

Housing Supply Expert Panel communique

8 April 2020

The Housing Supply Expert Panel (the panel) met for the sixth time on 8 April 2020. The emerging COVID-19 pandemic and its potential impact on the community and housing supply were the focus of the meeting.

The Deputy Director-General (Planning Group) of the Department of State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning provided an overview of the department's ongoing response to COVID-19. The panel noted the Queensland Government focus has expanded from the immediate health crisis to the broader economy.

The panel discussed the impact the crisis was having in their respective fields, noting among other matters that:

- some states have identified the need to fast-track new infrastructure or maintenance to stimulate the economy and support shovel-ready development
- early signs indicate the property market has been affected, with a decline in searches for new homes and increase in search for rental listings in most capital cities
- an increase in homelessness and people moving from domestic violence has been observed
- there has been a lack of clarity around how landlords are expected to absorb costs amid the eviction moratorium
- there may be a demographic impact, for example decreased interstate or international immigration or changing housing structures due to adult children returning home for financial reasons
- parts of the private planning industry are investigating how they can assist the construction industry by improving the efficiency of planning systems.

The panel discussed potential opportunities and challenges for housing supply in SEQ in the economic recovery from COVID-19 and agreed that there is an opportunity for new housing models and governments to develop a bold agenda for housing supply over the coming months.

Brisbane City Council officers attended the meeting to provide an update on the Brisbane Housing Strategy. The panel thanked Council for taking up the opportunity to engage with them and indicated their support for an ongoing dialogue as the Brisbane Housing Strategy is prepared by Council. The panel encouraged Council to consider COVID-19's impact on the strategy over the next 18 months.

The panel discussed the department's work program for the Growth Monitoring Program in 2020, including preparation of the 2020 Land Supply and Development Monitoring (LSDM) Report. The panel was supportive of fine-grained reporting of 'middle dwellings' using Australian Bureau of Statistic's building approvals data in response to feedback on the 2019 report.

The panel noted the potential for a program of engagement with local governments and potential adjustment to its priorities for 2020 in response to COVID19. The panel discussed its role providing advice an advocacy as part of the economic recovery over the next 18 months.

The importance of the Market Factors section of the LSDM report was also noted given its ability to provide context about trends in development activity which may emerge as the pandemic evolves.

Comments from the panel chair, Julie Saunders:

“In this unprecedented time in history the role of housing supply, employment areas and development more broadly, are critical in our recovery post COVID-19. The Panel’s 5 key stimulus actions provide direction for the government as it develops its Recovery Plan. We thank the Minister for the opportunity to present these. The Panel has also offered its assistance to the Minister on a more regular basis, as an advisory group where needed. Most importantly though, is the continuation of the monitoring program, and to build upon the good work to date. COVID-19 impacts will no doubt flow through into the demand equation but more importantly, ensuring supply is enabled through stimulus initiatives is critically important. This year we look forward to talking with local governments as part of our engagement program. The opportunity for BCC to present and discuss the development of their Housing Strategy was a great start to this initiative. The Panel looks forward to a productive year.”

The panel is expected to formally meet again in May 2020, with more regular, short-form, virtual meetings proposed while the panel is unable to meet in person.