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SYDNEY NEEDS A HOUSE DOCTOR



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Sydney's housing supply needs a big boost and much of this could come from more radical changes to the planning system. Planning Minister Rob Stokes has indicated Sydney has a shortfall of 100,000 homes. Federal minister for cities Angus Taylor says Sydney needs 10,000 new homes a year. Clearly a big

changes are needed. Here are some options. The government must look at the poor transfer rate from housing approvals to completions. Planning department figures show that only 58 per cent of approvals become completed homes over a four-year period.

This is partly due to excessive conditions often by government agencies. The new reforms do help by giving the planning department a stick over other agencies but many conditions by councils make projects unviable.

Another idea is to open up restrictive zoning where only commercial buildings are allowed but not apartments. A similar zoning issue is emerging where inner city industrial land is banning housing even where the industrial uses have moved to Western

Sydney where the jobs are needed. Mixed use zoning in these areas could lead to many new homes being built.

Another area to look at is excessive design standards. A recent review of apartment design standards in Victoria found the NSW controls for solar access to 70 per cent of apartments were unrealistic and have therefore not been adopted. In Sydney it is very difficult to achieve the 70 per cent so many projects are not proceeding.

A relaxation of this rule would boost housing supply.

Finally, an affordable housing boost could occur if the Affordable Rental Housing planning policy was modified slightly to allow 20 per cent extra floor space for affordable apartments.

Up to 40,000 affordable rental

homes could then be built over 10 years.

The improvements to the planning system announced by Rob Stokes are a step in the right direction but they are certainly not of the scale and impact that Robert Menzies initiated after the World War II.

The scale of the problem is getting bigger as Sydney housing prices continue to climb. Some bold changes are needed as outlined here but, more importantly, the government needs to appoint a Menzies-like commissioner of housing supply for Sydney to drive the housing outcomes of the planning system. In other words, someone to make sure these reforms actually happen.

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