



Australian
Institute of
Architects

NSW

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The Royal Australian Institute of Architects
trading as Australian Institute of Architects

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The Hon. Premier Chris Minns MP
52 Martin Place
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Premier Minns

Earlier this month you announced a series of changes and challenges to the Development Industry in your Bradfield Address. Two announcements caught our attention:

1. You have announced an international competition for the design of a series of residential buildings (terrace houses up to 6 level apartment buildings) with the aim of achieving a level of 'pre approval' – to enable quicker and higher quality 'shovel ready' solutions for infill housing, for builders and developers to roll out ASAP.
2. That design competitions will be deleted from requirements for high density State Significant Development projects around rail and metro stations and infrastructure projects.

We congratulate you on your agenda of change. We would like to make a few suggestions that in the experience of our members will get you closer to what you are aiming for, quicker, and with more political agency.

Missing Middle Housing

Outcomes for missing middle housing will not be delivered as a consequence of an international competition. Victoria ran a competition 3 years ago for exactly the same challenge. Four worthy projects were selected as winners. To date, none have been delivered despite the 'preapproval' status that they possess. Instead of spending time and money on a competition for sites that don't exist, we suggest that a more expedient process would be to appoint some of our brightest Architects in NSW to directly design a series of well-considered examples – understanding environment, lifestyles, cultural background, and construction strategies. The buildings would be real projects, for Housing NSW and Landcom, the outcomes of which could form a series of pattern book designs as you have requested. The benefit being that the pattern book examples would have been tested in real time, to ensure their adequacy and effectiveness.



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High Density Competitions

Competitions, run by developers in collaboration with government for high density projects around infrastructure projects such as train and metro stations are a good investment for developers and the community. For the developers they get a variety of ideas solving specific site challenges, for the community they get design led solutions, for the consent authority they are engaged early – enabling a clear understanding of the specific regulatory environments impacting a site.

Generally, through the competition process wins can be achieved for both a community and the developer, rather than a stalemate process that results from a ‘straight to DA’ design processes. As an industry our lived experience is that competitions can reduce the time from site purchase to digging a hole. It is correct that there is a greater up front time investment – in the initial stages, but this leads to significant savings further down the track during development assessment, generally negating rework, resubmission and/or Land & Environment Court processes. Competitions don’t help ‘tick and flick’ developers, but they do help committed long term developers and investors who want to make money while delivering quality community and built outcomes.

We believe you are focusing on the right thing – getting housing happening faster. We too want quicker, more succinct approval processes. However, we don’t think that design is what is slowing the pace down, so instead of holding design competitions for sites that don’t exist, and cancelling competitions for sites that do, we believe our suggestion of your Government directly appointing architects to deliver housing for the Department of Housing and Landcom to develop and test a series of ‘pattern book’ designs for use by the broader development community. We also think that we shouldn’t give up on demanding good design for high intensity sites – the competition process doesn’t slow the process down, but it does ensure that the community get the best outcomes on our most public sites.

We welcome the opportunity to talk to you in more detail about our suggestion – lending you the lived experience of our 4500 members based in NSW.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Best Regards,

Adam Hadow
President
NSW Chapter
Australian Institute of Architects