



Gecko - Gold Coast and Hinterland Environment Council

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John Hawkins
Committee Secretary
Senate Select Committee on Housing Affordability in Australia
Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

housing.sen@aph.gov.au

Re: Submission to Senate Inquiry on Housing Affordability

Gecko appreciates the opportunity to make a submission to the Senate Inquiry on Housing Affordability. We have read and support the submission made by the Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland Bayside Branch (WPSQ-BB).

We have also read and agree with the analysis by the Local Government Association of Queensland (2006) that land release is not the answer to housing affordability and that the whole issue is largely a beat-up by the Housing Industry Association and the Property Council of Australia, together with other vested interests, to pressure governments to release more land.

Demand - The demand for housing has largely been a creation of those same vested interests and the governments that have responded with baby bonuses and increased immigration at the expense of Australia's biodiversity and landscape protection. Attempts to alleviate housing pressure should include a reversal of policies designed to increase that pressure, that is, those same baby bonuses and high levels of immigration. While the State and Federal Government pursue the fool's dream of endless growth the problem of housing affordability will only be exacerbated.

Skilled Workers - To assert, as some vested interests have done, that we need to import more 'skilled workers' in construction to make housing more affordable is a nonsense. Firstly, our local governments say that one of the reasons that we need to continue to cave in to developers' demands is to continue to employ those currently working in housing construction. Secondly, it appears that the demand for more 'skilled workers' will drive down the level of affordability of housing for our current 'skilled workers', both due to lowering their pay and/or employment security and due to increased demand for the product.

Sustainability – Housing affordability is a complex issue driven by a number of factors, such as demand, social and demographic changes, resource shortages (especially water and soon to be fuel) and tax and finance structures, and needs to be addressed within a context of sustainability and not be a scheme to facilitate growth at the expense of Australia's biodiversity and the life support systems of existing residents and future generations.

Unsustainable growth – If we continue to pander to the demands of the housing development industry and allow further destruction of our open spaces, farmland and bushland to satisfy the industry's lust for land, it will not solve the housing affordability problem. Continuing to open more land and not recognising limits to growth will only facilitate the continuation of more demand. Our unsustainable population growth is creating a demand that cannot be managed and is diminishing the region's resources and increasing their costs.

Resources and infrastructure - Currently our unsustainable growth has forced us to commit billions of dollars just to supply water, the fundamental necessity of life, and to spend little on enhancing our quality of life or to deal with issues like housing affordability.

Lower the growth rate - If the Government would confront the rate of growth and move to lower it, then Australia would have some chance of sustaining a reasonable quality of life for residents, supported by a diverse economy. Under this scenario we could address housing affordability in a sustainable manner.

Urban land development authorities – The establishment of urban land development authorities, similar to that recently established in Queensland, will destroy our environment and override residents' concerns about development, the protection of their lifestyles and the biodiversity of the region.

Loss of democracy – These “independent” authorities, as the one announced in Queensland with no community consultation, will have the power to override elected community representatives and local government planning schemes and ignore the provisions for environmental protection in state legislation and in regional plans.

No accountability - The provision of the new legislation in Queensland to remove all constraints to development in areas the Minister declares to be ‘urban development areas’ or ‘major development areas’ represents a return to the past era of no accountability.

Ecological sustainability - rushing development through at the expense of existing communities makes a mockery of community consultation and environmental protection. All levels of Government in Australia signed the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Environment in 1992 and committed to ecologically sustainable development.

Conclusion - High population growth is a major driver of many of our social, economic and environmental problems. In particular, it is the principle cause, as openly anticipated and welcomed by land speculators and property developers, of Australia's housing hyper-inflation.

We call upon the members of the Senate to re-commit to genuine sustainable development and real community consultation about the future of our communities and rein in the rampant urban development that no one but the development lobby wants.

Gecko sincerely hopes that the Senate Inquiry into Housing Affordability will result in acknowledgement of limits to growth, lowering of population size and better protection for existing communities and the biodiversity and landscape values of this continent.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C Adams'.

Rose Adams, Secretary
Gecko – Gold Coast & Hinterland Environment Council