



OPENING STATEMENT

Environment Protection Reform Bill 2025 – Senate Inquiry

Thank you for the opportunity for the Housing Industry Association (HIA) to appear today.

I welcome the chance to speak to the Committee about the implementation of the new EPBC legislative reforms. That in and of itself, rather than debating whether long overdue reform in the problematic 1999 EPBC laws should occur, is an important milestone.

At the outset, I want to make one key point: the passage of the EPBC laws is only the beginning — not the job done. The success of these reforms will rest entirely on how effectively they are implemented. In many respects, implementation is as critical, if not more critical, than the policy design itself.

To achieve this, the 2026–27 Budget must allocate sufficient funding for a comprehensive implementation and education program. The reforms — including the National Environmental Standards and the suite of supporting instruments — are too important to risk poor execution or inconsistencies in application.

Implementation also demands transparency, clarity, and accountability. We believe there should be a publicly available implementation roadmap, with defined milestones and metrics, reported to government and industry at six-month intervals. This is vital for tracking progress, identifying emerging issues early, and maintaining stakeholder confidence in the reform process.

We remain concerned about the development of bilateral agreements with the states, as well as the progress of strategic assessments and regional plans. These are the foundational components of the new system — everything else hinges on them. Yet, to date, there has been little visibility on their status, timelines, or the expected pathway to completion.

I also want to acknowledge the work of the Housing Strike Team. Their efforts to address the backlog of more than 26,000 long-stalled homes have been significant — with one recent project approved in just 64 days. This must not be the exception but the new benchmark for timely, high-quality decision-making. For this reason, the Strike Team should be made permanent, and resourced not only to clear historic backlogs but to ensure the system performs at the pace the community and economy demand.

Finally, improving transparency for proponents is essential. The system would benefit from a real-time approvals dashboard, allowing industry and the public to see where projects are in the process — a modern, user-centred approach, effectively an “Uber for approvals”. This would support accountability, help deliver statutory timeframes, and reduce reliance on ROIs and stop-clock mechanisms.

These reforms present a once-in-a-generation opportunity to deliver an environmental approvals system that is credible, timely and trusted and removes the high levels of duplication in the system.

Getting the implementation right is essential. We stand ready to support the Committee in its work and to provide any further assistance it requires.

Thank you. I am happy to take your questions.