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Regulation Rumble 2025

BCA | Business Council of Australia



Comparing regulations and tax policies across states and territories to inspire a race to the top.

Identifying what works

The only way to sustainably lift living standards and grow real wages is through faster productivity growth.

Poor regulation and red tape, and poorly targeted taxes, make it more difficult and more costly to run a business, and delivers less productive outcomes. That means less jobs and less investment by the private sector.

In contrast, well designed regulation means less unnecessary red tape and more productive businesses, supporting job creation, better products, and lower prices for consumers. That's why earlier this year the BCA called for a 25 per cent reduction in regulatory costs by 2030.

The BCA prepares Regulation Rumble to identify good regulatory and tax practices across Australia, to highlight what is working well and encourage states and territories to learn from each other. For the third year in a row, it compares state and territory planning systems, payroll taxes, land taxes, licensing, and other regulation that may be holding back business activity across Australia.

It presents the BCA's view on how the states and territories compare. The rankings are based on policy that has been implemented through to

mid-2025. That means that prospective policies announced but not yet in place are not factored into results.

The research in this paper has been put together by experts in the planning industry, together with economists and policy experts with expertise in taxation and regulatory reform. It builds on previous editions of Regulation Rumble, as well as policy work by the BCA around regulation and productivity, and on housing supply. Those policy pieces are available on our website.

This year, we have added to the scope of Regulation Rumble, ranking insurance levies charged by the states and territories. We have also expanded the metrics used to assess planning system performance.

By combining the 'cost and regulation ranking' together with the 'planning ranking' we identify the best jurisdictions in the nation in which to do business.



Recognising complexity and work underway

The need for better regulation is now a welcome feature on the national policy agenda.

Governments across the country are working to improve their regulatory settings to lift economic performance, providing a better environment to do business and support the broader economy.

Regulation Rumble is playing its part in helping drive that positive change with a focusing effect on important pieces of regulation and taxation.

In particular, we recognise that most state and territory governments are moving ahead with reforms to deliver more housing supply. That means many announcements have been made in the planning space, a major component of Regulation Rumble. Most significantly, in New South Wales, Victoria, and Western Australia, there have been substantial and much welcome changes to improve planning systems. Some of those changes have been implemented, but others are in development or still to be legislated. Major planning system changes have been outlined in more detail in the planning master scorecard. It is important to note that even once in place, some of these will take time to see results that are measurable.

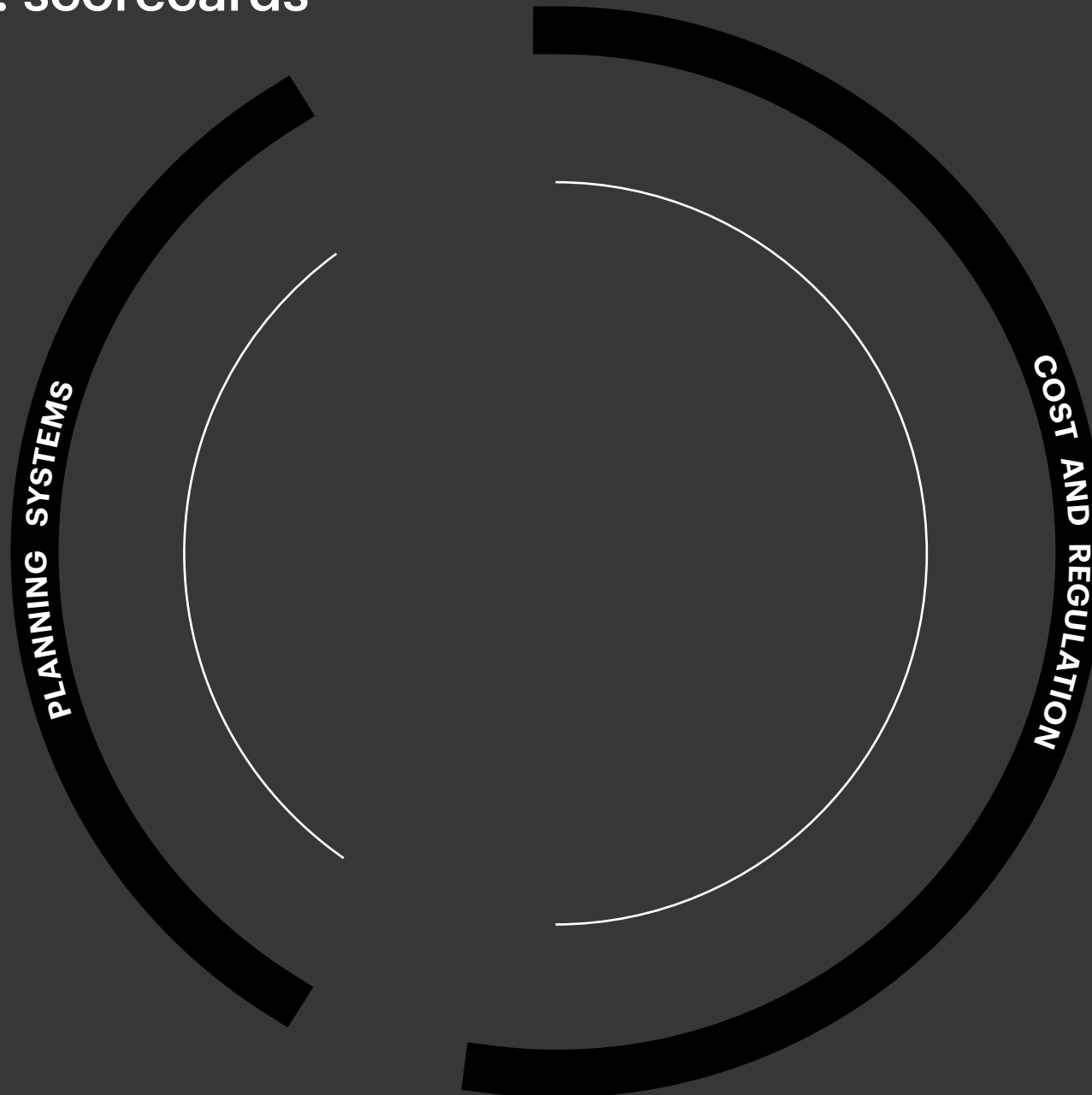
The BCA also recognises that the larger states are likely to face greater complexity in terms of the projects that they have to assess. That complexity naturally leads to systems that are designed to deal with greater variation and scale of projects, and potentially longer decision-making timeframes. This is an additional burden that those systems need to carry which may not be faced by smaller jurisdictions. Those larger jurisdictions however also have more resources to put towards their systems. Ultimately, Regulation Rumble is intended to assess the environment that is experienced by businesses.

Capturing a point in time

 *Regulation Rumble 2025 captures a point in time, being mid-2025. Changes that occur after that are not captured, and will be incorporated into the next edition.*



Overview: scorecards



Best for business in 2025

In 2025 the BCA has again found that overall, South Australia has the best regulatory and tax settings for doing business in Australia. This is the third year that South Australia has topped the Regulation Rumble rankings.

Our comparison finds that South Australia comes out in front in terms of its payroll tax system and across aspects of its planning system. The state also ranks in the top three performers for property taxes and charges, and business licensing.

South Australia does however have room for improvement. It has relatively restrictive retail trading settings compared with much of the nation. It also ranked last in the new insurance duties score card. Generally, however, in comparative terms today, the state still provides the best environment in which to do business.

Amongst the states and territories, Victoria remains as having the most work to do in improving its business environment. Disappointingly, this is consistent with last year's ranking. While its planning system ranks in the top half of the nation, it is the uncompetitive ranking for property taxes and charges, payroll taxes, and business licensing requirements, that heavily weigh down the state's



performance. That means Victoria continues to have much room for improvement to make it competitive from a business perspective.

As the second most populous state in the country, Victoria accounts for almost a quarter of the nation's gross domestic product. So a poor performance for the state has an outsized impact on the nation's global competitiveness.

Compared with last year, the Northern Territory has moved up to third place in the rankings. This has been driven by a relative improvement in planning performance, coupled with an already strong performance on regulation and taxes.

1st	South Australia
2nd	Tasmania
3rd	Northern Territory
4th	Australian Capital Territory
5th	New South Wales
6th	Queensland
7th	Western Australia
8th	Victoria

Approach to ranking

The patchwork of regulation across the nation discourages investment and is a barrier for companies to expand and trade across state lines or overseas.

A competitive tax system, and effective and efficient regulation, are part of the economic fundamentals necessary for a more resilient, diversified, and dynamic economy.

Regulation Rumble is based on research by urban planning professionals, together with the BCA's economists and policy experts. The rankings are based on analysis of current policy settings as of mid-2025, including state and territory budgets and current legislation, together with outcome data that provides real world planning system performance.

Because Regulation Rumble 2025 is focused on the performance and policies in place as at the end of the 2025 financial year, policies that have been announced, but are not yet in place, are not captured in the rankings. This is particularly relevant for planning systems, with several states having announced legislative reforms that are forthcoming.

All states and territories should strive for best practice regulatory settings. In the coming years, as reforms and changes occur, we hope to see

jurisdictions rise up the ranking as they seek to outperform others in a race to the top. Together this will lift Australia's productivity and facilitate further business investment and employment growth.

Further detail on each of the individual scorecards and the methodology used is contained in the background reports to Regulation Rumble 2025. These separately cover 'costs and regulation' and 'planning systems', and both are available on the BCA's website.

The BCA has selected metrics that impact businesses across the nation, imposed at a state and territory level, to rank how jurisdictions perform in relative terms.

Jurisdictions that achieve a higher ranking are generally better placed to capture business investment and support employment growth. The rankings are from a business and customer perspective. There are ten individual scorecards, across two distinct areas (shown right).

The combined 'best for business' ranking applies a 70 per cent weighting to cost and regulation, and a 30 per cent weighting to planning systems. This is consistent with last year's approach. The following pages expand on the detail in each of these two areas.

COST AND REGULATION

- Taxes on employing workers (payroll taxes).
- Charges for owning property (land tax and stamp duty).
- Flexibility of retail trading hours.
- Cost of workers compensation schemes.
- Licensing and requirements to do business.
- Cost of insurance duties.

PLANNING SYSTEMS

- Efficiency in assessment and decision-making processes.
- Consistency in land use planning, based on standardisation, paperwork, and flexibility for proponents.
- Certainty in land use planning, based on regulated timeframes, delegations, and development contribution approaches.
- Transparency in land use planning.

COST AND REGULATIONS



COST AND REGULATION: Best in 2025

This master scorecard ranks the states and territories' taxation, regulatory cost, and trading regulation from a business perspective. It brings together six elements. Each element is expanded on in its own scorecard:

- 1 Taxes on employing workers (payroll taxes).
- 2 Charges for owning property (land tax and stamp duty).
- 3 Flexibility of retail trading hours.
- 4 Cost of workers compensation schemes.
- 5 Licensing requirements to do business.
- 6 **NEW** Insurance duties charged to businesses.

Updates since 2024

From an assessment perspective, we have one additional scorecard not included last year, on insurance duties. This has been added given it is a cost burden on top of insurance products often required to do business, and because different jurisdictions have taken very different approaches to this cost.

In key policy changes since last year, there have been amendments to payroll taxes in the Northern Territory, Victoria, and Australian Capital Territory, and land taxation or stamp duty changes in New South Wales and South Australia.

Overall cost and regulation outcome

Regulation Rumble 2025 finds that South Australia is the best performing jurisdiction in terms of the

regulatory environment and taxation, followed by the Northern Territory, in line with last year's rankings. The Australian Capital Territory has moved up to third place this year, having come first in the new insurance duties scorecard.

South Australia performs best on payroll tax and also ranks highly in terms of property costs and licensing. The Northern Territory excels in retail trading flexibility and licensing requirements, and also ranks in the top half of states in terms of payroll tax.

Victoria is the least competitive state or territory in terms of cost and regulation. Its property tax settings and licensing requirements were the least competitive nationally, and it also ranked uncompetitively in terms of payroll tax costs.

1st	South Australia
2nd	Northern Territory
3rd	Australian Capital Territory
4th	New South Wales
5th	Tasmania
6th	Queensland
7th	Western Australia
8th	Victoria

1 Payroll tax

Payroll tax is an additional cost that businesses must absorb when they hire more staff. A national business must also deal with eight different payroll tax regimes with differences in rates, thresholds, scaling systems, exemptions, and administration across the country.

This can deter a business from expanding and hiring workers in a particular jurisdiction, which is counterproductive for governments seeking to create more jobs.

What was measured?



Highest payroll tax rates charged
(including levies and surcharges).

Thresholds for when payroll tax is applicable.

Payroll tax rates charged for different payroll sizes.

Alignment of payroll tax revenue rulings.

1st	South Australia
2nd	New South Wales
3rd	Northern Territory
4th	Queensland
5th	Tasmania
6th	Western Australia
7th	Victoria
8th	Australian Capital Territory

1. Payroll tax (continued)

Key findings

South Australia has the lowest payroll tax rate for large employers and the third highest threshold. With its low payroll tax rate and its progressive rate and deduction system, South Australia also leads the way for the lowest payroll tax rates for small expanding businesses.

The Northern Territory, which has increased the annual tax-free threshold from \$1.5 million to \$2.5 million, has improved its position from last year to hold third place outright (previously joint with Queensland).

The Australian Capital Territory imposes the highest basic flat rate for payroll tax, with large businesses facing additional burden through an increased 'large business surcharge'. While the Australian Capital Territory has the second-highest tax-free threshold, because it has a high tax rate, the threshold benefit is rapidly offset as payroll costs increase.

Despite changes in the tax-free thresholds in Victoria, Victoria's threshold remains the lowest in the nation, now tied with Western Australia. The Northern Territory has increased its threshold, and now has the highest tax-free threshold nationally.

The extent to which each jurisdiction has adopted payroll tax revenue rulings affects the level of consistency experienced by businesses operating

across multiple states and territories. New South Wales continues to lead in the number of revenue rulings adopted, followed closely by Victoria and Tasmania, with Queensland and South Australia also having adopted many. In contrast, the Australian Capital Territory and Western Australia have adopted significantly fewer rulings, with Western Australia adopting the fewest overall.

The Victorian and Queensland payroll tax systems are unique in that they have reduced rates for regional employers. We have not accounted for regional rates in our rankings, given their targeted nature.

	Top rate (including levies)	Threshold
NSW	5.45%	\$1,200,000
VIC	6.85%	\$1,000,000
QLD	5.70%	\$1,300,000
SA	4.95%	\$1,500,000
WA	5.50%	\$1,000,000
TAS	6.10%	\$1,250,000
ACT	7.85%	\$2,000,000
NT	5.50%	\$2,500,000

What changed?

Major policy changes

- The Northern Territory increased the annual tax-free threshold from \$1.5 million to \$2.5 million, which helped to lift its ranking. This was despite changes to the phasing of the deductible amount.
- Victoria raised the tax-free threshold from \$900,000 to \$1 million in addition to an increased deduction phase out rate, from 45 per cent to 50 per cent.
- The Australian Capital Territory increased the large business surcharge rates by 0.25 per cent. Employers with a national payroll between \$50 million to \$100 million will now pay a surcharge of 0.5 per cent, and those with a national payroll over \$100 million will pay a surcharge of 1 per cent.

2 Property taxes and charges

Land tax and stamp duty contribute significantly to the cost of doing business when holding or trading land and property.

These systems also vary based on the ownership structure, whether the entity is an individual, company, trust, or a foreign equivalent, and the type of property, such as residential or commercial.

Land tax is an ongoing operational expense, while stamp duty is a one-off cost incurred at the point of acquisition, effectively increasing the upfront purchase price. While land tax is typically lower than stamp duty initially, it can accumulate to a substantially higher cost over time. In contrast, stamp duty is widely regarded as economically inefficient, as it discourages transactions and penalises economic activity.

What was measured?



Highest stamp duty amounts charged.

Stamp duty rates charged for different property values.

Highest land tax rates charged.

Land tax rates charged for different land values.

1st	Australian Capital Territory
2nd	Tasmania
3rd	South Australia
4th	Northern Territory
5th	New South Wales
6th	Western Australia
7th	Queensland
8th	Victoria

2. Property taxes and charges (continued)

Key findings

The Australian Capital Territory is the top-ranked jurisdiction, with no land tax being levied on commercial property, as well as competitive settings for stamp duty rates and tax scaling for small businesses.

Victoria is the lowest-ranked state. It has the third-highest land tax rate for domestic owners, and the highest rate for foreign owners. It imposes the highest commercial stamp duty rate nationally. This ranking is reinforced by the introduction of a COVID land tax surcharge and an increased absentee owner surcharge for foreign investors, both introduced in 2024.

As of January 2025, New South Wales now imposes the highest combined land tax and stamp duty rates for foreign purchasers of residential property. This is especially problematic for new builds, where foreign capital can be used to increase housing stock for Australian residents and citizens. Across Australia's eight jurisdictions, six impose foreign owner surcharges on stamp duty, all targeting residential property exclusively. This can be counterproductive when governments are working to attract capital to increase housing supply, although some jurisdictions have exemptions that can be sought for new residential development. The Australian

Capital Territory and Northern Territory are the only jurisdictions to not impose a surcharge.

New South Wales's freeze on the annual indexation of land tax thresholds has come into effect, with land tax thresholds fixed at their 2024 valuations. A lack of annual indexation of thresholds leads to higher land tax for business as land value appreciates. South Australia is the only state to continue indexing land tax thresholds.

What changed?

Major policy changes

- In New South Wales, the foreign owner surcharge on both land tax and stamp duty has been increased, while stamp duty thresholds have also been increased.
- South Australian land tax thresholds have also been increased.

3 Retail trading hours

Restrictions on retail trading hours can limit business sales by preventing businesses from operating at times that best serve their customers. These limitations can lead to inefficiencies in business operations, adding an extra burden.

Retail trading hours are regulated at the state and territory level, leading to varying restrictions and complexities across the country.

What was measured?



Legislated restrictions on regular day retail trading.

Legislated restrictions on public holiday retail trading.

1st	Australian Capital Territory
	Northern Territory
3rd	Tasmania
	Victoria
5th	New South Wales
6th	South Australia
7th	Queensland
8th	Western Australia

3. Retail trading hours (continued)

Key findings

Both the Australian Capital Territory and Northern Territory have no legislated trading hour restrictions for either regular or public holiday trading, earning them the top placed ranking in this scorecard.

New South Wales, Victoria, and Tasmania have largely unrestricted regular trading day hours. However, New South Wales has the most restrictive public holiday trading among these jurisdictions.

South Australia, Queensland, and Western Australia continue to have the most restrictive trading hours in the nation, with Western Australia having the fewest exemptions and shortest trading hours. These states impose varying restrictions based on geographic areas, with regional areas often having fewer trading hours compared to capital city regions. There are also varying categories of exemptions across each of these three states depending on shop type. In an era of online shopping and increasing demand for customers to be able to shop when convenient to them, these restrictions can appear anachronistic.

4 Cost of workers compensation schemes

Workers compensation is a compulsory form of insurance paid by most employers in Australia. It provides important protections to employees if they suffer a work-related injury or illness, which the BCA supports.

The workers compensation system in Australia is, however, highly complex with differences in the entitlements and premium rates under each state or territory's legislation, and variances between the different insurance schemes.

There are material differences in how the premium rates are applied by each jurisdiction and, by extension, the cost they impose on businesses.

What was measured?



Average premiums as a percentage of wages.

The NSW Government has introduced legislation that potentially makes significant changes to workers compensation premiums. This has not been incorporated into the 2025 rankings, as the bills have not passed the NSW Parliament and taken effect as at mid-2025

1st	Queensland
2nd	Western Australia
3rd	Victoria
4th	Australian Capital Territory
5th	Tasmania
6th	South Australia
7th	New South Wales
8th	Northern Territory

4. Cost of workers compensation schemes (continued)

Key findings

Queensland has the lowest average workers compensation premiums, over 30 per cent lower than the highest jurisdictional rate. The national average premium rate rose by just under 3 per cent year over year, driven by increases in jurisdictions with comparatively high premium rates even prior to the change.

Premium rates in Queensland and Western Australia are below the national average, while premiums in New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Tasmania, the Australian Capital Territory, and the Northern Territory are higher than the national average.

What changed?

- Average workers compensation premium rates, as well as jurisdictional actuarial reviews, have increased across New South Wales, the Australian Capital Territory, Queensland and Western Australia.

5 Licensing and requirements to do business

The complexities and variations in business licensing, regulation and codes of practice across Australia significantly impact businesses, particularly small ones. Increased administrative burden, delays in obtaining necessary licences, and compliance risks can lead to higher costs and act as barriers to growth.

Businesses must navigate a range of licences, permits, and registrations required at federal, state, and local levels, which can vary significantly by business type. We assessed the complexity of these requirements by examining the number of business licences across each jurisdiction. We considered the different codes of practice, licences, and regulatory obligations required for three typical types of small businesses.

What was measured?



The number of licences, regulations, and codes of practice required for a small café.

The number of licences regulations, and codes of practice required for a small childcare service.

The number of licences regulations, and codes of practice required for a small clothing, footwear, and accessories retailer.

1st Northern Territory

2nd South Australia

3rd Queensland

4th New South Wales

5th Western Australia

Australian Capital Territory

7th Tasmania

8th Victoria

5. Licensing and requirements to do business (continued)

Key findings

Cafe operations, out of the three business types, continue to require the most extensive licensing and regulatory requirements across all jurisdictions. This is due to the higher number of general business licences needed, along with additional food and liquor regulatory obligations. Tasmania and Victoria have the highest licensing and regulatory obligations for café operations, approximately two-thirds greater than in the Northern Territory.

Business licensing and regulatory obligations for childcare services is the second most extensive among the three business types across all jurisdictions, with unique standards for childcare, recognising the importance of regulation in protecting children from harm. Tasmania has the most voluminous licensing requirements, nearly double those of the Northern Territory, which has the least.

Getting these regulations right for childcare will be important in delivering on increased access to childhood early learning. The BCA acknowledges there is ongoing work examining childcare regulation in light of recent child safety matters. It is important to note that this metric does not examine the effectiveness of the regulatory regime.

Business licensing for clothing, footwear, and accessories retail is the least extensive among the three business types across all jurisdictions. Tasmania and Victoria have the most voluminous licensing and regulatory obligations. This is nearly double those of Queensland, which has the least voluminous licensing and regulatory requirements.

Overall, the Northern Territory ranks first having the least onerous licensing requirements, with South Australia second. Victoria and Tasmania have the most voluminous licensing regulatory requirements and rank consistently in the bottom two across all three business types.

There is an opportunity for states and territories to harmonise these requirements nationally, to standardise licensing and other requirements for businesses across the nation.

What changed?

- Readjustments to the scope of licensing requirements to exclude atypical requirements and changes to regulatory obligations, resulting in readjustments across all states.

6 Insurance duties

Insurance duties are taxes imposed on the payment of insurance premiums. These payments impose a direct cost on businesses, as well as creating indirect regulatory complexity.

For this year's Regulation Rumble, we have introduced this insurance duties scorecard to reflect this cost to business.

We compare the general insurance duty rate, along with the rates of professional indemnity and compulsory third party (CTP) insurance duties.

Insurance duties can impose a disproportionate burden on professional services, with fields such as legal, mental health, and medicine, requiring indemnity insurance, and then having to also pay these additional duties.

What was measured?



NEW The general insurance duty per cent rate.

NEW The occupational indemnity insurance duty per cent rate.

NEW The compulsory third party (CTP) insurance duty per cent rate.

1st	Australian Capital Territory
2nd	New South Wales
3rd	Queensland
4th	Tasmania
5th	Victoria
6th	Northern Territory Western Australia
8th	South Australia

6. Insurance duties (continued)

Key findings

The Australian Capital Territory has no insurance duties, while South Australia has the highest overall burden of insurance duties.

South Australia has an 11 per cent insurance duty rate that applies to general insurance, professional liability and CTP insurance. This is followed by Western Australia and the Northern Territory, which charge a 10 per cent insurance duty for all insurance.

Some states are working to reduce or eliminate these duties. New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland have selectively cut insurance duty rates for indemnity insurance. Victoria is gradually abolishing duties for professional indemnity insurance over a 10-year period. New South Wales's occupational indemnity insurance sits at 5 per cent and it has abolished CTP insurance duty altogether. Queensland has removed a percentage fee in favour of a flat notional fee for CTP policies. The Australian Capital Territory abolished all insurance duties in 2016.

What changed?

- This is a new scorecard in 2025.

Seize the moment

The Economic Reform Roundtable has put the cost of regulation on the national agenda.

A big part of the issue faced by business is the inconsistency and duplication between states and territories in regulating what is essentially the same activity in different ways, with different requirements.

That creates a regulatory maze across the country for medium and large businesses that operate across multiple jurisdictions. For occupational licensing it means there are barriers to some licensed professionals moving from one state to another to pursue employment opportunities.

One emerging area of importance is circular economy regulation which includes single use plastics, container deposit schemes, and product stewardship. The frameworks to support growth in the circular economy have grown significantly over the past decade, however, in many areas they have developed in an uncoordinated manner. A lack of national harmonisation has resulted in a significant compliance burden for those participating in them, which is undermining the circularity goals. There is an opportunity here for states and territories to collaborate on harmonising regulation in the circular economy.

More broadly, going forward, we need to rethink the way states and territories approach regulation; so that where there is not a strong case for differentiation across jurisdictions, the default becomes that states collaborate and work towards a single set of regulatory requirements.



PLANNING SYSTEMS



PLANNING SYSTEMS:

Best land use and planning system in 2025

This master scorecard ranks the nation's planning and building permitting systems from an applicant's perspective. It brings together four elements. Each element is expanded on in its own scorecard:

- 7 Efficiency
- 8 Consistency
- 9 Certainty
- 10 Transparency

Updates since 2024

Over the last 12 months (since mid-2024), there has been significant reform across a number of aspects of state and territory planning systems; particularly in regard to supporting housing supply. This includes:

■ New South Wales

- Transport Oriented Development program and Low and Mid-Rise Housing Policy.
- Housing Pattern Book.
- Housing Delivery Authority and Investment Delivery Authority.

■ Victoria

- Activity Centre program.
- Townhouse and Low-Rise Code.
- Great Design Fast Track Pathway.

■ Queensland

- Affordable housing state application pathway and dedicated assessment team.

■ South Australia

- Land Division Assessment Panel.

■ Western Australia

- Wholesale amendments to Local Planning Schemes.
- Reform of the Western Australian Planning Commission.
- Permanent Significant Development Pathway.
- Development Assessment Panel reforms.

■ Australian Capital Territory

- The Territory Plan came into effect.

From an assessment perspective, elements of the methodology and weightings used have been refreshed, and three new KPIs have been added. One of these relates to efficiency, and two relate to certainty.

Australia is in the midst of a housing supply crisis. That's why, in 2022, the Federal Government together with all the states and territories signed on to the National Housing Accord. This included a target of 1.2 million new, well-located homes across Australia over 5 years. The BCA backs this target, and the reforms cited on this page evidence the changes at a state and territory government level to deliver on the Accord. But there remains more work to do to meet the build rate to achieve the target. Federal and state governments, along with the private sector and local councils, will need to continue their strong collaboration under the Accord's settings to deliver the necessary housing supply for the nation.

PLANNING SYSTEMS: Best land use and planning system in 2025 (continued)

Overall planning outcome

Once again, South Australia’s planning system performed best in 2025, followed by Tasmania. These two jurisdictions have processes that deliver more consistency and certainty for applicants. This helps provide for efficiency in processes. Western Australia has moved up to third place, as it begins to reap the benefits of its recent planning reforms.

New South Wales remains with the most work to do on its planning system. While it scored highly in transparency, it is relatively inefficient and lacks the level of consistency and certainty of other jurisdictions. Many of the reforms undertaken by New South Wales to date are changes in zoning or are focused on specific sub-sets of projects, rather than wholesale reforms to the planning system. Having said that, in absolute terms New South Wales has seen positive improvement since last year, and the recently proposed major

reforms to planning legislation are not included in these rankings as they were not in place prior to mid-2025.

Most jurisdictions are embarking on reforms to their planning systems which is extremely positive. Policy changes are captured in the metrics assessed, but results such as efficiency improvements (calculated based on actual time taken to achieve an outcome) will take a longer period to manifest. It is also important to recognise that the ratings are comparative, meaning that if multiple states and territories are striving to improve their planning systems, then their relative rankings may not change as much.

In this context, Western Australia, Victoria, and the Northern Territory have all improved in their planning rankings this year, as compared to last year. Western Australia in particular has moved into third place, with a number of planning system reforms having come into effect over the last 12 months.

The NSW and Victorian governments are progressing major legislative reform to their planning systems. Once these changes come into effect, they will be considered in the next Regulation Rumble report.

1st	South Australia
2nd	Tasmania
3rd	Western Australia
4th	Victoria
5th	Australian Capital Territory
6th	Northern Territory
7th	Queensland
8th	New South Wales

7 Efficiency

The core of any planning system is its permitting and approval processes.

Efficiency in planning decisions is important because longer assessment and decision-making periods mean capital and resources are locked up as the process is worked through. Outcomes such as new homes, offices, warehouses, or other developments are frozen until permits are received.

There is a real financial and economic burden borne by project applicants in the time taken to make decisions.

Turnaround times were measured across residential, industrial, hospitality, office, retail, commercial, infrastructure, resource extraction, and energy (including wind and solar farm) projects.

What was measured?



Average time for development applications valued under \$30 million.

Average time for development applications valued at over \$30 million.

Average time for construction approval post-development application.

Average time for proponent initiated and planning authority code amendments, or rezonings.

Residential building approvals per capita.

NEW Reduction of decision timeframes for development applications from previous year.

1st	Western Australia
2nd	Tasmania
3rd	South Australia
4th	Victoria
5th	Queensland
6th	Northern Territory
7th	Australian Capital Territory
8th	New South Wales

7. Efficiency (continued)

Key findings

Western Australia ranks first in our efficiency theme, followed by Tasmania and then South Australia. New South Wales is ranked last.

These results have changed since last year due to improvements in decision making timeframes for development and building applications, particularly for Western Australia which excels in building approval decision timeframes. Western Australia has also recently reformed its Planning Act to put guardrails around additional information requests ('stop the clock') from local councils.

New South Wales was ranked last due to having the slowest determination timeframes for development and building applications. The new Housing Development Authority, which was established in late 2024 and started operating in early 2025, is a significant and positive reform. It will start to see dividends delivered as more projects are assessed under this pathway going forward.

What changed?

Performance data is based on the average time taken in each category. That means that the data is updated to include performance in 2024-25.

This year included one new metric:

- We have assessed the reduction of decision timeframes for development applications relative to the previous year, to ensure that jurisdictions that have improved their performance year on year are better recognised.

The efficiency scorecard, being based on actual performance data, reflects policy changes based on their outcomes and impact on measurable performance.

8 Consistency

Consistency in processes underpins and drives efficiency in planning systems. It makes interactions between the thousands of applicants and multiple planning authorities more predictable and routine, and easier for businesses to navigate.

Having standardised and plain English planning controls, which consistently apply across multiple local planning authorities (like local councils), also helps businesses understand what is expected of them. This creates a clear regulatory landscape across different local and state government organisations.

What was measured?



Standardised planning instruments across the jurisdiction.

Standardised zoning that provides clarity of interpretation and application.

Number of planning documents beyond standard instruments.

The ability or otherwise for planning scheme amendments (such as re-zoning applications).

Specific mining and energy planning initiatives, in the context of the transition to a clean energy future.

Whether there are planning reforms and programs in place consistent with the national goal to increase housing supply.

1st	South Australia
2nd	Australian Capital Territory
3rd	Tasmania
4th	Northern Territory
5th	Victoria
6th	New South Wales
7th	Queensland
8th	Western Australia

8. Consistency (continued)

Key findings

South Australia continues to rank first in consistency given its centralised and consolidated planning code approach. The Australian Capital Territory also has an advantage in this metric given it is the only jurisdiction in Australia that does not have individual councils, and therefore there is standardisation across the Territory.

Tasmania continues to score well in consistency due to its introduction of a statewide planning scheme, the Tasmanian Planning Scheme. This was introduced in 2017 and the roll out is almost complete, with only a handful of areas left to be transferred.

Queensland does not rank highly in this scorecard given the state's localised and decentralised planning system, which grants significant autonomy and power to local councils.

Western Australia has been reforming its planning system, with a new Planning and Development Amendment Act introduced in 2023 to implement changes focused on streamlining processes, reducing unnecessary red tape, and improving efficiencies in decision-making. Western Australia is currently in the process of standardising land use terms and zoning across all planning schemes, which once implemented, will improve navigation of the planning codes and requirements for businesses working across the state.

New South Wales has embarked on significant reforms to deliver new housing supply through rezonings that are currently in process. These changes will need to be coupled with significant improvements to the permitting (development application) process and alignment of planning changes to market feasibility for the new housing opportunities to be taken up, something that the government is now embarking on. We applaud the recent announcement of major legislative reforms in this space, which if legislated, will be incorporated in the next edition of Regulation Rumble. We also welcome the introduction of the Housing Delivery Authority and Investment Delivery Authority, targeted at speeding up decision-making, noting they are more limited in their approach compared with broad legislative reform.

What changed?

Major policy changes

Western Australia has been reforming its planning system, including a new Planning and Development Amendment Act introduced in 2023 to streamline processes and reduce unnecessary red tape. These reforms have been coming online in 2024, with further regulatory changes still to follow.

There continues to be significant reform focus across the nation on delivering new housing

supply. Different jurisdictions have taken different approaches to tackling this issue. New South Wales's Transit Oriented Development program, along with financial incentives to help local areas build the infrastructure needed to support the National Housing Accord, is one example. Victoria has released the 'Plan for Victoria' which identifies 60 activity centres as part of the Activity Centre Program for intensified development and increased dwellings. This included new zoning and overlays within the identified activity centres and an ambition to revive underutilised land with housing diversity and mixed-use developments. This work is behind the NSW Transport Oriented Development program in terms of implementation, so is not fully reflected in the rankings as yet.

9 Certainty

Certainty in the planning system supports and drives efficiency. It enables project proponents to plan their delivery and operational needs with confidence. A lack of certainty in planning systems creates added risk and cost of delay, which impacts a project's feasibility, reducing the likelihood a project may proceed.

Certainty also reduces misinterpretations and the erosion of trust in the planning processes. When proponents perceive that there are "moving goal posts" in achieving an approval, it can trigger serious delays, and break trust and confidence in the system. This diminishes community support in the planning process, and business desire to invest.

What was measured?



Whether a statutory timeframe is prescribed for deemed decisions by planning authorities on development applications.

Limits on 'stop the clock' provisions that allow a planning authority to stop an assessment and seek additional information, and whether applicants can constrain their use.

Availability of delegations to streamline bureaucracy and simplify procedural processes.

Whether there are simple pathways for implementing developer contributions.

Whether there are prescribed statutory timeframes for building regulators to make a building application decision.

Whether statutory timeframes are prescribed for planning authorities to make plan amendment decisions/rezonings.

NEW Whether legislative or regulatory action has delivered on policy commitments.

NEW System wide reform compared with targeted, more limited reform.

1st	Tasmania
2nd	Queensland
3rd	South Australia
4th	Western Australia
5th	Northern Territory
6th	Australian Capital Territory
7th	Victoria
8th	New South Wales

9. Certainty (continued)

Key findings

Tasmania has ranked first in this year's scorecard. In particular, the state has legislated timeframes that cover the entire end-to-end process of planning scheme amendments, development applications, and building approvals.

Queensland has a deemed approval pathway that is currently unique in Australia. It allows an applicant to force a planning authority to close out an application without an expensive and further time-delaying judicial court process. It also has limited stop the clock provisions, with the applicant needing to agree to stop the assessment clock. Beyond the development assessment process however, there is room for improvement, for example with timeframes for building applications.

The Australian Capital Territory, with its Lease Variation Charge (a form of betterment levy and value capture), provides certainty for development contributions by removing the need for long and drawn-out contribution negotiations being caught up in development assessments. Elements of the Australian Capital Territory's systems, such as prescribed building approval timeframes, have meant the Territory did not rank more highly.

New South Wales has the least planning certainty. Developer contributions have a relatively high cost and uncertainty level compared to other jurisdictions. New South Wales has a 'Minister's Statement of Expectations' approach for development application assessments, planning scheme amendment timeframes and strategic planning. While this can be used to influence council performance, it is based on what a council should achieve at a future date and relies on benchmark guidelines. This compares to other jurisdictions that have less ambiguous timeframe expectations, which are clearly set out within their overarching planning Act.

What changed?

Assessment changes

Two new metrics were introduced this year, which recognised whether policy commitments matched a government's legislative actions, as well as whether reforms were system-wide improvements or targeted as specific areas.

Major policy changes

Across the country there have been changes to planning systems.

Some of these have been several years in the making, such as the changes to the Tasmanian planning schemes which is almost complete in

rollout, or the Western Australia Planning and Development Amendment Act 2023, which became operational through 2024.

Victoria and Queensland have also delivered on planning reform announcements which directly target housing delivery through streamlining specific planning processes within their schemes.

10 Transparency

Transparent planning processes allow applicants to understand how efficient a planning system is and help governments understand good and bad performance in the system. It informs those responsible for the system on what is working and where there should be intervention, fostering an environment of continuous improvement.

Technological solutions enable transparency. They can also be applied to drive system improvements through automation, artificial intelligence, and other modern tools that can drive efficiency.

Governments should continue engaging with businesses that use the planning system every day, to ensure that they focus on delivering transparency where practitioners believe it is most needed, and to identify if reported measures are reflective of on-the-ground performance.

What was measured?



The extent of online web portals for applicants to view planning controls and track and lodge applications.

The extent of open data provided about development application process performance.

The extent of open data provided about planning scheme amendment performance.

The extent of open data provided about building approval performance.

1st	New South Wales
2nd	South Australia
3rd	Victoria
4th	Australian Capital Territory
5th	Northern Territory
6th	Tasmania
7th	Western Australia
8th	Queensland

10. Transparency (continued)

Key findings

New South Wales and South Australia are the leaders in the planning transparency scorecard.

In particular, New South Wales has the most extensive systems in place for collecting and processing development applications and open data availability to support monitoring, analysis, and systemisation of planning related outputs. Going forward, the NSW Government will need to consider how to improve robustness of the reports, so that local councils do not try and game metrics to avoid poor rankings (such as delaying lodging of applications).

New South Wales and Victoria are starting to provide Application Programming Interfaces for planning data, allowing third parties to directly access real time data held by the government. Modern technology firms can leverage this to innovate with artificial intelligence and new productivity enhancing products.

Tasmania ranks well in the metrics focused on building approval permits and planning scheme amendments but there is room for improvement in terms of a central development application portal and data transparency. The rollout of a state-wide portal for development applications is still underway.

In Queensland there is no consolidated development application data collection point for all local councils. Open data is published at a local government level only and can be very limited. This makes tracking relative performance between councils difficult. The Queensland Government itself does not provide open data.

Both in Queensland and Western Australia local councils have, to varying degrees, digitised their planning instruments and provide online application portals. Because this is managed at a council level, the provision and maturity varies across the state.

What changed?

Assessment changes

There have been minor changes to the measurement of the KPIs to better differentiate performance between jurisdictions.

Appendix

- State and territory pullouts

Appendix

South Australia

Areas of good performance

- Competitive payroll tax rates and thresholds.
- Licensing and regulatory requirements for starting a new business.
- Efficient development application process.
- Consolidated and standardised planning system across the state.
- Digital lodgement of planning applications and data provision.

Areas most needing further work

- Lack of flexibility in retail trading hour regulation.
- Cost of workers compensation insurance.
- Cost of levies on general, professional liability, and CTP insurances.
- Efficiency of rezoning processes.

Tasmania

Areas of good performance

- Competitive land tax and stamp duty rates.
- Efficient development application process.
- Planning system consistency across the state.
- Legislated timeframes for decision making across the planning system.

Areas most needing further work

- Licensing and regulatory requirements for starting a new business.
- Dwelling approvals per capita.
- Transparency of development application data.
- Centralised development application lodgement (noting that PlanBuild is rolling out to address this).

Northern Territory

Areas of good performance

- Highest payroll tax threshold in the nation.
- No land tax charges.
- No territory-wide restrictions on retail trading hours.
- Licensing and regulatory requirements for starting a new business.
- Prescribed timeframes for building approvals.
- Standardised planning scheme across the territory.

Areas most needing further work

- Cost of workers compensation insurance.
- Dwelling approvals per capita.
- Timeframes for deemed decisions, stop the clock and additional information requests.

Appendix (continued)

Australian Capital Territory**Areas of good performance**

- Property taxes and charges.
- No territory-wide restrictions on retail trading hours.
- No insurance duties charged.
- Centralised and consistent planning system given no separate local councils.
- Clear Lease Variation Charge instead of complex development contribution charges.

Areas most needing further work

- Least competitive payroll settings, with the highest rate charged nationally, and low adoption of revenue rulings.
- Inefficient building approval timeframes.

New South Wales**Areas of good performance**

- Broader payroll tax settings.
- Low insurance duty charges.
- Centralised development application submission portal, and transparency in approval timeframes across local governments.

Areas most needing further work

- Cost of workers compensation insurance (noting the NSW Government has legislation before the Parliament aimed at this issue).
- Least efficient planning system nationally, with slowest development application and building approval times (noting the NSW Government is advancing legislative reforms to address this).
- Complex, tiered planning instruments.
- High cost, uncertain developer contribution scheme, and overall least certainty of process for planning proponents.

Queensland**Areas of good performance**

- Lowest workers compensation premium rates.
- Licensing and regulatory requirements for starting a new business.
- Low overall insurance duty rates.
- Flexibility within development zones, reducing the need for rezoning.
- Deemed approval regime for some small-scale development applications.
- Limited 'stop the clock' provisions for development applications.

Areas most needing further work

- Lack of flexibility in retail trading hour regulation.
- Highly localised and decentralised planning system, meaning there is significant variation depending on local government area, with lack of standardised zoning.
- Statutory timeframes for building approvals.
- Centralised lodgement portal and transparent performance data for development applications.

Appendix (continued)

Western Australia**Areas of good performance**

- Cost of workers compensation insurance.
- Most efficient planning system, with good performance across development applications, building approval timeframes, and planning scheme amendments (rezoning).
- Clear limitations on request for additional information as part of planning processes.

Areas most needing further work

- Equal lowest payroll tax threshold in the nation, and lowest adoption of revenue rulings.
- Highest land tax rates for local landowners.
- Most restrictive retail trading hour settings.
- Relatively high cost of insurance duties levied.

- Variation in zoning across local government areas and fragmentation in planning code (noting that reform to address this is underway).
- Centralised portal for lodgement of development applications, and data transparency.

Victoria**Areas of good performance**

- Highest dwelling approvals per capita in the nation.
- Standardised zoning across the state.

Areas most needing further work

- Uncompetitive payroll tax rates and payroll tax threshold.
- Uncompetitive land tax and stamp duty rates.
- Licensing and regulatory requirements for starting a new business.
- Efficiency of rezoning processes.
- Level of process certainty for planning proponents including around timeframes and additional information requirements.

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