

# Sydney housing: Caution about reforms designed to speed up development, combat affordability crisis

By Riley Stuart

Mon 9 Jan 2017, 9:05am



**Photo:** The OECD warns that interest rate rises may be needed to cool a hot east coast housing market. (ABC News: Clarissa Thorpe)

The Baird Government has unveiled long-awaited planning reforms it says will combat Sydney's housing affordability crisis by speeding up the development application process.

## KEY POINTS:

- The NSW Government has proposed planning reforms it says will cut red tape
- One of those is expanding the 'complying development' assessment process
- Local councils have warned that could lead to 'riskier' developments being rubber stamped

Planning minister Rob Stokes said a raft of reforms, proposed today, were designed to cut red tape and give communities a bigger say in developments.

Today's blueprint comes after the Government tabled sweeping planning reforms in 2013, but did not follow through.

## KEY PLANNING CHANGES:

- 'Incentives' for developers to resolve disputes with neighbours
- Extending compliance development assessment process to include greenfield sites and terrace housing
- Standardising development control plans

Among the changes are standardising the development control plans and incentives for developers to resolve disputes with neighbours themselves, prior to submitting development applications to council.

However, Local Government New South Wales — the body representing municipalities around the state — is worried about a plan to expand 'complying development'.

Complying development refers to a fast-tracked approval process for 'straightforward' residential, commercial and industrial developments that currently covers most new one and two-storey dwellings.

As part of the proposed amendments to the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act, that would be expanded to include greenfield developments and terraced housing.

"Local Government is concerned about the proposal to expand complying development to riskier, larger-scale development, which could completely change the character of a local area," LGNSW president Keith Rhoades said.

"We welcome the Government's plans to address some existing issues with complying development, like requiring developers to pay a compliance levy and strengthening enforcement powers to manage illegal work, but we don't support expanding this model to larger-scale development.

**"Complying development means tick-a-box development — it gives developers and certifiers the green light to replace single houses with multiple townhouses."**

Sydney's population is expected to swell by 1.7 million by 2036, and Mr Stokes said 725,000 new homes would be required.

"What we're trying to do is achieve a balance but also recognise that our population is increasing and we do have affordability challenges here in Sydney," he said.

"We need a system that allows houses to be approved as fast as possible."



**Photo:** Planning Minister Rob Stokes (L) said the reforms proposed by Premier Mike Baird's (R) Government, were designed to cut red tape. (ABC News: Sarah Gerathy)

## **HARD TO GET DEVELOPMENTS BUILT: LABOR**

In November, the Government announced it was expecting an extra 200,000 homes would be built in Sydney in the next five years.

Labor's spokesperson for planning and infrastructure Michael Daley described the reforms as "disappointing".

**"The big issue in New South Wales is not the fact that you can't get a development application approved, it's that once you get your DA approved, it's really hard to get developments built," he said.**

"There's nothing — not a sausage — in these proposals that goes to that point."

The Government's proposed amendments are on public exhibition until March 10.