

Event: Senate Select Committee Hearing on Intergenerational Housing Inequity

Date: 15 June 2026

Speaker: Darren Disney, Master Builders National Director for External Affairs & Engagement

Opening Statement

E&OE

Thank you Chair and Senators for the opportunity to appear today on behalf of Master Builders Australia. My name is Darren Disney and I am the National Director of External Affairs and Engagement and I am joined by our Chief Economist, Shane Garrett.

Master Builders Australia is the nation's peak building and construction industry association, representing more than 32,000 building and construction businesses across the residential, commercial and civil sectors.

As we well know, Australians access to affordable housing is far more challenging today than it was for previous generations. Whether someone is seeking to secure a rental property, buy their first home, or responding to an economic shock later in life.

From our perspective, the most effective way to address these challenges and to make housing more affordable is by increasing the supply of homes across all tenures, including owner-occupied, rental, social and affordable housing.

There are 5 numbers I'd like to bring to the Committee's attention that help paint a picture of the magnitude of the challenges faced by home builders.

- The housing construction workforce is short by 116,000 people
- The cost of building a detached house is 48% more expensive than before the pandemic
- The regulatory burden per new house is estimated to cost up to \$320,000
- The rule book for home builders started out as a 'glove box compendium' of 93 pages, but is now 889 pages.
- Finally, house builds are expected to fall short of the Housing Accord target by more than 200,000.

Australia's housing challenge is not the result of a single policy failure. It reflects a combination of rising construction costs, labour shortages, infrastructure constraints, planning and regulatory burdens, and taxation settings.

To put this another way, as the Committee's earlier witness, Dr Spiller from the National Housing Supply and Affordability Council, said, "...gaining approvals is not really the bottleneck now. The bottleneck is achieving a feasible development."

So, what can government do?

In brief, Master Builders would like to see the government be far more ambitious and targeted than what we saw in last month's federal Budget.

1. The regulatory burden on builders needs to be reduced, while maintaining standards in safety and quality. The work underway to modernise the **National Construction Code** is a welcomed first step.
2. **Tax settings** need to incentivise investment and project feasibility. We need a holistic approach taken to tax reform that leads to a turbocharging of new housing supply, instead of the ad hoc changes we have seen in this year's budget.
3. **Our workforce shortage** requires a better targeted uplift in skilled apprenticeships, supported by a better targeted skilled migration program to fill the gap.
4. **Enabling infrastructure funding** needs a further significant uplift to unlock new developments.
5. We need to continue to invest in the **regulatory agencies** that support the building and construction if we are to support the industry's growth and productivity – while working to reduce red tape.

The building and construction industry stands ready to deliver the homes Australia needs. However, to do so, we need governments to focus on the practical barriers that prevent projects from proceeding or that push up the cost. It's clear what parts are broken, what we need now is action.

Thank you and we welcome your questions.