

# Unblocking Homes Program

This document answers frequently asked questions about the Unblocking Homes Program, an \$11.5 million suite of initiatives to support councils move the backlog of planning proposals and development applications to unblock delivery of up to tens of thousands of homes in the planning system.

## What is the Unblocking Homes Program?

With housing becoming increasingly unaffordable and our population growing, the NSW Government has committed to supporting councils to unlock tens of thousands of homes in the housing pipeline.

Councils play a pivotal role in boosting the state's housing supply, but many are dealing with resourcing issues, such as a shortage of planning staff, to assess the growing number of planning proposals and development applications needed to achieve housing supply goals for their growing communities.

The NSW Government is supporting councils through the Unblocking Homes Program, an \$11.5 million coordinated package of 7 initiatives for the 2022/23 Financial Year to boost resourcing for councils to help progress the backlog of planning proposals and development applications to help drive the supply of new houses needed in the state over the next 4 years.

## What are the details of the 7 initiatives that make up the program?

The 7 initiatives each target a particular issue currently blocking the delivery of housing in regional and metropolitan areas in NSW:

- **Regional Housing Flying Squad (new round)**  
Following a highly successful pilot in early 2022, the program will be expanded to help under-resourced regional councils by outsourcing the assessment of housing DAs to a panel of planners administered and managed by the department's Planning Delivery Unit (PDU). The Flying Squad includes an 'Incubator Program' that will enable graduates and students with no planning experience to train alongside experienced planners. They will then be placed in a suitable role in a regional council to help provide a long-term solution to the planner shortage.
- **Planning Proposal Support and Expert DA Assessment for complex, high value, high yield projects (new project)** - a framework has been developed to support councils with expertise and resources to help them finalise decisions on rezonings and development applications which contribute to significant housing supply.
  - **Housing Planning Proposal Support**  
This program identifies large housing planning proposals and what support might be needed to unblock their progress in the system and finalise on time. Support includes policy guidance, planning assessment, technical mapping assistance and help resolving agency issues. The department is

reaching out to councils with relevant planning proposals to consult on what support they may need.

- **Housing Application Expert Assessment**

We will provide help for councils to progress large and complex housing development applications already in the system, through a range of services like preparing assessment reports or collaborating with agencies to resolve issues.

The focus will be on large and complex residential subdivision, seniors housing and multi-unit dwelling projects that are local or regionally significant development. The department is reaching out to councils with these types of applications lodged in the system to identify what support they may need. There is no change to the consent authority, with determinations made by council or a planning panel.

- **Local Housing Strategy Implementation** – supporting Greater Sydney councils to achieve their housing supply goals through a consistent approach to local housing strategies, reporting and monitoring.
- **Regional Housing Strategic Planning Fund** – competitive grant funding for regional councils’ strategic planning resourcing to help fast-track housing supply.
- **Faster Local Assessment Grant** - supporting 14 high councils with a high number of un-determined development applications or planning proposals to speed up the assessments that lead to the delivery of new homes and make long term improvement to assessment timeframes.
- **Regional Case Management and Planning Concierge** – helping case-manage the parties involved in blocked development applications or rezoning and act as a central point of contact for guidance on the NSW planning system.
- **Regionally Significant Development Assessments capacity building and faster assessments** – assisting applicants, councils and planning panels to align and resolve regionally significant development assessments that lead to the delivery of large numbers of homes.

### Why is an Unblocking Homes Program needed?

Through our own data and what we’ve heard directly from councils, we know that many LGAs are experiencing challenges with finding and retaining planning staff to process the large amounts of assessments in the planning system that have the potential to unlock hundreds of thousands of new homes.

The Unblocking Homes Program builds on momentum that the NSW Government is creating to work in partnership with councils, industry developers and community providers to create a faster, simpler planning system and deliver more homes sooner of the right type and in the right location.

The program will give industry, developers and community providers greater certainty and clarity to progress projects that will improve housing supply, provide critical infrastructure and ultimately make housing more affordable and accessible for people across NSW.

### What is the momentum this program is building on?

The NSW Government has made significant progress in recent years to create a faster, better planning system. During the 2021-2022 financial year, development applications were approved by consent authorities including the Department, planning panels and councils that could see 114,881 homes built across NSW.

### Is my council eligible for support and/or funding?

Each of the initiatives has specific criteria to target issues which councils need to meet to be eligible. However, there is support available through the Unblocking Homes Program for all NSW councils that require the support.

### How will you ensure a rigor is retained in the assessment process when progressing projects more quickly?

This program is about boosting assessment capacity and having more people share the load to reach the point of decision quicker. Normal decision-making processes will remain for the determination of development applications. Councils, local or regional planning panels are responsible for making decisions.

We're boosting resources to help complete assessments more efficiently – that doesn't impact the ongoing rigor of the assessment process. The aim is always best practice assessments with quick timeframes for homes where they are most needed.

### When does the work of the new Regional Housing Flying Squad start?

An expression of interest for the first intake of the Flying Squad was open to regional councils between 17-28 October 2022. During this period, councils were able to nominate any housing DAs they would like to outsource to the Flying Squad for assessment. Assessments will commence on 7 November 2022.

### How successful has was the first Regional Housing Flying Squad program?

The pilot program, which commenced in April 2022, saw the assessment of 103 DAs, which will result in the delivery of approximately 2,420 homes across 21 local government areas in regional NSW. The capital value of these DAs combined was \$487m.

During the pilot period we had a positive response from councils, and numerous requests from councils for the program are to be extended into the future.

### How many DAs can councils put forward to the Regional Housing Flying Squad?

There is no limit to the number of DAs councils can put forward for assessment, provided they meet the program's requirements.

To be eligible, nominated DAs need to deliver housing and be lodged in the Planning Portal.

### How can I find out more on the Unblocking Homes Program?

- Visit the [website](#) for more details on the suite of programs and the relevant contacts for each program
- Contact the Unblocking Homes Program team via email: [Unblocking.Homes@dpie.nsw.gov.au](mailto:Unblocking.Homes@dpie.nsw.gov.au).