



We need cheaper homes, not cheaper standards

Proposals to strip back the National Construction Code and treat accessibility and liveability requirements as “optional extra” will not solve Australia’s housing crisis and will severely impact the community long-term.

National Shelter CEO Jackson Hills said housing affordability and housing quality are not competing objectives.

“There is no question that building homes in Australia has become extremely difficult and expensive but focusing solely on gutting building standards completely ignores the real problem,” Mr Hills said.

“We cannot build our way out of the housing crisis by making homes harder to live in.

“The debate must focus on where the costs actually sit. The cost of a home is driven by the cost of land, taxes and charges applied to housing, and the cost of construction itself. If we are serious about making housing more affordable for all Australians we need to address all three.

“Requirements like step-free showers, mobility access and energy performance cannot become an optional extra. Accessibility standards are not gold-plating - they allow older Australians and people with disability to stay in their own home rather than being moved out of it.

“A step-free shower or a bathroom that fits a walking frame costs very little at the design stage, but thousands of dollars to renovate later on. If we don’t build accessible homes today we will be paying more in the future through costly retrofits, higher healthcare spending and greater pressure on the aged care system.

“The challenge is separating bureaucracy from good standards. Some regulations create delays without improving outcomes. Others establish the minimum standards Australians should reasonably expect in a modern home. We shouldn’t throw both into the same basket.

“Australians absolutely need cheaper housing. But cheaper housing shouldn’t mean lower quality housing. A home isn’t just another product. It’s where people raise children, age, recover from illness and build their lives.

“We are all for cutting red tape. But not for cutting dignity. Housing affordability and quality are not competing objectives. Australia urgently needs more affordable housing, but that should not come at the expense of safety, accessibility and human dignity. An objective might be cheaper homes, but we cannot afford cheaper standards.”

