

Regulation Rumble

An Australian

Jurisdictional Planning

Scorecard

Prepared for
Business Council of Australia

October 2025



About the Mecone Group

Mecone is a leading urban planning and development advisory firm with offices in Sydney CBD, Western Sydney, Brisbane, and Melbourne. Mecone provides strategic and statutory planning solutions designed to balance the needs of our clients and stakeholders in the creation of long-lasting and sustainable environments.

Built on the founding principle of the equilibrium, Mecone has a commitment to balancing human needs and the natural environment – providing practical, economically viable and sustainable solutions to complex planning problems. Mecone shares a motivation to innovate, collaborate and problem solve, facilitating the development of thriving urban and regional spaces.

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* This document is for discussion purposes only unless signed and dated by the persons identified. This document has been reviewed by the Project Director.

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1 Executive Summary

Background & Purpose

In 2023 the Business Council of Australia (BCA) released its first edition of the Regulation Rumble, a jurisdictional scorecard that ranks performance of planning regulations and business taxes across Australia's eight States and Territories. Regulation Rumble was undertaken again 2024 and Mecone were engaged for this review too. Now in 2025, Mecone have been engaged to once again to produce a report and scorecard on planning systems throughout Australia as an input to the BCA's Regulation Rumble 2025 scorecard.

It has been noted by the BCA that planning and building systems can significantly support the development of housing, employment and infrastructure. When the planning and building systems are inefficient, inconsistent, inflexible, and overly complex, they stifle business, services, housing and infrastructure. If they are unable to support a growing and vibrant country, they are no longer fit for purpose.

The BCA has commissioned this report into state and territory planning systems, to shine the light on best practice in planning systems, the jurisdictions needing to improve regulatory systems, and the jurisdictions that have undergone reform over the years that enable business to thrive. In doing so, the BCA aims to encourage a better planning and building regulation environment. One that helps diversity of businesses produce more homes, employment opportunities and for people to have efficient access to the goods and services provided by millions of businesses throughout Australia.

Scorecard Objectives

The scorecard objective of this report is to rank the nation's planning and building permitting systems, encouraging custodians to develop better planning and building processes that supports the operation of businesses, and economic growth. This scorecard can be a guiding north star of best practice examples that do exist in Australia, that helps businesses thrive.

The 2025 edition of the scorecard used the same scorecard themes identified in 2023 and 2024 to maintain consistency and comparability over time. These themes are outputs of planning systems that together helps businesses get on with doing business – **Efficiency, Consistency, Certainty and Transparency**.

Importantly to note, we have ranked from an applicant's (a business end user's) perspective of planning systems and how they help, or could help, businesses. These findings should not be interpreted for other stakeholders, such as a community neighbour, or an administrator or a public sector staff member governing and implementing a planning system. Therefore, a diversity of readers may interpret planning and building systems differently, and we acknowledge there are different pressure points that may lead to different perspectives.

Disclaimer: The scores and ranks provided in this scorecard are intended to offer a general overview of the Nation's planning system to support ease of doing business. They are based on information and data available at the time of evaluation and may not fully capture all aspects of a jurisdiction's planning and building system, or its nuances. Users should consider these scores as one of many tools in assessing system performance for ease of doing business and should seek additional information and context when making decisions based on these results. The results may also vary depending on changes in policies, practices, or external factors that change over time, or with different research methodologies deployed by research teams.



South Australia – Still Leading Through Structural Reform

South Australia remains the benchmark of Planning systems in Australia, largely due to its implementation of the Planning and Design Code in 2021. This state-wide planning system replaced a fragmented and disparate collecting of planning schemes. The reform delivered a single, consistent planning framework across the state, simplifying user interaction with the planning system, improving consistency and certainty. While South Australia has introduced minimal new reforms since, this is in part because of the depth and effectiveness of the earlier system-wide reform. Accordingly, it continues to top the scorecard and is the reason why South Australia experiences efficiencies in their processing times for planning related applications.

What significant changes have occurred in 2024/2025 across Australia’s planning systems?

Jurisdictions	Significant Changes to Planning Acts, Regulation and Instruments in 2024/2025
New South Wales	<p>Transport Oriented Development (TOD) Program:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Implemented in 2024 and focuses on higher-density housing (6-8 storeys) within 800m of transport hubs. <p>Low and Mid-Rise Housing Policy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">New planning controls to encourage more dual occupancies, terraces, townhouses, apartments and shop top housing. <p>NSW Housing Pattern Book:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">A collection of low-and mid-rise home designs aimed at accelerating the development of high-quality homes to fast-tracked planning approval process. <p>Housing Delivery Authority</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">To accelerate the delivery of much needed homes and help meet our target under the Accord, the NSW Government established the Housing Delivery Authority (HDA). The HDA will lead a new State Significant Development (SSD) pathway and SSD with a concurrent rezoning process for major residential developments. <p>Infrastructure Delivery Authority</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">The NSW Government has recently established the Investment Delivery Authority (IDA) to attract and accelerate investment in major projects across all industries. The IDA would accelerate approvals for these major projects, coordinate across government on the necessary infrastructure to deliver projects and identify reforms to make it easier for businesses to invest in NSW. <p>Planning Instrument Simplification:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Progressive updates from 2023-2025, including drafting a new umbrella instrument for housing.
Victoria	<p>Streamlining Multi-Dwelling Lots:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Schemes amended to streamline the planning process for two or more dwellings on a lot and residential buildings to be considered deemed-to-comply enabling streamlined assessment approvals. <p>Activity Centre Program:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Activity Centre Program plans for more homes in and around 60 activity centres across Melbourne.



Jurisdictions	Significant Changes to Planning Acts, Regulation and Instruments in 2024/2025
	<p>Great Design Fast Track Pathway:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A streamlined planning process for apartments and townhouses that meet specified design principles to access an accelerated approval pathway. With the Minister for Planning as decision-maker and the removal of third-party appeal rights, this reform is designed to facilitate faster planning decisions.
Queensland	<p>Housing Availability and Affordability:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A new State application pathway and dedicated assessment team which allows proposals that include an affordable housing component that equates to at least 15% of all dwellings resulting from the development to be assessed by the State. <p>Economic Development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Empowers the Minister for Economic Development to take the lead in delivering diverse housing options, with an emphasis on social and affordable housing.
South Australia	<p>Additional Planning Panel has been created:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To expedite the assessment of applications for large scale land division proposing 20 or more allotments, the government has created the Land Division Assessment Panel capable of assessing applications where councils have not met statutory timeframes or where there have otherwise been delays with the assessment of applications.
Western Australia	<p>Wholesale amendments to Local Planning Schemes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> On receipt of the application for development approval, the Responsible Authority must request further information within 7 days of receiving the application. If no further information sought within the 7-day period, the application is taken to be accepted for assessment. A request for further information or material must provide a period of at least 21 days for the applicant to respond. <p>Reform of the Western Australian Planning Commission:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aimed at improving efficiency in decision making, streamline membership and to clarify the Commission's role. <p>Permanent Significant Development Pathway:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In certain instances, proponents will have the option to choose different pathway options for the assessment and determination of development applications, which will give developers the choice of whether to have their applications determined by the Western Australian Planning Commission, a Development Assessment Panel, or by a local government. For complex proposals of more than \$20 million in Perth and Peel and more than \$5 million in regional WA, the WAPC acts as the decision maker if the applicant lodges a development application through Significant Development Pathway. <p>The Development Assessment Panel Reforms:</p>



Jurisdictions	Significant Changes to Planning Acts, Regulation and Instruments in 2024/2025
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The DAPs reforms create an opt-in pathway for any development over \$2 million (including group and multiple dwellings but excluding single houses and ancillary structures).• The WA Government is providing all community housing projects with the ability to opt into the assessment panel pathway regardless of the scale and value of the project <p>State Planning Policy and Planning Code Regulations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• New planning and development regulations came into effect. These regulations introduce ‘risk-based’ assessment and decision-making pathways.• The Regulations introduce three streams for region planning scheme amendments (complex, standard and basic). The purpose of which is to introduce the use of risk-based assessment and decision-making pathways, reducing timeframes for lower-risk proposals. <p>Single House Streamline Approvals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Decisions are to be made by the CEO or local government Authorised Officer and not to be determined by the Council. <p>Ancillary Accommodation Approval Exemptions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Compliant ancillary dwelling on residential lots (including grouped dwelling and strata lots) of any size will no longer require approval.
Australian Capital Territory	New Planning Instrument – The Territory Plan came in effect in 2024. Significant planning reforms enacted in previous years.
Tasmania	No significant Planning Act or Regulation changes in the last year.
Northern Territory	No significant Planning Act or Regulation changes in the last year.



System-Wide v Targeted Planning Reforms Across Jurisdictions

Targeted reforms (especially in housing) can help meet urgent needs, there is a broader imperative for jurisdictions to deliver legislated, system wide reforms that address the root cause of inefficiencies, uncertainty and inconsistency. We can see that jurisdictions which have undertaken these broader reforms have more success in achieving positive change in performance. **Western Australia** has most recently undertaken significant comprehensive reform to its planning systems and lead in this regard for this edition of the Regulation Rumble.

Comprehensive reform delivers lasting productivity benefits across all sectors, not just in housing. Those relying on piecemeal or issue-specific adjustments (**New South Wales** and **Queensland**) risk creating fragmented systems that are hard to navigate, regulate, and invest in. While rezoning for density is important, these jurisdictions still need to fix the underlying broken approval systems that is resulting in uncertainty and inconsistency.

We note that both **Victoria** and **New South Wales** have announced their intention to update their planning acts, which is considered to be a significant positive opportunity and will be reflected in the future once those updates have occurred.

All Australian jurisdictions have announced or implemented planning reforms in recent years. This year's Regulation Rumble highlights that jurisdictions pursuing comprehensive, structural reforms continue to outperform others, as they deliver greater consistency, certainty, and efficiency for wide cross section of planning system users that ultimately flow on into the economy.

Tasmania – Steady Progress Toward State-Wide Consistency

Tasmania's state-wide planning scheme, first introduced in 2017, has been progressively rolled out and is now nearing completion. Only a few schemes, such as the Hobart Interim Planning Scheme and Sullivans Cove Planning Scheme, remain to be integrated. Once complete, Tasmanians will benefit from a consistent, unified planning system across the state.

Australian Capital Territory – Comprehensive Reform Recently Enacted

Through the **ACT** Planning System Review and Reform Project, the nation's capital implemented a new Planning Act 2023 and Territory Plan that commenced in late 2023 and September 2024, respectively. These changes followed a four-year review and represented a major overhaul of the ACT's planning framework. As this reform is still relatively new, its full impact is yet to be seen in processing times for development applications or building approvals, but its system-wide nature and intent is promising.

Western Australia – Ongoing Legislative Reform and Modernisation

Western Australia continues to make significant progress through the Planning and Development Amendment Act 2023, aimed at reducing red tape, streamlining decision-making, and supporting housing and infrastructure delivery. Provisions from this Act, as well as remaining parts of the 2020 Amendment Act, became operational in March and July 2024. The impact of these reforms is already reflected on the ground, with marked improvement in WA's overall performance. **Western Australia** is also progressing reforms to standardise land use codes and zone naming, which will enhance legibility and consistency for system users.

Other Jurisdictions – Targeted Reforms, but Gaps Remain

Queensland introduced the Planning (Social Impact and Community Benefit) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025, currently under committee review. The Bill focuses on:

- Social impact and community benefit provisions
- Economic development reforms
- Olympic and Paralympic Games-related planning

While meaningful, these are issue-specific reforms, not full system reform.

Victoria introduced several scheme amendments in 2025, including:



- A deemed-to-comply pathway for multi-dwelling residential development
- The Great Design Fast Track, a streamlined process for well-designed apartments and townhouses.

Both **Queensland** and **Victoria** are responding to housing pressures, but these reforms are targeted, not structural. They improve housing approvals but do not address broader planning system inefficiencies.

New South Wales rolled out major housing-related reforms in 2025, including:

- Transport-Oriented Development (TOD) reforms
- Low- to Mid-Rise Housing Reforms
- A new Housing Delivery Authority
- A new Investment Delivery Authority.

These reforms aim to deliver over 170,000 dwellings across Greater Sydney, Illawarra, Hunter, and the Central Coast. While these are important to support housing supply, like fellow larger states Queensland and Victoria, continues to lack a system-wide legislative reform agenda.

For Queensland, Victoria, and NSW compared to South Australia, Western Australia, ACT and Tasmania, there is a growing gap: targeted reforms to housing are welcomed, but broader planning issues, such as efficiency in application assessments for all development types and rezoning speed for future land capacity across industry sectors, remain under-addressed. This limits overall productivity gains in our largest jurisdictions and acting as a drag on the nation's productivity.

National Housing Accord and Alignment with Planning Reforms

The National Housing Accord provides a unified national policy backdrop against which planning systems are increasingly being investigated for their effectiveness in supporting housing. Importantly, the Accord also sets a clear challenge to planning systems, such as support in achieving:

- Faster zoning, planning approvals, and land releases for housing;
- Collaboration to improve responsiveness of land supply to demand; and
- Meeting housing supply targets.

How States and Territories Are Responding

The Regulation Rumble has a dedicated KPI (KPI 12) to assess how well jurisdictions align their planning systems with the Accord's objectives. Performance is measured by the presence of active rezoning programs, planning system reforms, and direct housing supply outcomes.

As of 2025, most jurisdictions have adopted some level of planning reform aligned to the Accord, although at different impact levels:

- **Queensland, Victoria, and New South Wales** have dedicated substantial housing-focused planning reforms, including streamlined approvals, priority pathways, and rezoning efforts that directly support housing supply.
- **South Australia** and **Western Australia** have initiated state-led rezoning and housing delivery programs, though their alignment varies in depth and scale.
- **Western Australia's** deemed approvals and timed referral assessments directly supports housing supply and delivery by providing certainty around timeframes and outcomes.
- **Tasmania** has advanced housing standards and review mechanisms through updates to its planning scheme and the Housing Land Supply Act.
- The **ACT** has expanded zoning flexibility to support dual occupancies and subdivision within suburban areas.

The National Housing Accord demands real, measurable progress in planning reform. Reforms to meet the Accord have generally been focused on housing related planning instrument amendments, support initiatives for



small scale housing delivery, or supply targets. This approach, while welcomed, also represents a missed opportunity for system wide reforms that are needed to support the general economy that enables more affordable housing for Australians, and faster delivery of housing assets at large scale. Leveraging off the Housing Accord challenge to address the root causes of planning inefficiencies across the economy, such as slow approvals in the infrastructure or employment lands sector to support housing and national productivity to increase Australia's household wealth to afford higher cost housing, have largely been missed.

Climate change and renewable energy

In 2024, the Federal Government announced the National Renewable Energy Supply Chain Action Plan, with the aim of meeting our 2030 renewable targets. The intent and purpose of the action plan is to reduce supply chain risks and address vulnerabilities for priority technologies to ensure delivery of the critical infrastructure needed to achieve the renewable energy target of 82 percent by 2030.

Similar to housing, the renewable energy targets present a challenge the nation's planning system – to support businesses to lift and shift operations to cleaner energy. Initiatives that streamline energy related developments, such as solar and wind farms, will help businesses with the cost of lifting and shifting to the clean economy.

How have jurisdictions performed in this measure?

Western Australia's Green Energy Approvals Initiative is helping to attract business investment into the Western Australian renewable energy sector, helping to ensure the environment is protected for future generations.

Victoria, in September 2023 introduced a dedicated clause into all planning schemes where renewable projects of a certain scale or type go through a fast track process via the Planning Minister through what is known as the Development Facilitation Pathway.

In **New South Wales**, renewable energy projects are declared as State Significant Development or State Significant Infrastructure, which are both processes assessed by the Minister for Planning or the Independent Planning Commission, giving them elevated status. The Renewable Energy Planning Framework provides a suite of policies guiding the planning and assessment process, providing industry with certainty and clarity on the development assessment process and matters for consideration in lodging a development application.

The **Tasmanian** Government committed to upgrading the approval pathway for major renewable energy projects and introduced the Renewable Energy Approval Pathway. This supports renewable projects by entering them in the Major Projects assessment process.

Neither Northern Territory nor the Australian Capital Territory have evidence of reforms for renewable energy projects within their planning systems.

Planning Systems, Over-regulation and Australia's Productivity Challenge

Over-regulation has long constrained both the planning profession and the broader business community, acting as a significant drag on productivity. Our research reveals a persistent problem with planning systems:

- Excessive overlapping of planning instruments and controls result in vague and contradictory decision frameworks that impact on certainty and consistency,
- Digital transformation of planning systems has been slow, inconsistent, and underutilised, and
- Despite reforms in targeted areas, key indicators like approval timeframes and assessment consistency have not improved at system-wide scale for planning systems to contribute to productivity improvement.

If Australia is to meet its productivity challenge, planning reform must move beyond good intent and into performance. The Business Council of Australia has already highlighted the stakes of poor productivity. In its recent report (*Australia's Flagging Competitiveness and Productivity*), the BCA warned:

"Productivity growth is one of the metrics most closely tied to our Australian quality of life, and a critical aspect of our ongoing challenge to manage inflation. Productivity growth (currently 0.5% annually) would need to quadruple



to 2% per year by 2030 just to match our performance from the previous decade — already the weakest in 60 years.”

Planning system reform can play a critical role in improving productivity, including:

- Progress more urgently in removing overlapping controls and planning instruments,
- Digitising and standardising processes to reduce time and cost, and
- Embedding efficiency, speed, and certainty as core principles as part of system wide planning reforms.

Only then will planning become a true enabler of business productivity, supporting business investment, housing delivery, and infrastructure development in a way that drives long-term economic growth.

Jurisdictional Score Card Result and Ranking

This jurisdiction scorecard charts the way for planning to become an enabler of businesses by shining the light on which jurisdictions are leading in this challenge. In this edition of the 2025 Scorecard, and as in 2024 and 2023, we find that **South Australia** remains the best performing planning jurisdiction, followed closely by **Tasmania**.

Why do these jurisdictions excel in helping businesses? The scorecard points to Key Performance Indicators that propel these two jurisdictions ahead of other jurisdictional systems – they have embedded **consistency** and **certainty** into their systems. With these two key foundations being in place, the systems provide **efficiency** on the ground. Efficient planning systems allow businesses to establish and update their operations, to deliver new housing, and ultimately to better deliver goods and services.

The **transparency** of local and state planning authorities allows the continued monitoring of performance, to ensure the benefits of consistency and certainty will continue to be realised.

Western Australia has also scored well in 2025, largely due to their efficiency in development application, building application and scheme amendment approvals. This is a testament to their recent reforms that have made its way through their parliament and some still in progress, which will potentially see further improvement in later years.

While larger jurisdictions such as **New South Wales**, **Queensland** and **Victoria** have added complexity of scale and bulk for addressing planning and building matters, they also have more resources to redirect to critical problems. Some of these states have responded strongly to national priorities, with housing programs that are consistent with the intentions of the National Housing Accord (**Victoria** and **New South Wales**) and the move to clean energy with simplified planning approval pathways (**Western Australia**). We also see instances of innovative policy (**Queensland**) that helps achieve certainty for businesses.

In these major states however, the **core of their planning systems remains inefficient** in permitting and approving development applications, planning scheme amendments and building approvals. No matter how innovative new housing programs are, or how much resourcing in planning offices and departments increase, if the foundations for achieving efficiency in the critical core parts of permitting and approvals are absent, they will lag in facilitating new projects, such as new homes.

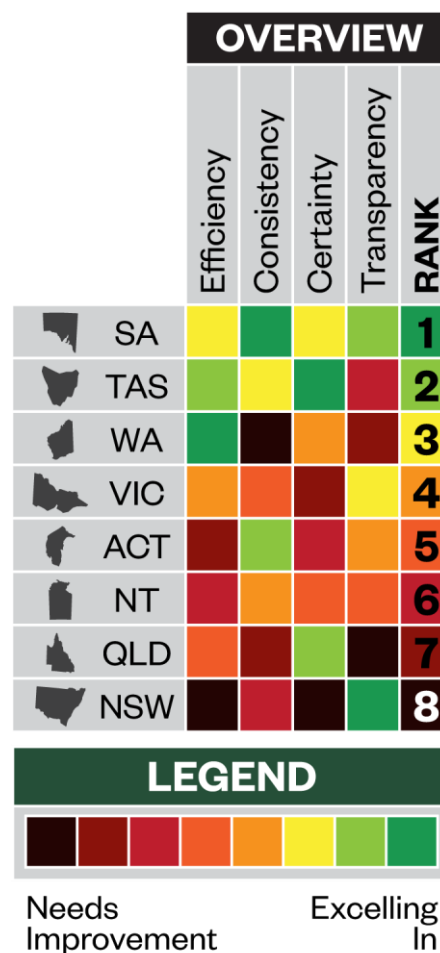


Figure 1: Jurisdiction Scorecard



Table 1: 2025 BCA Planning Scorecard Summary

Jurisdiction	In 2024	In 2025	Change	Excelling in	Can improve in
	Rank (weighted)	Rank (weighted)			
South Australia	1	1	→	Low number of operating planning documents and delegations	Prescribed timeframes for planning scheme amendments and housing supply planning initiatives
Tasmania	2	2	→	Prescribed timeframes embedded in Planning Act, mining & energy approval pathways and DA timeframes for projects <\$30m & >\$30m	Stop the DA clock rules & State online application portal
Western Australia	4	3	↑	Building approval, deemed approvals, coordinated referrals and scheme amendment decision times	Open data and standardised zoning names and land uses across LGA planning instruments.
Victoria	5	4	↑	Standardised planning instruments, building approval decision times and housing supply initiatives	DA turnaround timeframes for projects <\$30M
Australian Capital Territory	3	5	↓	Standardised planning instrument, development contributions and prescribed timeframes	Building approval decision timeframes experienced by applicants, mining and energy pathways and delegations
Northern Territory	7	6	↑	Prescribed building approval timeframes and standardised planning instrument	DA turnaround timeframes for projects <\$30M Housing supply initiatives Mining and energy pathways
Queensland	6	7	↓	Deemed approvals and stop the clock rules	Statewide planning portal for local permit approvals & consistency in local zoning codes. DA turnaround timeframes for projects <\$30M
New South Wales	8	8	→	Open data and scheme amendment decision times. Housing supply initiatives.	Large number of operating planning documents, development contributions and DA timeframes for projects <\$30m & >\$30m



How did we score?

To generate a ranking, business themes were developed, each with their own KPIs. There are 24 KPIs that were weighted to form an overall ranking, and a ranking within the each of the following business enabling themes:

- Efficiency (weighting = 40%)
- Consistency (20%)
- Certainty (25%), and
- Transparency (15%).

The overall weightings have been adjusted from the 2024 scorecard as a result of the addition of one new KPI in Efficiency and two new KPI's in Certainty, which has increased the weighting of certainty over consistency. From a business perspective, certainty within the planning systems carries a higher weighting than consistency.

This scorecard relies on open-source data, data we commercially collected, and web-based information from each jurisdiction. Where data and information are inaccessible, and/or open data is not available, jurisdictions are scored lower as a result. Findings were tested with BCA for alignment to their real-world experiences. For detailed methodology of scorecard, please refer to Appendix A.

Why did some jurisdictions score better or worse this year?

Since last year there has been some changes made by jurisdictions to their planning systems. This year we see the effects of the changes made by **Western Australia** to their planning systems in efficiency. In the efficiency metric, scores are based not on desktop analysis of the legislation itself, but on measured performance; where system improvements, including additional resourcing, are reflected in changes in those metrics.

Additionally, this year there are three new KPIs measured compared to 2024. This means a broader lens is being applied with more metrics and facets of the regulation systems being included with a focus on planning reform, especially broader reform. This will push jurisdictions rankings up or down compared to last year. These new KPIs are not weighted as heavily, however as those carried forward from 2024, to ensure there is a balance between consistency from the KPIs used in 2024 and the broader approach in 2025. As mentioned above, we have swapped the overall weightings of consistency and certainty due to new KPIs and our revised assessment and review when applying the perspective of impacts on business.

This edition also included methodology refinements, to better capture a wider pool of data and information, and where jurisdictions were difficult to separate, the score methodologies were expanded or narrowed to capture nuances between otherwise similar policy settings.

Table 2: Key reasons for change in results

Jurisdiction	2024 weighted rank	2025 weighted rank	Key Reasons for change
South Australia	1	1	No change in overall rank however some individual scores may change due to better data availability or scoring refinement.
Tasmania	2	2	No change in overall rank however some individual scores may change due to better data availability or scoring refinement.
Western Australia	4	3	WA has scored well due to quick decisions for DA's and BA's that are likely stemming from recent reforms. Standardised planning schemes and transparency of data however needs improvement.
Victoria	5	4	Victoria have improved from previous years due to efficiencies in decision timeframes, number of approvals and the new KPI about system wide reforms. Victoria also has the longest timeframe before an authority can stop the clock. They do not have a statutory timeframe



Jurisdiction	2024 weighted rank	2025 weighted rank	Key Reasons for change
			for rezoning decisions, and this is evident in their scoring.
Australian Capital Territory	3	5	New Planning Act being implemented in ACT strengthens some scores, particularly those around consistency. This occurred in 2023, and we are still seeing the impacts in the 2025 review. ACT continues to fall behind in decision timeframes indicating good policy intent in reforms not playing out on the ground in practice.
Northern Territory	7	6	NT continue to perform well in DA decision timeframes and BA statutory timeframes likely as a result of lower scale and bulk of DAs and BAs and an already centralised planning system.
Queensland	6	7	A lack of standardisation across local planning schemes, limited open data available to measure LGA performances and decision times continues to hold QLD back. Positively, the QLD system has competitive statutory decision timeframes embedded within their planning instrument. A centralised and transparent zoning system and data collection to monitor LGA DA performances to hold Councils accountable to statutory timeframes would likely see QLD move up the rankings.
New South Wales	8	8	No change in overall rank. NSW continues to rank highly in transparency but is held back by lack of consistency and certainty within their planning systems, which in turn impacts the efficiency of their planning system.

The best of Australia’s planning systems

Some of the best initiatives that helped jurisdictions score well, and thereby help businesses get on with doing business, are outlined below.

Table 3: Jurisdictional planning outcomes that best support businesses

Our Chosen Jurisdiction’s Best Feature	What about this feature is there to like?	Why this feature benefits businesses and the community.
South Australia’s consolidated planning documentation.	A consolidated central source of truth for planning laws and codes.	Helps customers & planning professionals avoid analysing multiple instruments & documents to piece together often critical and widely fragmented planning laws and codes.
Tasmania’s prescribed timeframes.	Statutory based prescribed timeframes for both application assessments and planning instrument amendments.	Puts a time performance metric on local councils and government departments that can be monitored for compliance and expectations of desired turnaround times.
Queensland’s deemed approvals.	A pathway for development applications that can proceed into being deemed approved instead of deemed refused.	Creates certainty for applicants, who have better control of timeframes of assessment, while incentivising councils to adhere to timeframes.
NSW’s Housing Reform rezonings.	Aims to address National Housing Accord targets with initiatives	Focused on increasing housing density around key transport hubs



Our Chosen Jurisdiction's Best Feature	What about this feature is there to like?	Why this feature benefits businesses and the community.
	including transport-oriented development rezonings and changing planning rules to tackle the 'missing middle' of housing supply.	that will support businesses via well-located homes for employees and people to access employment opportunities and/or for acquiring goods and services.
Western Australia's Delegation Levels	Gives developers the choice of whether to have their applications determined by the Western Australian Planning Commission, a Development Assessment Panel, or by a local government.	This is likely to create competition for Responsible Authorities for development assessments to come into their department. Competition is healthy and makes jurisdictions accountable and take ownership in decision making process. Having varying options for business means the service providers, in this case the three alternative pathways, means the providers need to ensure they are offering a sound and effective service.
ACT's Lease Variation Charge (betterment levy) to support land use development.	A value capture system that provides upfront certainty while funding infrastructure where land value 'up lifts' occur arising from improved development rights.	Community shares benefit in land value uplift that can be used to fund public infrastructure, and developers avoid contentious and drawn-out developer contribution negotiations with planning staff.
Victoria's Standardised Planning Approach.	Standardised planning scheme for all councils – e.g. Commercial 1 Zone is written the same for all Planning Authorities.	Increases consistency and reduces instances of planning law and code contradictions for people and organisations doing business with multiple local councils.
Northern Territory Building Approval timeframes.	20-day prescribed building approval timeframes helps shorten period between development application approval and construction commencements.	Encourages faster progression post DA to unlock capital investments sooner than it otherwise would.



2 Efficiency in Planning Systems

Why we measured this

The core of any planning and building system is their permitting and approval processes, and the customer experiences that these processes bring to applicants and businesses seeking permits. Efficiency is highly valued because waiting for permits means capital investments are locked up as the process is worked through. In effect project outcomes are frozen from being released into the economy until certain bureaucratic gates are crossed and permits are received.

While holding time for permits and approvals is necessary for due diligence, ensuring compliance with planning codes and allowing for community input, the monetary and non-monetary cost of waiting for decisions is mostly exclusively being borne by applicants.

What we measured

KPI 1: Average turnaround times for development applications valued under \$30 million.

KPI 2: Average turnaround times for development applications valued at over \$30 million.

KPI 3: Average turnaround time for construction approval post-development application.

KPI 4: Average time observed for Proponent-initiated and planning authority code amendments.

KPI 5: Residential building approvals per capita (ABS statistics).

KPI 6 (new): Reduction of decision timeframes for development applications from previous year.

This theme brings together the full customer pathway that business may experience in the planning to construction process. This includes obtaining and passing through gates associated with planning scheme amendments, development applications and building approvals.

Focused areas include planning and building permit applications for developments associated with the following business critical sectors:

- Residential,
- Industrial,
- Hospitality,
- Office,
- Retail,
- Commercial,
- Infrastructure,
- Resource extraction,
- Energy utility, including wind and solar farms.



Figure 2: Efficiency Scorecard

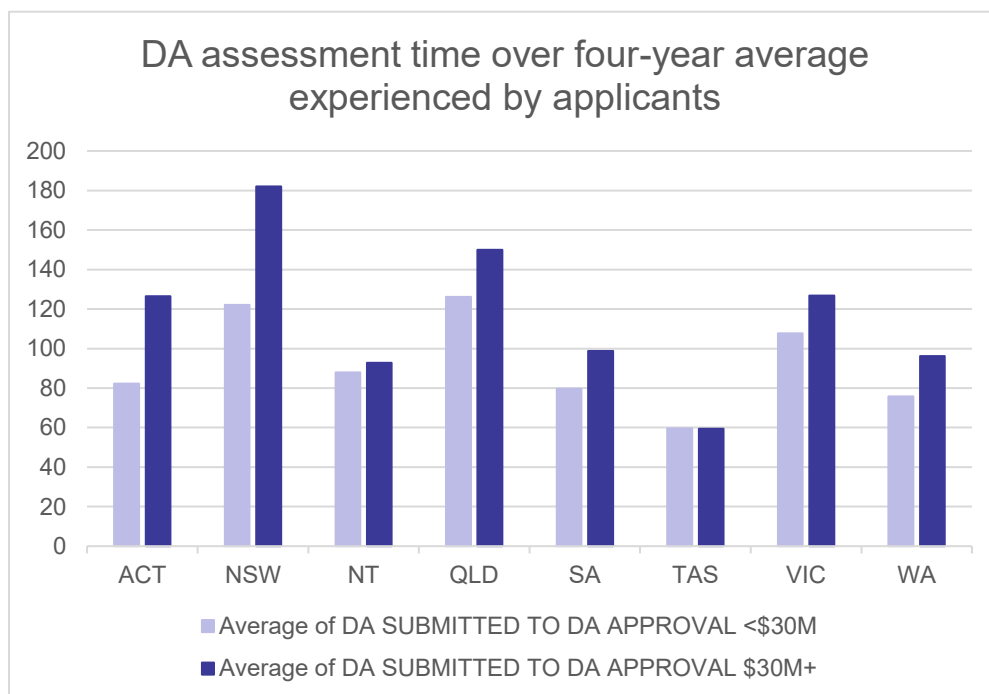


What has changed from 2024 scorecard for efficiency?

This year included one new KPI which aims to measure the reduction of decision timeframes for development applications across the jurisdictions from previous years. This KPI assesses jurisdictions dedication to improvement of decision timeframes, whether that has been through reforms to the planning scheme or Act. Reforms that seek to improve efficiency should then be reflected in decision timeframes.

What we found

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** who excel in building approval decision timeframes. This can be explained by their quickest statutory timeframe for building approval and recent reform to the Act where additional information ('stop the clock') must be requested within 7 days of local Council's receiving development applications. **New South Wales** was ranked last due to having the slowest determination timeframes for development and building applications.



South Australia's consolidated planning approach creates an environment of certainty and consistency not typically observed in other jurisdictions. These factors in turn are likely to be underpinning overall efficiency in processing applications and allows them to remain near the top of the pack.

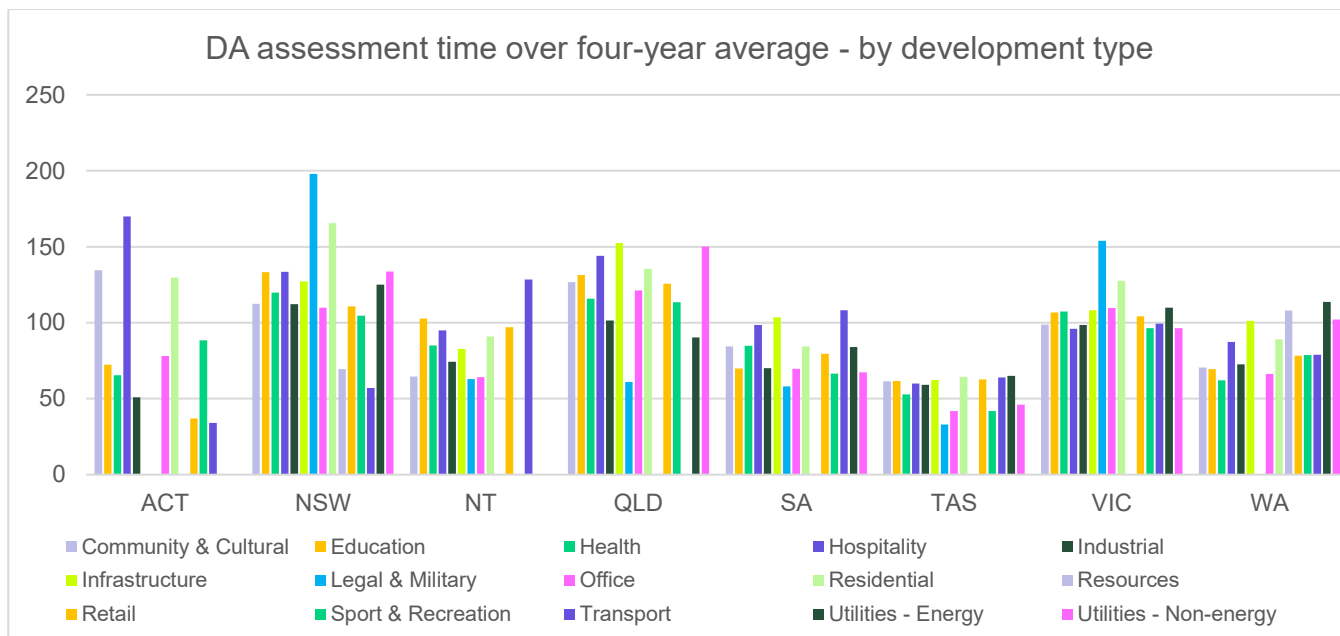
Tasmania had the fastest determination timeframe for development applications less than \$30m and above \$30m. However, they score low for residential building approvals per capita.

Western Australia scored well in building approval times, enabling approved developments to proceed quicker to construction. **Victoria** scores the highest in residential building approvals per capita.

New South Wales and **Western Australia** were the most efficient in terms of rezoning and planning scheme amendments. However, **Queensland** was ranked first for KPI 4 due to their unique planning system that does not require rezoning in the same way as other jurisdictions and enables a faster process for developers seeking to develop a use in a zone that is not typical for that use.

Northern Territory and the **Australian Capital Territory** do not have open data on rezoning and planning scheme amendments decision timeframes and therefore were scored poorly.

With housing supply a major national priority, the approvals of residential buildings is a key metric for the nation. Measuring the number of residential buildings approved per capita (KPI 5) allows us to measure the output of the planning system in meeting this national priority, standardised against the overall population of the jurisdiction. **Victoria** leads this measure by far, followed closely by **Queensland**, **South Australia** and **Western Australia** over the 2024-25 financial year period. Conversely, the **Northern Territory** and **Tasmania** are the worst performers on this metric, with **New South Wales** the worst performer of the large states.



What system changes would help ease business burdens?

Avoid rezoning and planning scheme amendments by allowing greater range of permissibility of development types

Planning scheme amendments are taking considerable time to process with research indicating scheme amendments ranging on average from 200 to 600 days+ across jurisdictions. **New South Wales** and **Western Australia** have the fastest planning scheme amendments in the samples obtained. However, **Queensland** has been ranked first in this KPI, as rezoning in the manner that other jurisdictions have, is not applicable in **Queensland**. Instead, the applicant can seek a variation request – called quasi-rezoning – which is an approval to vary the way in which the planning scheme applies to the site. This however does not actually rezone the land in the planning scheme. This means that the process to “rezone” in **Queensland** is automatically more efficient than in other jurisdictions.

New South Wales, Victoria and **South Australia** don't have prescribed statutory timeframes for rezoning and planning scheme amendments. This is evident this year with **Victoria** and **South Australia** both ranked poorly having the slowest planning scheme amendments in the samples obtained. In particular, **South Australia** averaged over 800 days for some rezoning projects from the samples obtained. Without prescribed statutory timeframes, this reduces jurisdictions efficiency and in turn certainty for applicants and businesses seeking planning scheme amendments and rezonings.

Australia's planning system is based on a zoning and coding approach where development types are zoned to avoid incompatible uses – for example industrial developments and residential developments; or to protect environmental lands (national parks, water ways etc). Planning schemes are also used to establish controls in built form such as height of buildings and floor space ratios.

However, this prescriptive approach means that when lands or planning controls are no longer serving their historic purposes or changing service needs are being experienced, overly complicated statutory controls need to be unravelled, amended and updated. Only then are the opportunities created for new development types to meet changing community expectations or to encourage integrated and denser land uses or asset renewals.

Where planning systems allow for greater permissibility of development types and broader range of built form controls (like **Queensland**), less planning scheme amendments will need to occur. Urban renewal becomes a continuous improvement process, without needing significant instances of reinvention and rewriting of overcomplicated prescriptive controls.

The question then lies; how can we avoid rezonings or lengthy scheme amendments? can jurisdictions have a streamlined approach where an obsolete zone exists and orchestrate a rezoning for net community benefit? The



time and resources that goes into rezonings does not meet market expectations and marks forecasting and investment by business difficult.

Jurisdictions including the **Northern Territory** and **Australian Capital Territory** have limited public data and transparency on planning scheme amendment timeframes and should seek to include this in their open data policy and platforms.

Allow minor and low impact developments to be fast track through to Building Approval stages

Planning and building systems in this business efficiency theme are focused on regulations that cover:

- A planning instrument amendment process that typically sets the planning and building controls and if you are permitted or prohibited from building something (e.g. KPI 4),
- A development application process that assesses what you are building against those planning controls (e.g. KPI 1 & KPI 2), and
- A building approval process (e.g. KPI 3) that assesses how you are building something is complying with Australia's construction standards and building codes, among other construction related needs.

In many cases, an applicant will be required to go through all three regulatory contexts, often taking several years to progress through for complex large-scale developments.

Allowing smaller scale developments that are typically associated with internal to boundary works such as single lot housing developments, to proceed thorough to building approval by undergoing rapid checks (**Victoria's** VicSmart permits), or bypass planning approval development applications altogether, will help unburden the critical development application component of the system.

Small scale developments would also be suited, for example, to fall under a code applying and deemed approval regime like that operating in **Queensland** and with applicants being issued with automated standard conditions of consents unless there are good local amenity and planning impact reasons to hold up and merit assess the proposed development.

In essence, there are too many projects getting caught up in a duplication of assessment, criteria and process, that just adds cost and time to business. Fast tracking development to building approval will reduce time and costs and end up with the same outcome, albeit a much better process for business.

What is the risk to this? If too many powers, delegation or decision making is taken away from Council via fast-track exemptions or State pathways, will local Council enforce unnecessary expectations of proponents, become territorial and seek to make themselves relevant by having influence. There is a fine balance between delegation of projects via different pathways and ensuring all stakeholders play a role, where appropriate, in decision making.

Speed in post development approval helps release investments

Post development application, many businesses are then confronted with obtaining building approvals which can be tied to planning consent conditions. That is why we are assessing the decision timeframes for building applications across the jurisdictions (KPI 3).

Ensuring that some level of shortened prescribed time frame (**Western Australia** and **Northern Territory**) for turning around building applications, along with clearer rules on post development approval requirements that can limit what can be sought from planning authorities and the timeframes in which additional non-planning approvals are to be issued, will help release capital works and investments into the economy quicker than they otherwise would.



3 Consistency in Planning Systems

Why we measured this

Consistency in planning systems, along with certainty, is a foundation that underpins and drives efficiency. Jurisdictions that have embedded consistency in their planning systems will find that overall, the interactions between the thousands of applicants and multiple planning authorities are more predictable and routine, and easier for businesses to navigate.

Having standardised and plain English planning controls that consistently apply across multiple local planning authorities also help businesses understand what is expected of them, across different planning officers from different local and State government organisations, and the codes and requirements that will likely be applied.

What we measured

KPI 7: Standardised planning instruments across the jurisdiction.

KPI 8: Standardised zoning that provides clarity of interpretation and application.

KPI 9: Number of planning documents beyond standard instruments.

KPI 10: The ability or otherwise for proponent led rezoning and planning scheme amendments

KPI 11: Mining and energy projects are supported to transition to clean economy.

KPI 12: Planning reforms and program are consistent with Government policy to increase housing.

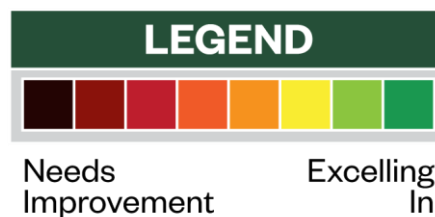
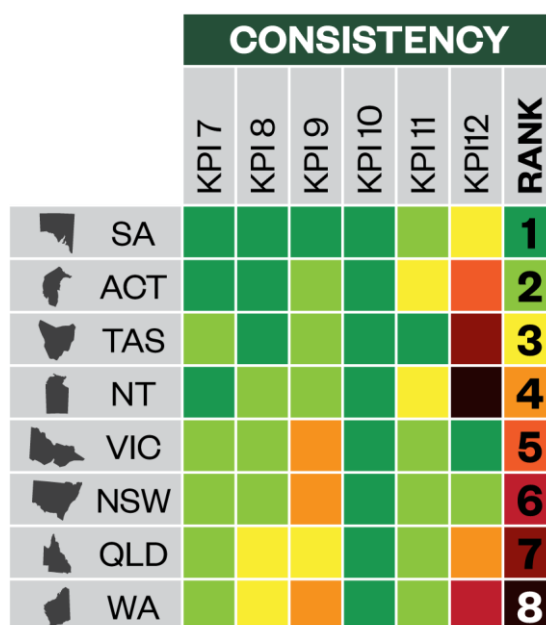


Figure 3: Consistency Scorecard

What we found

South Australia continues to rank first in consistency in the planning scorecard due to its centralised and consolidated planning code approach, which businesses can refer to without web site hopping or downloading and reading through multiple planning documents. 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 their introduction of a statewide planning scheme, the Tasmanian Planning Scheme (TPS). This was introduced in 2017 and the roll out is almost complete with only the Hobart Interim Planning Scheme, Kingborough Interim Planning Scheme and Sullivans Cove Planning Scheme to be transferred within the Local Provisions Schedules of the TPS.

Queensland scores poorly in this area given the state’s localised and decentralised planning system grants significant autonomy and power to local councils in planning instrument zoning naming and coding. There are some standardised aspects to the planning schemes in terms of land uses and zoning but no mandated structure. The Queensland Planning Provisions were repealed which aimed to set a structure for planning schemes, but it is still commonly referred to when drafting new planning schemes.

The **Northern Territory** remains in the same position as 2024, mainly due to their smaller scale initiatives in housing reforms and transitioning to clean economy compared to other jurisdictions. What’s keeping them in a



good position is their standardised planning scheme for the entire territory, except Jabiru – which has the Jabiru Town Plan.

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 improving efficiencies in decision-making support. Their reforms are also focusing on standardising the land use terms and zoning within the planning schemes which will provide improved clarity and interpretation for businesses. **Western Australia** is still yet to see the full effect of these reforms in action. We expect that we will see **Western Australia's** ranking in this category increase in time as the reforms are legislated and in practice.

New South Wales has embarked on significant reforms to deliver new housing supply through rezonings that are currently in process. It remains to be seen whether these will be a success given that 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.

What system changes would help ease business burdens

Removing fragmentation will help businesses better understand what is expected

In **South Australia** businesses can obtain, from one centralised document, the planning codes and standards needed to build their development. This is regardless of which part of **South Australia** they may choose to operate in. This consistency helps users build a portfolio of works and adopt standardised and repetition of building plan and delivery methods. It also helps them understand with confidence the regulatory context and requirements before investing in, or taking risks, to provided goods and services in multiple local jurisdictions.

Reducing variations and patch-based planning will improve consistency

When inconsistency occurs, planning becomes patchworked, requiring bespoke research and investigations. Removing layered and tiered documentation, consolidating codes and instruments and digitising planning instruments to enable technology solutions to play a navigating role, will help businesses understand and apply planning codes and requirements.

While most jurisdictions have standardised planning templates for local councils to follow, the ability for local councils to add excessive detail or variations can result in diluting standardisation to a point where customers are confronted with complexity and contradictions (**New South Wales**). In some cases, business will come across tiered planning instruments that prevail or cancel out clauses or controls in other operating instruments (**New South Wales**) or zoning name and type variations that can be contradictory from one local council to the next (**Queensland** and **Western Australia**).

Queensland would benefit from better standardisation of zoning (like **Victoria**) to help businesses interpret and consistently apply planning zones and local laws across multiple Queensland Local Government Areas and include a statutory pathway for businesses to propose and trigger a local planning scheme amendment process.

Western Australia is currently in the process of standardising their land use terms and zoning across all planning schemes which once implemented, allow improved navigation of the planning codes and requirements for businesses working across the state.

Aligning to and being consistent with national reforms

Big ticket reforms such as the National Housing Accord and transitioning to the clean economy are being adopted by well-resourced states. **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 a positive program of reform. However the proof of effectiveness will be in the implementation, which has only just begun and is therefore not yet fully captured in the 2025 review due to its infancy.

Victoria has released 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 across Victoria. This is further behind the NSW TOD mentioned above and is not reflected in the scorecard for



2025. Rezoning of 7 of the 8 TOD precincts has been finalised to fast-track housing in these areas following consultation with the local community and stakeholders

The transition to the clean economy and supporting businesses to lift and shift operations to cleaner energy will be critical for businesses to reduce its carbon footprint in alignment with Federal government directions. Initiatives that streamline energy related developments, such as solar and wind farms, will help businesses with the cost of lifting and shifting to the clean economy. **Western Australia's** Green Energy Approvals Initiative is helping to attract business investment into the Western Australian renewable energy sector, helping to ensure the environment is protected for future generations.

Other regulations or decision making factors outside of planning

The planning process is often one part of the jigsaw and often the first piece in the process that carries a lot of weight in investment decisions in short and long term by business. In planning, too often matters end up being post approval conditions or to be dealt with at a later stage and in essence, 'kicking the can down the road'. Too often, there are other factors outside of planning, that are brought into the planning process that increase costs and delays. Jurisdictions need to make it attractive for business, that as part of the standardisation of planning instruments and/or fast track planning pathways, removing external regulations or allowing for concurrent assessment of external regulations will allow for better, quicker and sound decision making. Whilst planning decisions can at times be very theory based, allowing business to have certainty and allowing them to obtain other concurrent approvals will result in better development package. A great example of this is where **Victoria** recently removed the liquor licence clause from all Victorian Schemes. Where proponents previously needed to seek approval for land use of bar and use of land to sell and consume liquor and once approved, get separate approval from the Liquor licence commission, they now can just obtain planning approval for the land use of a bar and then get separate approval for liquor, outside of the planning process.



4 Certainty in Planning Systems

Why we measured this

Along with consistency, certainty is the other pillar that supports and drives efficiency. Certainty enables businesses to plan their delivery and operational needs with confidence. Businesses that are not provided with certainty must factor in added risk and cost of delay and uncertainty into their feasibility, reducing the likelihood a project may proceed.

Certainty also limits misinterpretations and the erosion of trust in the planning professionals and the processes they follow. When there are moving goal posts to hit, a decision maker or referral agency coming to a differing interpretation or viewpoint to an assessing officer, it can trigger serious delays, and break trust and confidence in the system. This diminishes community support, and business desire to invest.

What we measured

KPI 13: A statutory timeframe is prescribed for deemed decisions by planning authorities on development applications.

KPI 14: The ability to stop an assessment and seek additional information is limited and allow applicants to constrain its use.

KPI 15: Delegation is available to streamline bureaucracy and simplify procedural processes.

KPI 16: Developer contributions have simple pathways for implementation.

KPI 17: Statutory timeframe is prescribed for building regulator to make building application decision.

KPI 18: Statutory timeframe is prescribed for planning authorities to make planning scheme amendment decisions.

KPI 19 (new): Policy commitment v legislative action in the last 24 months.

KPI 20 (new): System wide v targeted reform impact.

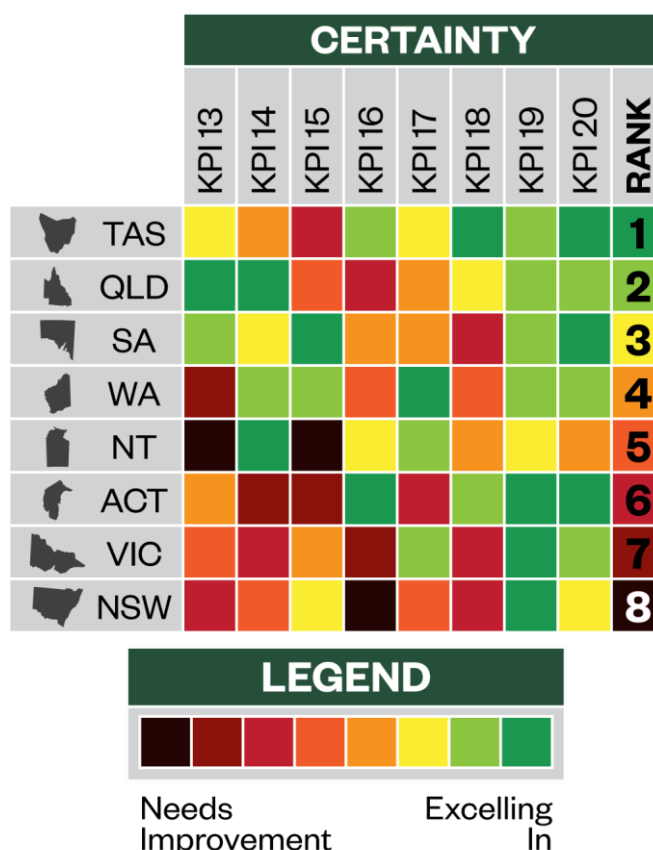


Figure 4: Certainty Scorecard

What has changed from 2024 Scorecard?

Two new KPIs were introduced this year, aimed at assessing jurisdictions commitment to reforms and the level of reform to their planning systems. Scoring of this KPI favoured those jurisdictions enacting system wide reforms. As a result, the overall weighting of certainty increased from 2024.

What we found

We find that **Tasmania** provides the most certainty to businesses and applicants seeking a planning approval. However, **Tasmania** falls short of availability of different delegation levels to streamline bureaucracy and state significant projects.

Queensland continues to rank highly. This can be explained by their deemed approval pathway, which is unique in Australia and represents a significant innovative policy that enables applicants to force planning authorities to make decisions and close out applications without the need to seek an expensive and further time delaying



judicial court process. **Queensland** also has limited stop the clock provisions, with the applicant needing to agree to stop the assessment clock. **Queensland** has room for improvement in statutory timeframe for building applications and planning scheme amendments, this continues to hold them back from other jurisdictions.

This year there has been a lot of movement within KPI 14 scoring. **Western Australia** has had recent reforms to their planning processes and now the Relevant Authority must request additional information with 7 days of receiving application.

South Australia's prescribed development application assessment timeframes range from 5 days to 95 days is a further example of innovative policy that ensures proportionality of application assessments to project scope and risks. This helps applicants plan and manage their expectations on turnaround times.

The **Australian Capital Territory**, with their 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.

Despite that, the **Australian Capital Territory** continues to be ranked low for this theme. The Territory has implemented a new planning system, and it may be a few more years before results are being felt on the ground. ACT does not score well in terms of prescribed building approval timeframes. This has resulted in a significant negative revision of the Territory's score for this theme.

New South Wales, who rank last in this theme, is ranking poorly in developer contributions (KPI 15) due to its relative high cost, changing schemes and the uncertainty contributions create compared to other jurisdictions with lower costs and more stable systems. NSW's 'Minister's Statement of Expectations' approach for development application assessments, planning scheme amendment timeframes and strategic planning, while new and innovative that can be used to influence council performances, is based on what a council should achieve at a future date and reliance on benchmark guidelines, compared to other jurisdictions who have less ambiguous timeframe expectations clearly set out within their overarching planning Act.

Victoria may appear to have gone significantly backwards in terms of prescribed timeframes for rezoning/planning scheme amendments (KPI 18). This metric was previously judged based on benchmark timeframes, however given other jurisdictions have legislated timeframes in place, **Victoria** has been differentiated between those jurisdictions given the higher levels of certainty legislated timeframes deliver.

All jurisdictions have at least announced planning reform of various nature. **South Australia, Tasmania** and the **Australian Capital Territory** have all implemented system wide reforms. **South Australia** and **Tasmania** have both consolidated their planning schemes to form one statewide planning scheme (**Tasmania** is almost complete with the rollout) and the **Australian Capital Territory** in 2023 passed the *Planning Act 2023* which presented a significant adjustment to their planning system.

Western Australia is in the process of several reforms through the *Planning and Development Amendment Act 2023* to which will enable system wide changes to several key planning issues including, application processing, housing delivery and standardisation. **Victoria** and **Queensland** have also delivered on planning reform announcements which directly target housing delivery through streamlining particular planning processes within their schemes. **Northern Territory** is far behind the other jurisdictions in terms of delivery and announcement of meaningful planning reforms to enable certainty for businesses and applicants and in line with national housing targets.

What system changes would help ease business burdens

Removing bottle necks by delegating down and support significant projects by delegating up.

Delegations play an important role in planning approvals. Having the ability to ensure applications are appropriately delegated makes the planning system better able to process and respond to the volume of applications at all levels of complexity and value.

When decision making is only restricted to the highest levels or with appointed panels, organising meetings, moving application documents, prioritising applications, briefing notes and recommendations, adds uncertainty due to the level of stakeholders involved in coordinating, assessing and approving development applications.



Conversely, for significant projects that affect the broader economy, environment or society, a pathway for delegating up to decision makers ensures that social and economic impacts of a project are properly considered, supporting business confidence investing in large scale projects. In **Queensland**, the Minister for Economic Development has the powers to assess and decide a 'Priority Development Area' development application.

In **Western Australia**, it was legislated that the determination of development applications for single houses must now be done by the CEO of the local government or employees authorised by the CEO rather than relying on the elected Council. This moves decision making for what should be relatively simple applications to a lower level of decision maker, to streamline development applications for housing.

In **New South Wales**, any project above \$5 million does not go to a 'Council meeting' for a decision but is reported to an independent panel.

In **Victoria**, there is no threshold per se and any application can be reported to the local Council for a decision at a meeting. Victoria being a large state like NSW, would benefit from a threshold system and independent panel.

In **Western Australia**, the Development Assessment Panels (DAPs) were established as part of the State Government's commitment to simplifying application processes and improving the approval procedures. DAPs are panels comprising a mix of technical experts and local government members with power to determine application for development approvals in place of the relevant decision-making authority. DAPs create an opt-in pathway for any development over \$2 million (including group and multiple dwellings but excluding single houses and ancillary structures). The WA Government is providing all community housing projects with the ability to opt into the DAPs pathway regardless of the scale and value of the project.

Delegations should be transparent and clear to applicants, so there is an upfront understanding of who the decision maker is for the project.

Legislated timeframes provide transparent metrics to monitor planning authorities

Tasmania has legislated timeframes that cover the entire 'cradle to grave' process of planning scheme amendments, development applications, and building approvals. As a result, **Tasmania** scores comparably well in providing certainty. This also provides an avenue for governing officials to monitor, measure and act on planning authorities and building regulators against prescribed timeframes, if they need to.

Innovative policy can help applicants and planning authorities work together

At present, planning systems deploy resolution pathways that are judicial in nature. In circumstances where applicants do not have the resources for escalating applications into a judicial environment, the application stays with the delegated planning authority, where there are no disincentives on the planning authority in the event of delays. For example, in **New South Wales**, development applications that have not been determined within a prescribed timeframe are lapsed into deemed refusal and applicants can force a decision via a legislative court process. This complex, costly and time-consuming approach is often not taken up by applicants. In practice this results in a regulating environment where there are too many disincentives for an applicant to undertake judicial processes and not enough disincentives for planning authorities presiding over delayed applications.

In **Queensland** innovative policy streamlines applications and brings applicants and planning authorities to work together because there are incentives and disincentives on both sides, for example:

- In certain circumstances planning regulations prohibit local government from assessing minor building works, Detached House/NDIS accommodation.
- Development Assessment Rules are regulating timeframes for both Council and applicant.
 - Where Councils do not adhere to regulated timeframes, the applicant can seek a deemed approval notice and the Council must approve the application subject to conditions.
 - Councils are regulated to approve with conditions all Code Assessable applications, and can only refuse applications if compliance cannot be achieved by via a development condition.

These innovative policy pathways from **Queensland** help bring applicants and councils together in a consistent manner, knowing that it is in both their mutual interest to resolve and progress applications efficiently.



Consultation and third-party involvement

A big part of the planning process is consultation and 'third party' involvement in decision making of planning applications. The planning process has always benefited from the democratic and collaborative approach but at times, it can be the involvement of a few who can derail or delay a project to satisfy their own objectives in lieu of the broader objectives and net community benefit

For example, **Victoria** has historically had an issue with notice and third party appeal rights causing delays at Council or the Victorian and Civil Administrative Tribunal (VCAT). In 2025, they amended their main assessment tool for residential development (Clause 55) and introduced a deemed to comply tool, that sets certain expectations of applicants and in turn, provides certainty to all parties on outcomes and remove third party appeal rights. All jurisdictions need to be continuously reviewing their consultation, notice and third party involvement regulations to ensure the democratic, collaborative and transparent planning process exists but expectations from community remain tempered, process are completed without delay and facilitating sound investment and public-benefit decisions.



5 Transparency in Planning Systems

Why we measured this

Technology helps streamline planning requirements and applications by collecting, sharing, processing and allowing analysis of results. This allows applicants to understand how efficient a planning system is, and governments to understand good and bad performance in the system. It informs those responsible for the system on what is or is not working as anticipated and fosters an environment of continuous innovation.

Once technology is adopted, it 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.

What we measured

KPI 21: The extent of on-line web portals for applicants to view planning controls and track and lodge applications.

KPI 22: The extent of open data provided about development application process performance (e.g. development assessment timeframes, types of applications lodged, determinations) that is issued by state and territory governments.

KPI 23: The extent of open data provided about planning scheme amendment performance (e.g. process amendment timeframes, determinations made, changes to planning instrument made) that is issued by state and territory governments.

KPI 24: The extent of open data provided about building approval performance (e.g. application timeframes, who made determinations, about the building application being assessed) that is issued by state and territory governments.

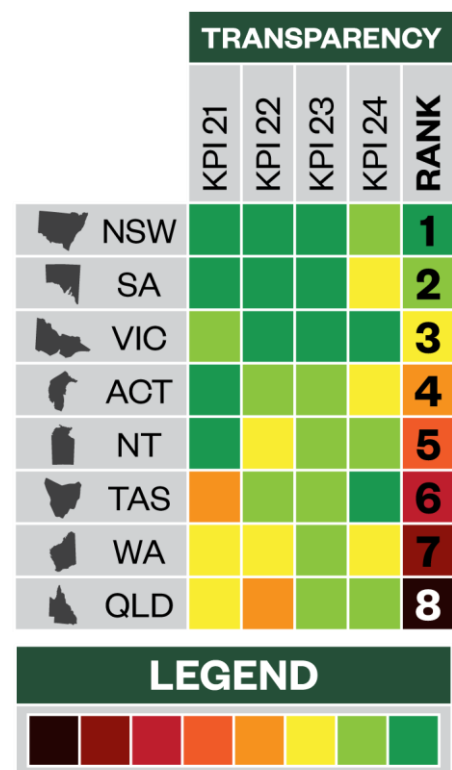


Figure 5: Transparency Scorecard

What has changed from 2024 Scorecard?

There was an addition to the scoring method to KPI 21 and minor rewording of KPI 22 in how it is measured

What we found

New South Wales and **South Australia** are the top performers in the transparency in planning scorecard. **New South Wales** for example, has the most extensive technology for collecting and processing development applications and open data availability to support monitoring, analysis, and systemisation of planning related outputs. The recently released development application council league table dashboard in **New South Wales** provides additional development application transparency. In saying this, it will be important that the Government monitors and adjusts its approach in response to how councils change their behaviour to deal with this new transparency.

This year there was a shift in the scoring methodology for KPI 21, which meant there was further separation between jurisdictions that have centralised online portals and those that have limited online portals. The rankings were the same however, the points given to each jurisdiction was slightly different in order to further reward those providing centralised portals (**New South Wales, South Australia, Northern Territory** and the **Australian Capital Territory**). For this year, we considered that majority of LGAs should be interpreted as those LGAs within the greater city regions as the development and resourcing context between city regions and regional areas is



significantly different and therefore the need for sophisticated online portals differs. Regional areas won't have the same number of development applications and less resources, therefore there is not the same need for a significant portal system for lodgement and tracking. This has been reflected in the scoring for KPI 21. The majority of LGAs have online portals for lodging DAs only in **Victoria**, with few LGAs having a sophisticated and accurate tracking system. Some LGAs in **Queensland** and **Western Australia** have online portals for lodging and tracking DAs.

Tasmania, while underperforming in terms of development application portal and data transparency (KPI 18, KPI 19), scores highly on the metrics that measure building approval permits and planning scheme amendments (KPI 20, KPI 21), resulting in a relative improvement compared to last year's ranking. It is noted that there are new investments being adopted by Tasmania to improve DA web portals, creating a centralised portal called *PlanBuild*. This is still being rolled out iteratively and the timeline for completion is unclear. Currently online applications through *PlanBuild* are only available for planning application within the City of Hobart, it is yet to expand to additional areas in Tasmania.

KPI 22 was amended this year, with the addition of a new scoring system and measurement. With this amendment we see those jurisdictions with state published up-to-date open data on DAs lodged and assessed being recognised (**New South Wales, Victoria** and **South Australia**). This KPI is focused on whether or not the State Governments have published open data on DAs lodged and assessed. However, there is a view that the rate of data being published is slowing down.

In **Queensland**, LGA open data is published Council by Council only and is very limited – this makes tracking relative performances between LGAs difficult. **Queensland** State Government do not provide open data and the community is reliant on data through the UDIA website, which is only accessible to those with a membership.

Some jurisdictions such as **Western Australia** and the **Northern Territory** planning related data is not easily accessible, transparent or available outside of commercially collected information, browsing local council web sites or through customer feedback mechanisms and this contributed to their lower scores.

South Australia and **Northern Territory** scores changed for KPI 24 as **South Australia** has not published any recent open data on building approvals and **Northern Territory** has published datasets for building approvals, but relies on data from ABS.

What system changes would help ease business burdens

Best practice open data will spur transparency and build cases for intervention and innovation

The benefits of transparency will not occur without best practice open data. Best practice open data is data delivered in several machine and non-machine reading formats. It can be used to drive cases for change and policy reform. Reform supported by planning data leads to better outcomes, such as better target resourcing of local planning offices.

Innovative products can also be developed from open and accessible planning data. Innovative technology products can help with aligning to code-compliant developments, tracking conditions of consent, or facilitating multi-agency application referrals. Products that can apply artificial intelligence will also greatly serve planning and non-planning actors to work better together.

New South Wales and **Victoria** are starting to provide several Application Programming Interfaces (APIs) for planning data. Modern technology firms can leverage off this to innovate with Artificial Intelligence and new productivity enhancing products.

With that being said, the data is only as good as it is entered by humans at the point of data entry. Data can be mishandled, inaccurate and manipulated without good data governance protocols being in place. This is part of the reason for why transparency has the lowest weighting of the four themes as we generally find urban planning data protocols and governance lack the same rigour as found in other industry settings.



Digitising planning instruments is the first and necessary step

Most planning practices remain siloed and isolated because they cannot leverage off digitalisation. Digitalisation occurs when machine readable files and formats are created and openly shared. Allowing and enabling the development and integration of technology systems will create modern solutions that help businesses prepare and submit development applications and to spur technology firms to innovate with products that drive efficiency.

New South Wales has centralised and digitised local council planning maps, however, district and regional planning maps have not been digitised, and they remain largely siloed from a variety of web-based technology platforms used in planning, architecture and engineering disciplines. This means industry consultants are spending manual time on integrating district and regional strategies into their consulting processes and passing this cost on to businesses seeking development approvals or planning policy advice.

Queensland's local councils have, to varying levels, digitised their bespoke planning instruments and zoning maps, however not all the of the State's local councils have online planning data portals. The level of maturity and capability to undertake this task will vary from council to council. This is the same as **Western Australia**, where not all local councils have online planning portals and also lack availability of open data on planning and building performance.

Should **Queensland** progress towards a centralised planning development application portal and consistent planning zone mapping overseen and resourced by the State, collecting planning data and applying modern technology to planning processes will make it easier for businesses to engage in Queensland's planning system.

Open data builds trust and accountability

Currently, there is a trust issue with both levels of government and industry expectations. There is an element of accountability missing from the process, and better accountability builds trust and makes parties responsible. Improving the use and accessibility of centralised open data will enhance accountability and build trust. Business is willing to invest and collaborate with government when information is transparent, where they have good visibility of the data and can comprehend the reasons for delays and/or decision making. Allowing business to better understand and interpret data and how that influences the market, will allow for sound and committed investment from business.

Appendix A: Methodology and Explanatory Notes



Methodology of Rankings

The following outlines the methodology used to collect and collate information to produce an objective comparison between the State jurisdictions.

Identification of Key Performance Indicators

Planning and building permitting systems are complex and detailed as they cover a diverse range of issues and stakeholders. A long list of elements were collated that were considered critical to enable businesses to thrive. The following considerations were applied to refine the indicators:

- the most influential in the ability for a business to get things done;
- objectively measurable through open source data; and
- could be measured over time to demonstrate changes in performance.

For this 2025 edition, a final list of 24 KPIs were considered to inform rankings.

Collection and ranking

Information on planning and building systems and frameworks was collected from open-source information primarily from state and territory government websites. Where data is not transparent, this lowered the score for that particular metric.

Development and building application efficiency was sourced from a data research firm that monitor a wide range of activities including projects that require planning and building applications. This approach is collected at local government area level.

Each State is awarded points against each KPI. These scores are then normalised and weighted.

Individual ranking methodology

Each individual ranking table is informed by a set of key performance indicators, weighted within their grouping. These individual component rankings are then weighted to achieve an overall ranking for either planning or ease of doing business.

There are four areas of business theme ranking components that together make up the combined ranking. These components have been weighted as follows:

- Efficiency (weighting = 40%)
- Consistency (20%)
- Certainty (25%), and
- Transparency (15%).



Business Themes and KPIs	Allocated Weight
Efficiency (40%)	
KPI 1: Quicker decisions enable business to move forward and reduce holding costs Measurement: Least Average Standard (<\$30m) DA assessment time over 4-year average	30%
KPI 2: Quicker decisions enable business to move forward and reduce holding cost: Measurement: Least Average Major DA (>\$30m) assessment time over 4-year average	30%
KP 3: Quicker decisions enable business to move forward and reduce holding cost. Measurement: Lowest average Building Approval Time Frame experienced by applicants.	10%
KPI 4: Quicker decisions enable business to move forward and reduce holding cost. Measurement: Lowest average time taken for Spot Rezoning reported by Planning Authorities	15%
KPI 5: More building approvals processed releases more projects into the economy Measurement: ABS building approvals per capita	10%
KPI 6: Decrease in decision times demonstrates commitment to reform and improvement Measurement: % reduction of decision timeframes for DA application from previous year	5%
Consistency (20%)	
KPI 7: Standardised approach across the State enables ease of interpretation and mobility of business. Measurement: State has standardised manner and form across Local Planning Instruments	25%
KPI 8: Standardised land use zones and development types provides clarity of interpretation and application. Measurement: State has standardised zones, land uses and development categories	20%
KPI 9: Limited number of local planning instruments beyond standard instruments reduces inconsistencies. Measurement: Least # of layers of planning documents in operation to manage and consider.	20%
KPI 10: Proponent led proposal enables innovative business ideas that regulatory framework might not yet have contemplated. Measurement: State has ability for proponent led rezoning and planning schemes.	15%
KPI 11: Mining and energy projects are supported to transition to the clean economy. Measurement: State approval pathways for mining and energy projects are consistent with other project pathways.	10%
KPI 12: State has included targeted reforms or programs to increase housing via planning system amendments. Measurement: Scope of planning reforms and programs are consistent with Government policy to significantly increase housing	10%
Certainty (25%)	



Business Themes and KPIs	Allocated Weight
KPI 13: Statutory timeframe is prescribed for planning authorities to make decisions. Measurement: Least # days Deemed refusal/approval timeframes for Development Applications.	20%
KPI 14: Ability to stop assessment and seek additional information is constrained. Measurement: Least # days and times a consenting authority can stop assessment and seek more information is constrained and/or rules are in favour of applicant.	20%
KPI 15: State has mechanisms for delegations in place, including to centralise significant complex matters to State level. Measurement: State has mechanism for delegations in place to streamline bureaucracy and support state significant projects.	10%
KPI 16: Development Contribution framework provides clarity of payments with low thresholds to preserve project viability. Measurement: Clear Development Contribution standard exists with prescribed thresholds or no contributions	15%
KPI 17: Statutory timeframe is prescribed for building regulator to make building application decisions. Measurement: Least # days prescribed for Deemed refusal/approval timeframes for building permit applications	10%
KPI 18: Statutory timeframe is prescribed for planning authorities to make rezoning decisions. Measurement: Least # days prescribed for Deemed refusal/approval timeframes for rezoning applications.	15%
KPI 19: Policy Commitment v Legislative Action (Last 24 months) Measurement: Number of announcements that then led to legislative action.	5%
KPI 20: System-Wide v Targeted Reform Impact Measurement: Level of change that is intended from the reform i.e. change to Act (system wide)	5%
Transparency (15%)	
KPI 21: Ability to lodge applications in digital format will speed up processes and reduces unfounded delays. Measurement: State or LGAs have centralised online development application portals for applicants.	40%
KPI 22: Open data on performance by LGA area promotes accountability and performance improvements. Measurement: State Government Publish open data on DAs lodged and Assessed across State/Jurisdiction.	30%
KPI 23: Open data on performance by Planning Authority area promotes accountability and performance improvements. Measurement: State Government Publish open data on rezonings lodged and assessed across State/Jurisdiction.	20%



Business Themes and KPIs	Allocated Weight
KPI 24: Open data on performance by Building Regulators and Local Councils promotes accountability and performance improvements. Measurement: State Government Publish open data on building applications lodged and assessed across State/Jurisdiction	10%

Appendix B: Jurisdictional Scorecard



Score Card – South Australia

Overall rank: 1st

Performance Measure	Ranking 2025	Ranking 2024	Ranking 2023
Efficiency	3 rd	1 st	3 rd
Consistency	1 st	1 st	1 st
Certainty	3 rd	1 st	2 nd
Transparency	2 nd	1 st	1 st

Score Card – Tasmania

Overall rank: 2nd

Performance Measure	Ranking 2025	Ranking 2024	Ranking 2023
Efficiency	2 nd	3 rd	1 st
Consistency	3 rd	3 rd	3 rd
Certainty	1 st	3 rd	4 th
Transparency	6 th	4 th	8 th

Score Card – Western Australia

Overall Rank: 3rd

Performance Measure	Ranking 2025	Ranking 2024	Ranking 2023
Efficiency	1 st	2 nd	2 nd
Consistency	8 th	5 th	6 th
Certainty	4 th	5 th	2 nd
Transparency	7 th	5 th	4 th



Score Card – Victoria

Overall rank: 4th

Performance Measure	Ranking 2025	Ranking 2024	Ranking 2023
Efficiency	4 th	5 th	6 th
Consistency	5 th	6 th	5 th
Certainty	7 th	4 th	5 th
Transparency	3 rd	2 nd	3 rd

Score Card – Australian Capital Territory

Overall rank: 5th

Performance Measure	Ranking 2025	Ranking 2024	Ranking 2023
Efficiency	7 th	4 th	7 th
Consistency	2 nd	2 nd	2 nd
Certainty	6 th	6 th	1 st
Transparency	4 th	3 rd	5 th

Score Card – Northern Territory

Overall Rank: 6th

Performance Measure	Ranking 2025	Ranking 2024	Ranking 2023
Efficiency	6 th	7 th	5 th
Consistency	4 th	4 th	3 rd
Certainty	5 th	5 th	5 th
Transparency	5 th	7 th	5 th



Score Card – Queensland
Overall Rank: 7th

Performance Measure	Ranking 2025	Ranking 2024	Ranking 2023
Efficiency	5 th	6 th	4 th
Consistency	7 th	8 th	8 th
Certainty	2 nd	2 nd	5 th
Transparency	8 th	6 th	8 th

Score Card – New South Wales
Overall Rank: 8th

Performance Measure	Ranking 2025	Ranking 2024	Ranking 2023
Efficiency	8 th	8 th	7 th
Consistency	6 th	7 th	7 th
Certainty	8 th	7 th	8 th
Transparency	1 st	1 st	1 st



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