as a means to achieve greater housing supply. Heritage conservation areas are vital to the protection of Australia's cultural heritage, particularly from a suburban perspective. These conservation areas collectively demonstrate how Australia's suburban development has shaped overtime, from late 19th Century Victorian-era timber weatherboard cottages to the introduction of bungalow style architecture during the inter-war era of the 1920s and 1930s. Protection of these areas are critical as they collectively provide local amenity and they boost standards of living for those that reside in them.

My concern is compounded by the fact that it appears that no consultation has yet to be undertaken with any heritage professionals or the heritage industry as a whole. The report identifies generally that future consultation will be necessary for the final report, however there is no specific mention of plans to consult with the heritage industry of which this report appears to specifically attack. I think this is incredibly concerning and would not value any report produced that attacks a specific industry contributing to the cultural wellbeing of Australia without actually consulting with them first.

Separately, speaking from the perspective of a resident of a newer housing development (Melonba NSW), I believe the lack of understanding of the common Australian person is a significant detriment to planning of housing developments. I have firsthand experience of complaints from those in the local community about poorly designed and integrated services and new housing. Infrastructure and the provision of services are rarely coordinated in a meaningful manner with the rushed delivery of housing, meaning residents struggle with limited parking, amenity, education, shopping, public transport and communal spaces, just to list a few. The removal of specific controls to rush through more houses will compound this issue further; more houses rushed in while adequate services cannot be provided will detriment the regular Australian person.

At present, new homes are also built by large developers like the recently administered Bathla Group to such a poor standard that so often the owners and renters have to shell out additional funds to fix basic things. For example, the incline of bathroom floors to ensure appropriate drainage or stormwater piping are common non-compliant aspects of new builds that cost Australians millions to fix. Removing regulations to rush through more housing will lead to even more shoddy developments that will cost Australians more to fix their homes, which, during a cost of living crisis, is even more detrimental to the Australian people. By removing regulations that ought to protect the Australian consumer so that developers can skip their due diligences and deliver worst builds at cheaper prices is so incredibly poor form that there wouldn't be a pub in the country where this would pass the test.

I strongly encourage the authors of this report to actually consult with Australians living in new developments to hear firsthand the problems new residents face with rushing through houses with no appropriate infrastructure plan. I also strongly urge the authors to undertake informed consultation with relevant industries (not just heritage but others like biodiversity) to actually deliver what Australia needs in a manner that works with Australia's cultural and natural environment. I am afraid that failing to do so would make the final report the Productivity Commission produce worth less than the value of the paper the report is printed on.

Sincerely,

Kurt Dixon