# Regulation Rumble

## An Australian Jurisdictional Planning Scorecard

Prepared for
Business Council of Australia

October 2026

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Mecone acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land on where this project is undertaken and across the Mecone offices that this report is prepared, paying respect to the Elders past and present. We recognise the ongoing connection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to land, waters, and culture.

## About Mecone

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

***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.*

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# Executive summary

## Background and 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. The scorecard was repeated in 2024 and 2025, with this 2026 edition building on the analysis of previous years.

Planning and building systems play an important role in determining how quickly housing, employment land and infrastructure can be delivered. When these systems are inefficient, inconsistent, inflexible, and overly complex, they can constrain business activity and the delivery of housing, services and infrastructure.

The BCA has commissioned this report to identify best practice in planning systems, highlight areas for improvement and demonstrate the benefits of sustained reform over time. The broader objective is to encourage planning and building regulation systems that enable businesses to operate efficiency, support the delivery of homes and employment opportunities, and provide communities with access to the goods and services they need.

## Scorecard objectives

The scorecard objective assesses Australia's planning and building systems from the perspective of an applicant or business and user across four themes established in 2023 and retained in subsequent editions: **Efficiency**, **Consistency**, **Certainty** and **Transparency**.

The themes and their weightings have remained largely unchanged since 2023, allowing changes in rankings to reflect changes in jurisdictional performance rather than changes to the assessment methodology. The scorecard is intended to encourage policy makers to improve planning and building processes that support business activity and economic growth, while highlighting examples of best practice across Australia.

These findings should be understood from the perspective of a business or development applicant and are not intended to represent the experience of other stakeholders, including community members, administrator or public sector decision makers. They should therefore be considered alongside other information when assessing system performance. The methodology and explanatory notes are provided in Appendix A:

## Tasmania takes the lead

For the first time since Regulation Rumble began, there is a change at the top of the rankings. **Tasmania** takes first place from **South Australia** as the best performing planning jurisdiction in 2026. Supported by their adoption of a single state-wide planning scheme and statutory timeframes throughout the length of the approvals process, **Tasmania** ranks first for both Efficiency and Certainty and records the fastest determination timeframes for development applications below $30 million.

**South Australia** ranks a close second and remains the national benchmark for Consistency, ranking first in that theme for the fourth consecutive year. Its Planning and Design Code continues to provide business with a single state-wide framework, while reforms under the Housing Roadmap have streamlined the Code amendment and land division processes. Its consistent high performance demonstrates the value of maintaining and building on planning reform over time.

Beyond the top two, the movement in rankings is significant. The **Northern Territory** records the largest improvement, rising three places to third, driven largely by its efficient development application determination timeframes. **Victoria** records the largest decline, falling four places to eighth. **Western Australia** falls one place to fourth, while the **Australian Capital Territory** remains fifth. **Queensland** and **New South Wales** each improve one place, ranking sixth and seventh respectively.

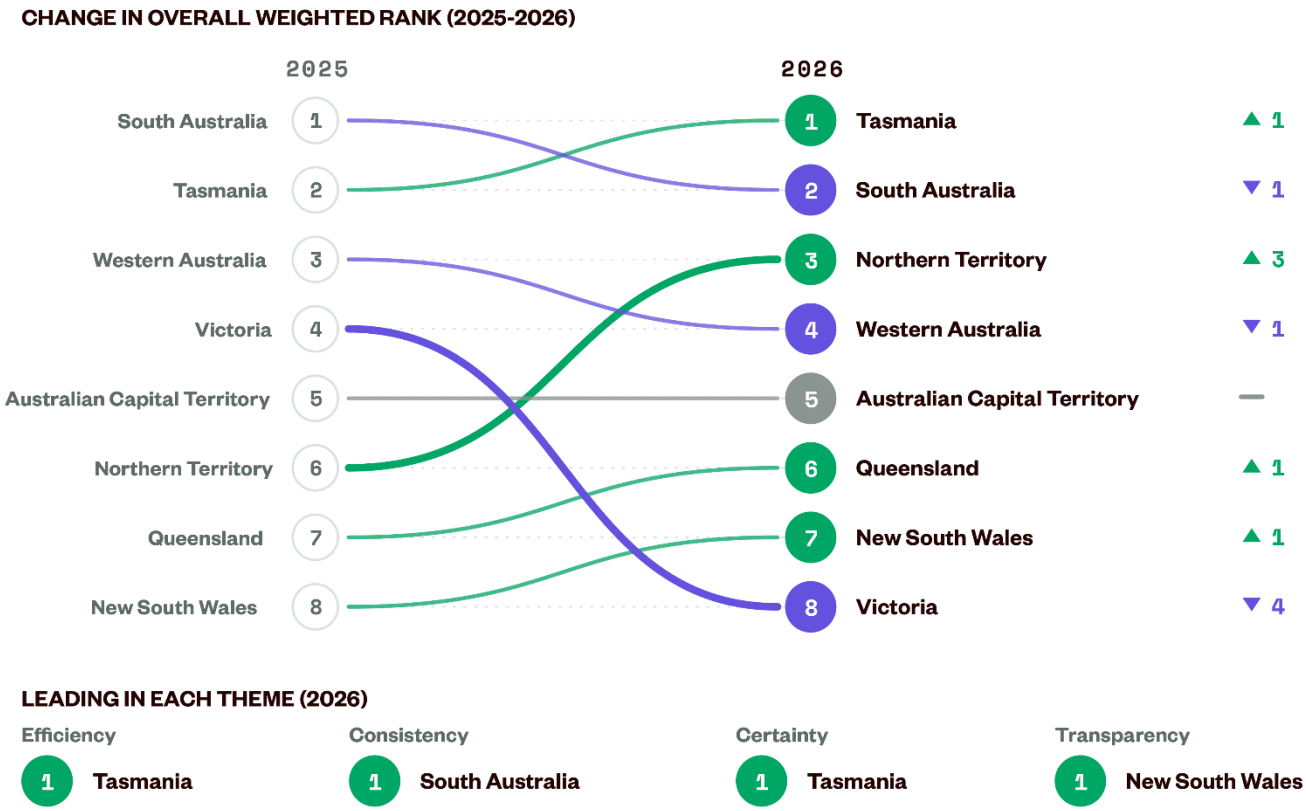



**Table 1: Change in overall weighted rank, 2025–2026**

Overall, the 2026 scorecard indicates that planning reform delivers the greatest benefit when it is sustained and translated into day-to-day efficiency. The highest ranked jurisdictions are generally those that have completed major system-wide reforms and had time to embed them.

Conversely, lower ranked jurisdictions have not necessarily failed to reform, in several cases, reforms have yet to be fully implemented or translated into measurable improvements for applicants.

# 1 Australia's planning systems in 2025/2026

This chapter provides the context for the 2026 scorecard. It begins by considering the three main national priorities increasingly shaping the operation of planning systems and the pressures placed on them, being:

- the Australian Government's *Homes for Australia* plan and housing targets under the National Housing Accord
- the assessment pathways needed to support the energy transition
- the broader productivity challenge, where planning regulation is recognised as a constraint.

The chapter then outlines the key changes to planning systems across each jurisdiction during FY2025-26, distinguishing between broader system reform and reforms targeting specific outcomes such as housing supply, the energy transition and productivity. Much of the reform activity recorded in this period is a direct response to these national priorities.

## 1.1 National priorities

### 1.1.1 Homes for Australia

On 28 May 2026, the Australian Government released *Homes for Australia: A National Plan*. This is the government's comprehensive $47 billion plan to rebuild Australia's housing system, so it works for all Australians. This is part of the National Housing Accord and the National Planning Reform Blueprint, released in 2023. The *Homes for Australia* Plan:

- brings together the progress already made, including the actions taken in the 2026–27 federal Budget
- focuses effort across government and ensures agencies are working toward a shared vision and clear goals
- guides policy decisions and investment over the long term
- strengthens coordination across all levels of government, alongside industry, investors, and the non-government sector
- identifies priorities for further reform and directs future housing and homelessness investment.

The Plan makes the following statements:

- Australia is not building enough homes, in part because our planning systems have made it too hard to say yes to new housing. For too long, restrictive zoning, complex rules and slow approvals have limited supply.
- This Plan is about shifting the system from one that too often says no by default, to one that enables more homes to be built. National Cabinet has agreed to the National Planning Reform Blueprint (see below), which will make it easier to deliver more homes, including higher-density housing.
- The Blueprint sets out a coordinated package of reforms to increase housing supply, including faster and simpler approvals, more flexible zoning, greater use of well-located land, improved planning capacity, and better alignment between housing, infrastructure, and environmental processes. All states and territories have progressed most actions under the Blueprint.

The Australian Government has made a clear financial and strategic investment decision to support housing growth and by doing so, encourage and support jurisdictions undertake planning reform, for quicker and better outcomes. Much of the latest reforms in each jurisdiction is a direct response to this Plan and measures set out in the Blueprint. This is a great example of a collective (albeit top down)

approach in implanting system wide planning reform for net community benefit and in recent years and years to come, states are operating effectively under one plan and one blueprint.

As part of the National Planning Reform Blueprint, there are measures to which each state reports on:

- **Measure 1:** Collaborate on a national vision for urban and regional planning policy, including identifying common policy approaches, definitions and data sources.
- **Measure 2**: Report on state, regional and local strategic plans that reflect their share of housing targets.
- **Measure 3:** Undertake planning, zoning, and land release adaptions to meet their share of housing targets.
- **Measure 4:** Identify well-located development ready land.
- **Measure 5:** Streamline approval pathways and prioritise planning amendments to support diverse housing, including promoting medium- and high-density housing in well-located areas.
- **Measure 6:** Create accelerated development pathways and streamline approval processes for eligible development types, particularly in well-located areas, including to support the rapid delivery of social and affordable housing.
- **Measure 7:** Identify and rectify gaps in housing design guidance and building certification processes.
- **Measure 8:** Ensure adequate resourcing of built environment professionals.
- **Measure 9:** Work towards community consultation processes which are clear, transparent and predictable.

### 1.1.2 The National Housing Accord

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

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 2026, all 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 **Australian Capital Territory** has expanded zoning flexibility to support dual occupancies and subdivision within suburban areas.
- The **Northern Territory** declared new classes of planning scheme amendments that don't require public exhibition, seeking to streamline the rezoning processes.

The impact of these reforms, or their limits, is visible in the latest quarterly data shown below. The National Housing Supply and Affordability Council's March 2026 progress report shows a widening gap between approval activity and actual completions across most jurisdictions. The Council notes the trajectory towards the Accord target can vary across jurisdictions and can be affected by the balance of detached housing and higher density housing that is progressing through the supply pipeline.

**Table 2: Building approvals, completions and expected Accord completion dates by state and territory**

| State or territory | Building approvals[1] | | Building completions[2] | | Expected Accord completion date[3] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Change on past 12 months (rolling) | Share of Accord target[4] approved (to date) | Change on past 12 months (rolling) | Share of Accord target[4] built (to date) | Quarter |
| **NSW** | 8% | 21% | -3% | 15% | Jun 2031 |
| **VIC** | -1% | 28% | -12% | 23% | Sep 2029 |
| **QLD** | 16% | 26% | 4% | 17% | Sep 2030 |
| **SA** | 15% | 27% | 7% | 19% | Sep 2030 |
| **WA** | 13% | 29% | 16% | 22% | Sep 2029 |
| **TAS** | 4% | 15% | -16% | 12% | Sep 2033 |
| **NT** | 38% | 9% | -13% | 5% | After 2034 |
| **ACT** | 117% | 25% | 0% | 23% | Sep 2029 |
| **AUS** | **9%** | **25%** | **-2%** | **18%** | **Jun 2030** |

*Source: National Housing Supply and Affordability Council, 25 March 2026 based on data from NHSAC 2026; ABS Building Activity 2026; ABS Building Approvals 2026; ABS Producer Price Indexes 2026; ABS Consumer Price Index 2026.*

Notes:

1. The latest building approvals data are as at January 2026. Building approvals data are measured in seasonally adjusted terms for states and in original terms for territories (as seasonally adjusted data are not available).
2. The latest building completions data are as at September 2025 quarter.
3. The expected Accord completion date reflects when the Council has estimated that jurisdictions will reach their share of the Accord target as at March 2026. The forecasting model reflects what the Council expects in future years based on leading indicators and historical housing market dynamics (that is, it does not assume the rate of construction to date continues).
4. The state and territory Accord targets are calculated using population shares at the time the Accord was agreed and were published by the Council in 2025. The features and limitations of the Council's modelling framework are summarised in Box 5.1 in State of the Housing System 2025.

Approvals are trending upward in most states, yet completions moved in the opposite direction in most jurisdictions, with national completions falling 2% over the past 12 months. **Victoria's** completions dropped 12% despite its substantial reform agenda, while **Tasmania** and the **Northern Territory** recorded declines of 16% and 13% respectively. **Western Australia** shows reform translating into genuine delivery, with completions up 16% and 22% of its Accord share already built. The expected completion dates underline the shortfall, with no jurisdiction other than **Western Australia**, **Victoria** and the **Australian Capital Territory** projected to meet its target before 2029.**South Australia** and

**Queensland** are also shown minor increases in housing completions. **New South Wales** is not projected to meet its target before June 2031, and the **Northern Territory** sits beyond 2034. Nationally, only 18% of the Accord target has been built.

The 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 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.

### 1.1.3 Climate change and the energy transition

In 2024, the Australian 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% by 2030.

Since then, the Australian Government has sharpened its focus on approvals. The National Renewal Energy Priority List, established with states and territories in March 2025, has identified 56 priority generation, storage, and transmission projects for streamlined assessment under a "faster to yes, faster to no" approach. Amendments to the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) passed in November 2025 are expected to support faster approval decisions.

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. A draft Renewable Energy Planning Code and Guidelines is currently awaiting final approval by the Western Australian Planning Commission (WAPC) and Minister for Planning. The purpose of this new code is to provide a clear and consistent framework for assessing energy infrastructure across **Western Australia**.

In April 2024, **Victoria** introduced a dedicated clause into all planning schemes where renewable projects of a certain scale or type go through a fast-tracked process via the Planning Minister, through what is known as the Development Facilitation Program (DFP). No significant reforms have occurred following implementation of the DFP, other than VicGrid releasing renewable energy zones.

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.

In 2025, **Queensland** introduced significant regulatory reform to the planning and assessment framework for battery energy storage facilities. *The Planning (Battery Storage Facilities) and Other Legislation Amendment Regulation 2025 (QLD)* (Regulations) amends the *Planning Regulation 2017*

and seeks to align the state's planning framework with current assessment processes for other renewable energy projects

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

### 1.1.4 The 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.
- 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 BCA has already highlighted the stakes of poor productivity. In its previous report *Australia's Flagging Competitiveness and Productivity*, the BCA warned:

*"Productivity growth is one of the metrics most closely tied to our Australia 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."*

In the *Homes for Australia* Plan, it states:

> *Australia is not building enough homes, in part because our planning systems have made it too hard to say yes to new housing. For too long, restrictive zoning, complex rules and slow approvals have limited supply. The Productivity Commission has found these constraints are the single largest cost on new housing, with zoning regulations adding $140,000 in cost to the average house.*

In **Queensland**, not everyone agrees with these statements. In a submission made by the Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ) on 28 August 2025, in response to the Queensland Productivity Commission Construction Production Commission (QPC) inquiry into the 'Opportunities to Improve Productivity of the Construction Induistry' Interim Report, the LGAQ contested the sentiment that the lack of planning, rezonings and reform were the problem in the delivery of housing and slowing down productivity. The LGAQ contested the recommendations of the interim report that they believe shows Queensland councils are facilitating development at rates that support State and Federal Government housing targets. They state:

> *Queensland councils have already zoned enough broadhectare land for ~580,000 new homes according to the QGSO2. In addition, based on a review of publicly available, State Government endorsed Local Government Infrastructure Plan extrinsic materials from 35 councils, the LGAQ has found that councils have also zoned for more than 1,000,000 new infill homes.*

Their submission continues on to defend the current planning system and Councils, stating that council zoning or council approvals are not a barrier in housing supply in Queensland.

When it comes to over-regulation, in **Victoria,** much of the *Planning Amendment (Better Decisions Made Faster) Act 2026*, along with the recent deemed to comply reform, seeks to limit third party appeal rights. The Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) made a submission in November 2025 in response to the Bill, and they made the following statements:

> *When you overlook environmental risks, abolish the right to know about proposals, remove Parliamentary oversight, and demand impossible approval timelines — communities lose confidence that the right decisions are being made. We don't support cutting corners that will eliminate public trust and create expensive problems for the next generation.*

What does this tell us? There is friction between state government and local government representatives when it comes to planning reform. Introducing reform at a state-wide level requires thorough consultation and buy-in from all parties. When decision makers at local level are not supportive of statewide reform, there may not be tangible change at the 'day-to-day' level in which planning applications and processed and determined. If local councils do not see their system as a barrier to productivity, more housing or recognise a need to repair trust with their communities, there may be limited incentive to change how planning decisions are made. In our own experience, we know this conflict and tension affect councils and their day-to-day operations.

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

- progressing more urgently in removing overlapping controls and planning instruments
- digitising and standardising processes to reduce time and cost
- 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.

## 1.2 Significant changes

States and territories have responded to these national priorities during FY 2025-26, although the scale and nature of reform varied considerably. The table below summarises these key changes. It records reform activity rather than its impact, noting that some changes had not yet commenced or were only partially implemented when the scorecard data was collected.

**Table 3: Key changes to planning acts, regulation and instruments in 2025/2026**

| Jurisdictions | Key changes to planning acts, regulation and instruments in 2025/2026 |
|---|---|
| **New South Wales** | ***Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment (Planning System Reforms) Act 2025***<br>• The most significant overhaul of the EP&A Act 1979 in decades, passed in December 2025 with key amendments having commenced 15 December 2025 and 21 March 2026.<br>• Reforms being progressively implemented via supporting instruments through 2026 include risk-based Part 5 assessment for public authorities (proportionate to the nature and risk of the activity), a single statewide community participation plan, the abolition of the Regionally Significant Development pathway and the Sydney district and regional planning panels, standard/model conditions of consent, simplified bushfire-prone land requirements and expanded powers to deal with 'zombie' DAs.<br>**Development Coordination Authority (DCA) Established**<br>• Establishment of a new authority providing a single, coordinated whole-of-government response to development applications, centralising concurrence, referral and integrated development functions.<br>• The DCA brings together a team of multi-disciplinary experts from up to 22 different parts of the NSW Government behind a single front door to provide a single, coordinated response on behalf of the NSW Government in just 28 days.<br>• To make the process simpler and more efficient, a new referrals framework for local development applications has been introduced. The new framework makes it clearer when referrals are needed and focuses expert input on the most important issues. It consolidates over 800 referral requirements into one single clear list aligned with state priorities.<br>**Housing Delivery Authority (HDA) Formalised**<br>• Established in 2024, the HDA is now a permanent part of the NSW planning system, following reforms that passed Parliament in late 2025.<br>• The HDA has evaluated more than 1,100 expressions of interest from industry against published criteria.<br>• To date, 484 EOIs have been declared, representing potentially 134,000 homes in Greater Sydney and close to 16,400 homes in regional NSW.<br>• To date, fourteen HDA projects have been approved, unlocking more than 2,500 homes and a further 74 development applications have been lodged representing around 26,000 potential new homes.<br>**Continuing Programs**<br>• The Transport Orientated Development (TOD) Program, Low and Mid-Rise Housing Policy (Stage 2 commenced February 2025) and the NSW Housing Pattern Book (launched July 2025 with an accelerated approval pathway) continue to operate, and the Investment Delivery Authority continues to fast-track major investment projects. |

| Jurisdictions | Key changes to planning acts, regulation and instruments in 2025/2026 |
|---|---|
| **Victoria** | ***Planning Amendment (Better Decisions Made Faster) Act 2026***<br>• Passed by Parliament and received Royal Assent on 17 February 2026. This reform to the Act marks the most significant update to Victoria's planning legislation and systems in decades. To assist with the transition, the Act has been passed with a default commencement date of 29 October 2027.<br>• Once fully implemented the Act will streamline application assessment timeframes with three planning permit assessment and planning scheme amendment streams; limit third party appeal rights; mechanism for state and regional plans to be approved and considered in planning scheme amendments; and allow affordable housing contributions to be required as a condition of a planning permit.<br>**ResCode**<br>• As of mid-2026, the ResCode (Clause 54, 55 and 57 of the Planning Scheme) to accelerate housing by introducing a "Townhouse and Low-Rise Code" (effective October 2025 and March 2026) and a "Mid-Rise Code."<br>• These reforms introduce deemed to comply standards for up to 6 storeys, reducing council discretion, limiting third-party objections and prioritising faster, and standardising approvals for townhouse and apartment medium-density developments.<br>**Plan for Victoria**<br>• Victorian Planning has previously been guided by Plan Melbourne 2017-2050, which acted more as a metropolitan strategy, than a statewide strategy.<br>• In September 2025, Plan for Victoria was gazetted into Victorian Planning Schemes, and this strategic document acts as a comprehensive, statewide strategic framework for Victoria having regard to housing, jobs and services, healthy neighbourhoods and sustainable environments.<br>**Continuing Programs**<br>• As of March 2026, the 25 Stage 1 Train and Tram Zone Activity Centre Plans have now been formally gazetted so are now legally in effect. |
| **Queensland** | ***Planning (State Facilitated Development) Amendment Regulation 2026***<br>• Commenced March 2026, 'resetting' the State Facilitated Development pathway for development that is predominantly for housing, meets zoning requirements and is supported by the local government can now access the pathway (replacing the previous 15% affordable housing eligibility trigger).<br>***Planning Amendment Regulation 2025***<br>• Extension of the streamlined provisions for rooming accommodation for an additional 12 months, to 2 December 2026.<br>• Extension of two temporary pathways available under the Queensland Rural Workers Accommodation Initiative that make it easier to provide housing to rural workers while planning schemes are being updated.<br>• The Planning Regulation has been amended to ensure consistent application across Queensland whilst continuing to support delivery of community residences.<br>• The changes to the Planning Regulation update the zone purpose statements for the low-density residential zone and low-medium density residential zone. |

| Jurisdictions | Key changes to planning acts, regulation and instruments in 2025/2026 |
|---|---|
| | The purpose of this change is to provide a consistent position on the types of housing expected in these zones.<br>• The changes to the Planning Regulation allow local governments to require a planning approval for single dwelling developments in the high-density residential zone and medium density residential zone.<br>**BESS Facilities Standardised Definitions and Development Code**<br>• The *Planning (Battery Storage Facilities) and Other Legislation Amendment Regulation 2025 (Qld)* (Regulations) amends the *Planning Regulation 2017 (Qld)* by introducing significant regulatory reform to the planning and assessment framework for battery energy storage facilities. The Regulations aim to align the State's planning framework with current assessment processes for other renewable energy projects. |
| **South Australia** | ***State Development Coordination and Facilitation Act 2025***<br>• New standalone legislation establishing a Coordinator-General's Office and coordinated/facilitated assessment pathways for significant State developments and associated infrastructure, operating alongside the PDI Act. |
| **Western Australia** | ***Planning and Development (Significant Development) Amendment Regulations 2025***<br>• Expanded the Significant Development Pathway so that multiple dwelling developments of any value that include at least 5% community housing in designated areas (R30+ within 800m of a railway station or higher-order activity centre in Perth/Peel, or near centre/mixed-use zones elsewhere) can be classified as 'prescribed significant development' and determined by the WAPC under Part 11B.<br>***State Development Act 2025***<br>• The Act establishes a new framework for the coordination, facilitation and promotion of projects of strategic or economic significance to WA. The substantive provisions of the Act, including the Priority Projects and State Development Area regimes, commenced on 19 February 2026.<br>• A key structural reform introduced by the Act is the creation of the Coordinator General, a senior statutory office responsible for overseeing State-significant development.<br>• The Act introduces a formal pathway for the designation of "priority projects". These projects are declared by the Minister, with the approval of the Premier, through a statutory instrument.<br>• The Act introduces a spatial planning tool through the declaration of State Development Areas (SDAs). These areas are identified by the Minister to facilitate economic development, infrastructure provisions, or environmental management objectives. Although existing planning schemes will remain in force, SDAs exert strong influence over decision making. Public authorities must have due regard to SDA plans, and planning schemes can be amended to ensure consistency with these plans. |
| **Australian Capital Territory** | **Missing Middle Housing Reforms – Major Plan Amendment 04 to the Territory Plan**<br>• Approved by the Minister in May 2026, passed by the Legislative Assembly, and commenced 1 July 2026.<br>• Enables 'missing middle' housing (dual/multi-occupancy, townhouses, terraces and low-rise apartments) in the RZ1 Suburban Zone and expands opportunities in RZ2, covering the large majority of Canberra's residential land. RZ1 retains a |

| Jurisdictions | Key changes to planning acts, regulation and instruments in 2025/2026 |
|---|---|
| | two-storey (plus attic) height limit; RZ2 allows up to three storeys plus attic; subdivision and block consolidation are permitted in both zones. This also included updates to the housing guide and revisions to the *Residential Zones Technical Specification.*<br>• A time-limited 50% reduction in the Lease Variation Charge applies to eligible missing middle developments (LVC deferred on or after 10 June 2026, development approval by 30 June 2029, construction complete by 31 December 2030). |
| **Tasmania** | **Tasmanian Planning Policies (TPPs)**<br>• The TPPs have been made by the Minister and came into effect on 1 July 2026. They are a single set of policies to inform the entirety of Tasmania's planning system.<br>• They set out the aims or principles that are to be achieved or applied by the Tasmanian Planning Scheme and the regional land use strategies. The TPPs will be implemented through the regional land use strategies, State Planning Provisions and amendments to Local Provisions Schedules.<br>**Continuing Programs**<br>• The new Minister for Planning reviewed the submissions with further changes made to the revised *Land Use Planning and Approvals Amendment (Development Assessment Panels) Bill 2025*. The revised draft Bill to introduce independent Development Assessment Panels (DAPs) was placed on exhibition from November to December 2025.<br>• It seeks to delegate the management process of determining an application under the DAP process, appoint DAP members and determine the application in accordance with the planning scheme requirements.<br>• There have been no updates since exhibition on the status of the revised Bill. |
| **Northern Territory** | **Streamlined Planning Scheme Amendments**<br>• Six new classes of planning scheme amendments have been declared exempt from public exhibition. Low-risk amendments such as policy-consistent rezonings, introduction of building setback plans, and zone normalisation following completion of master-planned subdivisions can now proceed directly to final decision instead of the 28-day exhibition process<br>***Territory Coordinator Act 2025***<br>• Commenced 31 March 2025, with the inaugural Territory Coordinator appointed in May 2025 and supporting Regulations tabled in October 2025. The model draws on the Queensland Coordinator-General and comparable regimes in South Australia, New South Wales and Western Australia.<br>• Establishes the Territory Coordinator as an independent statutory officer able to designate 'significant projects', declare infrastructure coordination areas and prepare infrastructure coordination plans, approve programs of works, and designate Territory Development Areas supported by statutory TDA plans that activities must be consistent with.<br>• The Minister for Territory Coordinator can issue prioritisation, progression and decision requests to responsible entities, step-in notices that transfer the decision-making role, and exemption notices that modify or exclude the operation of a scheduled law for a particular decision or process. |

## System-wide v targeted planning reforms across jurisdictions

Targeted reforms (especially in housing) can help meet urgent needs, however, 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. The defining development of the past 12 months is that the two largest jurisdictions have finally moved from announcement to legislation: **New South Wales** and **Victoria** have each passed the most significant amendment to their planning Act in decades.

This is a material change from the previous edition of the Regulation Rumble, in which both states were characterised as relying on piecemeal, issue-specific adjustment. Both now score at the top of the scorecard's two reform measures: the conversion of policy commitment into legislative action (KPI 19) and the system-wide rather than targeted reach of that action (KPI 20). Neither has yet moved materially up the overall rankings as a result, because the reforms are only partly in force and the measured performance of their approval systems has not yet responded. We would expect to see improvements in their scoring in the next financial year.

Legislation is not the same as delivery. **Victoria** has dropped to last for Efficiency and **New South Wales** sits in the bottom half, with the slowest building approval and major development application determination timeframes among the jurisdictions, respectively. The productivity benefit of these reforms will only appear in the measured indicators once the supporting instruments are made and councils and agencies are operating under them. For **Victoria**, the default commencement date for the bulk of its Act is 29 October 2027. A good indicator of the measure of success of the reform for **New South Wales** will be their efficiencies scores next year to demonstrate that delivery is matching updated and improved legislation.

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 a wide cross section of planning system users that ultimately flow on into the economy.

### Tasmania, South Australia, and the ACT – earlier reform now embedded

**Tasmania** and **South Australia** completed their system-wide reforms earlier and are now operating within them, which is why they occupy first and second place overall. **Tasmania's** state-wide scheme is complete other than Kingborough, and its Tasmanian Planning Policies took effect on 1 July 2026. **South Australia** has continued to refine the Planning and Design Code and has streamlined its Code amendment and land division processes under the Housing Roadmap. The **Australian Capital Territory** ranks fifth, operating under the *Planning Act 2023*. The reform has produced a top two result for Consistency; however, this has not yet translated into the measured efficiency indicators, where it ranks seventh.

### New South Wales & Victoria – system wide reform legislated

In **New South Wales**, the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment (Planning System Reforms) Act 2025* marks the most significant overhaul of the *Environmental Planning & Assessment Act 1979* in a generation. It updates the objects of the Act to recognise housing supply, introduces proportionate assessment with a fast-tracked 'Targeted Assessment Development' pathway between the full development application and complying development streams. It establishes the Development Coordination Authority as a single front door for agency concurrences and referrals, legislates the Housing Delivery Authority, standardises conditions of consent, introduces a 14-day determination period for minor modifications, and removes the Regionally Significant Development pathway along with the Sydney district and regional planning panels.

In **Victoria**, the *Planning Amendment (Better Decisions Made Faster) Act 2026* is the most significant update to the states planning legislation in decades. It creates three planning permit streams, and three planning scheme amendment schemes proportionate to complexity and risk, with deemed approval

timeframes of 10, 30 and 60 business days. It limits third-party appeal rights and public notice for the middle tier and provides a mechanism for state and regional plans to be approved and considered in scheme amendment. However, the default commencement date is 29 October 2027, with only limited provisions taking effect from 3 June 2026. As such, not all reforms are reflected in the 2026 scorecard.

### Western Australia & Queensland – continued legislative reform and modernisation

**Western Australia** drops down to fourth place but has continued to legislate, adding to the *Planning and Development Amendment Act 2023* through:

- The *State Development Act 2025*, whose substantive provisions commenced on 19 February 2026, creating a Coordinator General, a formal pathway for declared 'priority projects' and a spatial planning tool in the form of State Development Areas.
- The *Planning and Development (Significant Development) Amendment Regulations 2025*, which expanded the Part 11B Significant Development Pathway to multiple dwelling developments of any value that include at least 5 per cent community housing in designated areas.

These are substantial, although they largely add targeted pathways for significant projects rather than wider planning system reform.

**Queensland** has continued with targeted regulatory reform, including the *Planning (State Facilitated Development) Amendment Regulation 2026,* which from March 2026 reset the State Facilitated Development pathway so that predominantly residential development that meets zoning requirements and is supported by the local government can access it, replacing the previous 15% affordable housing eligibility trigger. **Queensland** has also legislated a separate fast-tracked pathway for Brisbane 2032 venues, villages and transport infrastructure under the *Brisbane Olympic and Paralympic Games Arrangements Act 2021*, with further priority projects added in February 2026. These reforms are meaningful, though they operate alongside rather than in place of a decentralised planning system that continues to rank last for both Consistency and seventh for Transparency.

### Northern Territory – incremental reform

The **Northern Territory** has undertaken incremental rather than system-wide reform over the past 12 months. While these changes are meaningful, they largely focus on project facilitation and streamlining lower-risk development, rather than addressing broader structural components within the planning system.

Key reforms include:

- The *Territory Coordinator Act 2025*, creating a significant project, infrastructure coordination and Territory Development Area regime.
- Six new classes of low-risk planning scheme amendment declared exempt from the 28-day public exhibition requirement, able to proceed directly to final decision.
- A dedicated fast-track assessment process for low-risk development applications, together with staged land-clearing approvals and clarified decision-making responsibility in Agriculture, Horticulture and Rural zones.

These changes are proportionate to the Territory's scale, and the **Northern Territory** sits first place in the nation on development approval timeframes over $30 million. This year **Northern Territory** moves up three places to third overall and last for Certainty, down from sixth, because it prescribes no deemed refusal or approval timeframe for development applications, places few limits on stopping the assessment clock, and offers limited delegation mechanisms.

The 2026 edition of Regulation Rumble highlights an increasingly clear divide between jurisdictions pursuing system-wide planning reform and those focused primarily on targeted housing measures. While reforms in **Queensland**, **New South Wales** and **Victoria** have rightly prioritised housing supply,

broader planning system issues – including efficient assessment pathways for all forms of development and faster rezoning to support future land supply across industry sectors – remain under-addressed.

By comparison, **South Australia**, **Western Australia**, the **Australian Capital Territory** and **Tasmania** have continued to comprehensively modernise their planning system. Over time, this divergence is likely to influence planning system performance, with comprehensive reform delivering broader productivity benefits across the economy than targeted interventions alone.

# 2 2026 scorecard results

This chapter presents the 2026 scorecard results, including the overall rank and the factors driving changes in each jurisdiction. It then considers the features of state and territory planning system that best supports business.

## 2.1 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 2026 Scorecard, and for the first time since the beginning of this scorecard, we find that **Tasmania** takes the lead for best performing planning jurisdiction, followed closely by **South Australia**.

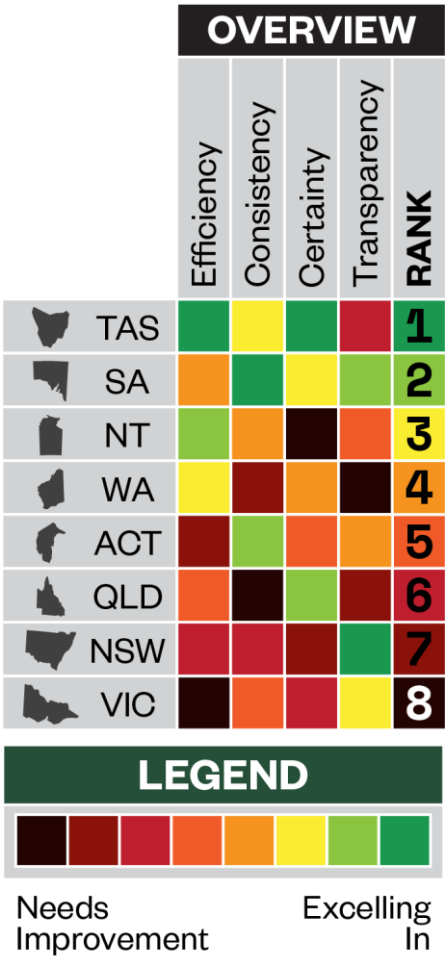



**Figure 1: 2026 scorecard overview**

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.

The largest movement in this year's scorecard is the **Northern Territory**, which has risen three places to third overall. This rise is built almost entirely on measured speed. It now records the fastest average determination time for developments over $30 million and second for those below. Its territory-wide scheme continues to score well for consistency, however that result sits alongside the weakest Certainty score of any jurisdiction.

The **Australian Capital Territory** remains fifth in 2026. The standardisation and consolidation of their planning system sought to provide efficiency, certainty and consistency for businesses. It has delivered on two of these, ranking second for consistency and fifth for certainty. What it has not yet done, is convert that structural advantage into measured performance, remaining seventh for efficiency, unchanged from 2025.

**Western Australia** continues to score well, largely due to their efficiency in development application and building application approvals. This is a testament to their recent reforms that have made its way through their parliament and some still in progress, which will be evident through further improvement in later years. Their drop to fourth is more of a reflection of **Northern Territory** improving in 2026 and less so a reflection of their poor performance over the years.

The defining development of the past 12 months is that the two largest jurisdictions have finally moved from announcement to legislation, with **New South Wales** and **Victoria** passing significant amendments to their planning Act.

Larger jurisdictions such as **New South Wales**, **Queensland** and **Victoria** have responded strongly to national priorities, with housing programs that are consistent with the intentions of the National Housing Accord and the move to clean energy with simplified planning approval pathways. We also see instances of innovative policy (**Queensland**) that help 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.

Table 4: 2026 planning scorecard summary

| Jurisdiction | In 2025 | In 2026 | Change | Excelling in | Can improve in |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Rank (weighted) | Rank (weighted) | | | |
| **Tasmania** | **2** | **1** | ↑ | Prescribed timeframes embedded in Planning Act, mining & energy approval pathways and DA determination timeframes for projects <$30m. | Stop the DA clock rules & state online application portal. |
| **South Australia** | **1** | **2** | ↓ | Low number of operating planning documents and delegations. | Prescribed timeframes for planning scheme amendments, housing supply initiatives and open data on building approvals. |
| **Northern Territory** | **6** | **3** | ↑ | DA determination timeframes for projects >$30m, prescribed building approval timeframes and standardised planning instrument. | DA statutory timeframes and stop the clock rules, building approvals per capita, housing supply initiatives, and mining and energy pathways. |
| **Western Australia** | **3** | **4** | ↓ | Building approval, deemed approvals, and coordinated referrals | Open data availability, reduction of decision timeframes, and standardisation of zones and land use terms. |
| **Australian Capital Territory** | **5** | **5** | → | Standardised planning instrument, development contributions and prescribed timeframes. | Building approval decision timeframes experienced by applicants, mining and energy pathways and delegations. |
| **Queensland** | **7** | **6** | ↑ | Deemed approvals and stop the clock rules. | Statewide planning portal for local permit approvals, consistency in local zoning codes, and DA timeframes for projects <$30m. |
| **New South Wales** | **8** | **7** | ↑ | Standardised planning instruments, open data and housing supply initiatives. | Large number of operating planning documents, development contributions, and DA timeframes for projects <$30m & >$30m. |
| **Victoria** | **4** | **8** | ↓ | Standardised planning instruments, and housing supply initiatives. | DA timeframes for projects <$30m and statutory timeframes for planning scheme amendments. |

## 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%).

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, and its members, 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 and this edition captures the first period in which both **New South Wales** and **Victoria** have wider planning reform legislated. 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.

In the 2026 edition of Regulation Rumble:

- overall KPIs structure is unchanged, and no additional KPIs have been introduced
- how we score and allocated points has changed for KPI 8, 9, 11, and 12.

The overall weightings of the four themes have been carried forward from 2025 to allow movements in the 2026 rankings to reflect jurisdictional performance rather than reweighting of themes. Furthermore, as planning systems change, federal and state government strategies and funding changes, minor tweaks to the KPIs scoring are required to better reflect the fluid movement of reform and to acknowledge that planning systems are not static and have evolved since our first review in 2023.

**Table 5: Key reasons for change in results**

| Jurisdiction | 2025 weighted rank | 2026 weighted rank | Key Reasons for change |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Tasmania** | 2 | **1** | Tasmania takes first place for the first time. It now ranks first for both Efficiency and Certainty, recording the fastest DA determination timeframes for projects under $30m. Its weaknesses are unchanged and include no constraints on stopping the DA clock, limited delegation levels, and a state application portal still confined largely to Hobart, which holds it sixth for Transparency. |
| **South Australia** | 1 | **2** | South Australia slips to second by a very narrow margin, rather than through any decline. It remains first for Consistency and second for Transparency. The absence of a legislated timeframe for Code amendments does create uncertainty for business however, South Australia ranked 3rd in rezoning durations. No recent open data on building approvals cost South Australia points. |

| Jurisdiction | 2025 weighted rank | 2026 weighted rank | Key Reasons for change |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Northern Territory** | 6 | **3** | The Northern Territory records the largest improvement of any jurisdiction, rising three places to third. It now ranks second for Efficiency on the strength of its DA determination timeframes. Its standardised territory-wide scheme and 20-day prescribed building approval timeframe still score well, and it has exempted six classes of low-risk scheme amendment from exhibition and introduced a fast-track pathway for low-risk applications. But it now ranks last for Certainty, with no prescribed DA determination timeframe, few limits on stopping the clock and limited delegations, and it scores lowest for building approvals per capita and housing supply initiatives. |
| **Western Australia** | 3 | **4** | This year WA has dropped down one place in the rankings. This is not necessarily due to WA's performance but other states improving more. Standardisation of land use terms and zones across local planning schemes remains unfinished, and open data availability is now the weakest in the country, leaving it last for Transparency. However, WA remains third in Efficiency on the strength of the fastest building approval times and the 7-day limit on requests for further information. |
| **Australian Capital Territory** | 5 | **5** | The ACT holds fifth place, unchanged from 2025. Its standardised single instrument and prescribed timeframes continue to score well. The effects of the standard instrument are not yet showing in efficiency, with ACT remaining at seventh in Efficiency. |
| **Queensland** | 7 | **6** | Queensland improves one place to sixth. It remains second for Certainty because of its deemed approval pathway and tight stop-the-clock rules. A lack of standardisation across local planning schemes and almost no centralised data keep it last for Consistency and seventh for Transparency. A statewide portal and consistent zoning typologies would likely move Queensland up the rankings. |
| **New South Wales** | 8 | **7** | New South Wales improves one place to seventh. It continues to rank first for Transparency by a clear margin. It ranks sixth for Efficiency, with the slowest DA determination timeframes for DAs over $30m, alongside the largest number of operating planning instruments, and the least certain development contributions framework of any jurisdiction. |
| **Victoria** | 4 | **8** | Victoria falls four places despite passing the *Planning Amendment (Better Decisions Made Faster) Act 2026*. The Act scores full marks on the reform measures, but most of it does not commence until October 2027 and so has not yet affected measured performance. Until then, Victoria still has no statutory timeframe for planning scheme amendment and the longest period to issue a stop-the-clock. |

## 2.2 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 6: Jurisdictional planning outcomes that best support businesses**

| Our chosen jurisdiction's best feature | What is there to like about this feature? | How does this feature benefits businesses? |
|---|---|---|
| **Australian Capital Territory's Lease Variation Charge (LVC) reduction to support delivery of missing middle housing** | The charge is published and rules-based rather than negotiated, making the cost of additional development rights clear before a proposal is lodged. The time-limited discount also demonstrates how value capture can be used deliberately as a lever to encourage supply, rather than solely as a revenue mechanism. | Businesses can price development rights upfront, while the discount can improve the feasibility of infill projects that might otherwise not proceed. |
| **New South Wales's Development Coordination Authority and Housing Delivery Authority** | The introduction of the Development Coordination Authority addresses fragmented referrals as a problem to be fixed, rather than creating another fast-track pathway around them. Consolidating more than 800 referral requirements into a single list, alongside a 28-day government response timeframe, places the obligation on the source of delay rather than the applicant.<br><br>The Housing Delivery Authority, provides a declared State significant pathway for housing proposals assessed against published criteria. | A defined government response time reduces approval uncertainty, allowing businesses to plan project programmes and financing with greater confidence. |
| **Northern Territory's consolidated planning documentation** | A single territory-wide instrument closes the gap between what the law requires and what users can reasonably find. It demonstrates that consistency does not depend on the scale of the reform program, but on the decision to consolidate the rules in one place. | Businesses can identify the applicable rules quickly, reducing research costs and the risk of designing a proposal around the wrong controls. |
| **Queensland's deemed approvals** | It reverses the usual consequence of administrative delay. Where deemed provisions typically result in a refusal and require the applicant to appeal, Queensland's approach results in an approval, shifting the consequences of missed statutory timeframes from the applicant to the decision-maker. | Businesses have a clear remedy for delay without needing to appeal, reducing the time and cost associated with prolonged assessments. |

| Our chosen jurisdiction's best feature | What is there to like about this feature? | How does this feature benefits businesses? |
|---|---|---|
| **South Australia's State Development Coordination** | The coordination function is established through standalone legislation and a named statutory office, rather than administrative arrangements that can change with a new government or personnel. This statutory foundation gives the function greater durability than comparable coordination arrangements elsewhere. | Major projects can receive a coordinated assessment rather than navigating agencies sequentially, reducing delays and holding costs. |
| **Tasmania's prescribed timeframes** | The timeframes apply to both plan amendments and development assessments, which is unusual. Most jurisdictions regulate the application process while leaving the plan-making process open-ended. Because the Tasmanian timeframes are statutory rather than guidance, performance can be measured and accountability applied. | Businesses can plan around published timeframes for both approvals and changes to planning controls, providing greater certainty when establishing or expanding operations. |
| **Victoria's Deemed-to-Comply ResCode** | The judgement is made once, transparently, when the standard is established, rather than being reconsidered for every individual application. | Businesses can establish compliance at the design stage, reducing assessment uncertainty, third-party objections and delays for medium-density housing. |
| **Western Australia's 'stop the clock' procedure** | The process is bounded at both ends: 7 days for the authority's preliminary assessment and 21 days for the applicant's response, with defined triggers for restarting the clock. Elsewhere, the clock can be stopped indefinitely, making this one of the most effective ways to prevent statutory timeframes from becoming meaningless. | Businesses have greater visibility over assessment timeframes, while prompt responses to information requests prevent the process from being suspended indefinitely. |

The rankings of this scorecard are based on 24 KPIs across four business enabling themes, being; Efficiency, Consistency, Certainty and Transparency – weighted according to their importance to business. The four chapters that follow examine each theme in turn, setting out what was measured, what the results shows and the characteristics that distinguish a planning system that supports business from one the creates unnecessary barriers.

# 3 Efficiency in planning systems

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.

## 3.1 Why we measured this

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 borne by applicants.

## 3.2 What we measured

- **KPI 1:** Average determination time for development applications valued under $30 million.
- **KP 2:** Average determination time for development applications valued at over $30 million.
- **KPI 3:** Average determination time for building approvals.
- **KPI 4:** Average time observed for proponent-initiated and planning authority code amendments.
- **KPI 5:** Residential building approvals per capita.
- **KPI 6:** Reduction of decision timeframes for development applications from previous year.

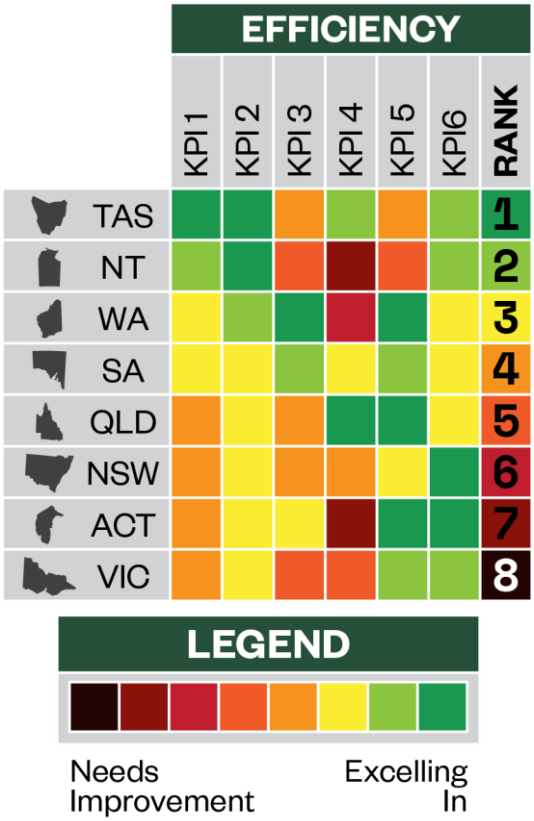



**Figure 2: Efficiency scorecard**

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.

## 3.3 Changes to the Efficiency assessment methodology

This edition measures development application and building approval timeframes (KPI 1, KPI 2 and KPI 3) using a three-year rolling average, replacing the four-year average used in previous editions. As jurisdictions have introduced or commenced significant planning reforms, a four-year measurement period increasingly captures data from before these reforms took effect. This can obscure recent improvements and continue to reflect the performance of systems that have since changed.

To ensure year-on-year comparisons remain consistent, prior-year results in the underlying scorecard have been recalculated using the same three-year methodology. This means changes between years reflect changes in jurisdictional performance, rather than changes to the measurement period. All comparative figures presented throughout this report are based on these recalculated results. Readers comparing this edition with the published 2025 scorecard should therefore expect some differences in the scores and rankings for these three KPIs.

The change applies only to KPI 1, KPI 2 and KPI 3. No other KPI or weighting in this theme structure has been changed.

## 3.4 What we found

**Tasmania** ranks first in our Efficiency theme, followed by the **Northern Territory and Western Australia**. **Victoria** ranks last in Efficiency for the first time, taking the spot from **New South Wales**.

**Tasmania's** rise in ranking is driven by outstanding performance in determination timeframes for development approvals compared to other jurisdictions (KPI 1 and 2), as well as strong results in building approval determination timeframes (KPI 3) and overall improvement in development application timeframes from previous year (KPI 6).

Although **Western Australia** has slipped from first place last year to third place for Efficiency, it remains a strong performer in efficiency. The marginal decline in ranking reflects **Tasmania's** and the **Northern Territory's** stronger performance, rather than a decline of **Western Australia's. Western Australia** remains competitive across most efficiency KPIs.

**Western Australia** remains the top performer for building approval determination timeframes (KPI 3) due to its 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 councils receiving development applications.

The most significant improvement this year is the **Northern Territory**, moving up four places in the Efficiency theme. This rise reflects strengths in development application determination timeframes (KPI 1 and 2) and reduction of development application timeframes from previous year (KPI 6). The Northern Territory records the fastest major development application timeframes in the country, and improved standard application timeframes by 19%. While it remains weak in planning amendments (KPI 4) and residential approval activity per capita (KPI 5), its improvements in development application assessments have enhanced its overall ranking.

**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. **South Australia** is the second strongest performer for building approvals (KPI 3) and improved on all three determination timeframe measures. Its weak point is major development applications (KPI 2), where it sits well behind the leading jurisdictions.

**New South Wales** ranks sixth for Efficiency, with the slowest determination timeframes for development applications over $30 million (KPI 2). There are positives in efficiency in **New South Wales**, with a reduction in decision timeframes from the previous year (KPI 6). It improved across all three determination measures; 20.8% for standard applications (KPI 1), 15.7% for major applications (KPI 2) and 23.1% for building approvals (KPI 3). The key challenge for **New South Wales** is its starting position. Despite these improvements, its determination timeframes remain too high to reach a scoring threshold for either development application measure.

**Victoria** falls to last place, having failed to reach a scoring threshold on any of KPI 1, KPI 2 or KPI 3 – the only jurisdiction to do so. However, this reflects **Victoria's** starting position rather than a lack of improvement. Major development application timeframes improved by 20.4%, while standard application timeframes improved by 14.8%, representing a stronger year-on-year result than several higher-ranked jurisdictions. However, these improvements were not sufficient to move Victoria into a scoring band.

**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. **Western Australia, Queensland** and the **Australian Capital Territory** lead this measure this year, followed closely by **Victoria** and **South Australia** over the 2025-26 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.

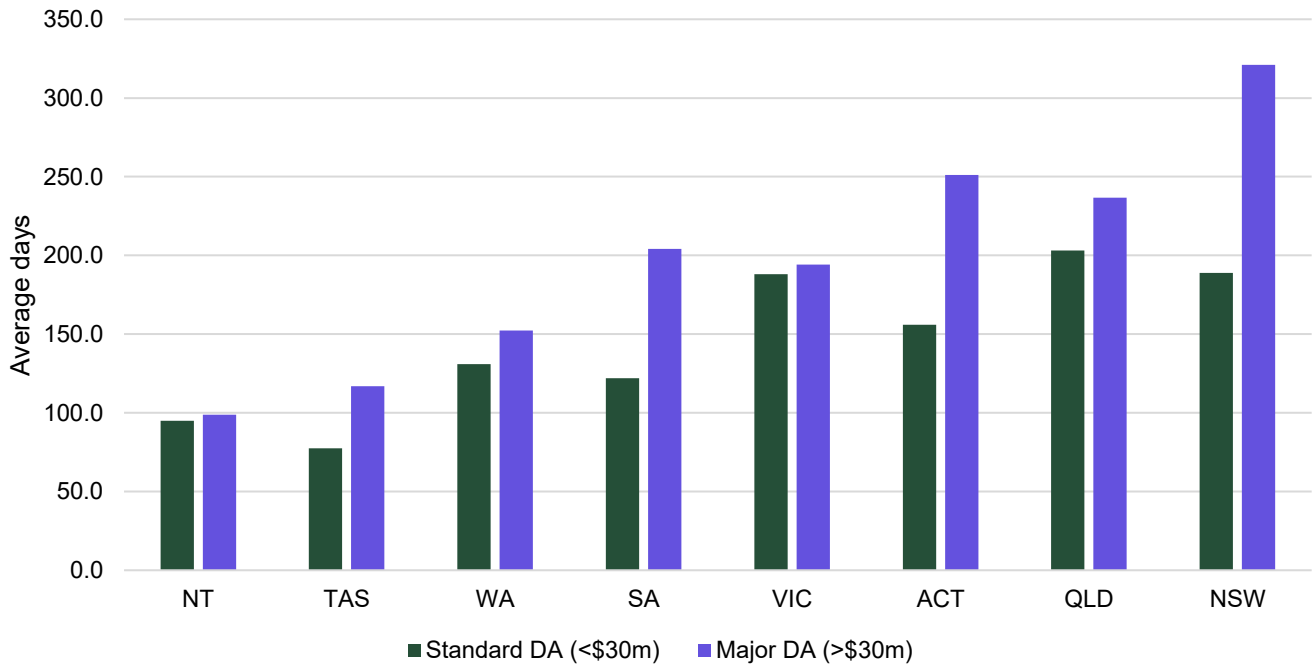



**Figure 3: DA determination time experienced by applicants – three-year average, FY2023-24 to FY2025-26**

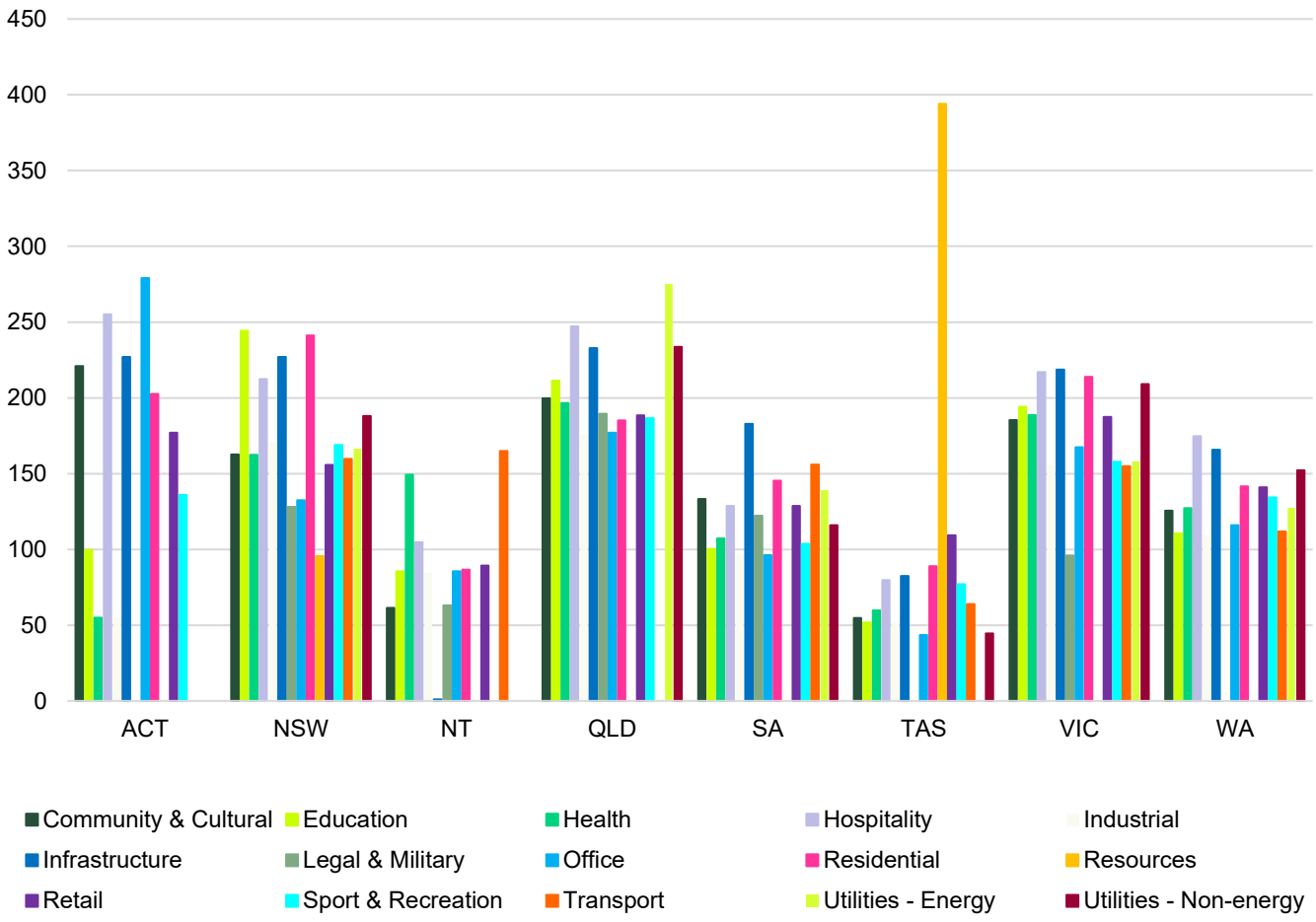



**Figure 4: DA determination time for development < $30m by development type – three-year average, FY2023-24 to FY2025-26**

## 3.5 What the scores don't show

### Building approvals per capita

There is more to the story than what the rankings show. While the rankings changed across several jurisdictions between 2025 and 2026, the underlying performance of jurisdictions in KPI 5 improved nationally. All jurisdictions recorded increases in approvals per capita from 2025 to 2026. Despite the improvements across all jurisdictions, the ranking of some declined because performance improvements were not uniform.

The **Australian Capital Territory** recorded the strongest improvement, with approvals per capita increasing by 92.3%. The **Northern Territory** achieved the second largest increase at 81.3%, however remain last in this KPI due to significantly less approvals per capita compared to other jurisdictions.

Despite an improvement of 28.6%, **South Australia** dropped down in the ranking due to other jurisdictions outperforming. **Victoria** recorded the smallest increase at 16.1% despite sitting among the top performers this year in equal second place with **South Australia**. **Victoria** led the way in this KPI in 2025, with significantly more building approvals per capita than other jurisdictions so there was less room for improvement compared to other jurisdictions from last year who performed poorly.

**New South Wales** recorded growth of 34.1% but remains toward the bottom compared to other jurisdictions. **Tasmania** recorded a 34.4% increase in building approvals but remains in second last place.

## 3.6 What characteristics of the planning system support business confidence?

### Large range of permissible development types in zones

Planning scheme amendments are taking considerable time to process, with research indicating scheme amendments ranging on average from 200 to 600 days+ across jurisdictions. **South Australia** and **Tasmania** have the fastest planning scheme amendments in the samples obtained. However, **Queensland** has been ranked first in KPI 4, 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** and **South Australia** don't have prescribed statutory timeframes for rezoning and planning scheme amendments. **Victoria** has loose prescribed timeframes that are significantly longer than other jurisdictions. This is evident this year with **Victoria** and **New South Wales** both ranked poorly having the slowest planning scheme amendments in the samples obtained. **Victoria** averaged over 600 days for some rezoning projects from the samples obtained.

Despite this, **Western Australia** ranked last for those jurisdictions with available data with the average days of the samples obtained being over 700+ days.

Without prescribed statutory timeframes, this reduces jurisdictions efficiency and in turn certainty for applicants and businesses seeking planning scheme amendments and rezonings.

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. Due to the lack of open data of planning scheme amendments, **Northern Territory** and the **Australian Capital Territory** rank last in KPI 4.

Where planning systems allow for greater permissibility of development types and broader range of built form controls (like **Queensland**), fewer 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.

### Fast track approval pathways for minor and low impact developments

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)
- 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 through to building approval by undergoing rapid checks (**Victoria's** VicSmart permits), or bypassing planning approval development applications altogether, will help unburden the critical development application component of the system.

Since the last report, several reforms were introduced into the Victorian Planning Scheme, seeking to streamline the planning process for two or more dwellings on a lot and residential buildings. If a proposal meets all the standards under Clause 55 or 57, the application is considered deemed-to-comply. A deemed-to-comply assessment seeks to streamline the planning process for proposals that meet the standards, reducing council discretion, limiting third-party objections and prioritising faster, standardised approvals for medium-density developments.

In addition to the above, the *Planning Amendment (Better Decisions Made Faster) Bill 2025* will amend the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* to provide a more effective and efficient statutory planning framework for Victoria. The changes will support the delivery of Victoria's Housing Statement and the actions of Plan for Victoria.

A part of the reform to the Act will also introduce a tiered system of planning permit applications and planning scheme amendments based on risk and complexity, with the goal of improving efficiency of assessments and timeframes for making decisions.

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.

## Streamlined pathways to achieve good housing outcomes

In April 2025, **Victoria** implemented the Great Design Fast Track (GDFT) which is a streamlined planning process for apartments and townhouses that demonstrate good design. Proposals which meet the specified principles for good design can access this accelerated pathway. With the Minister for Planning as decision-maker and the removal of third-party appeal rights, the GDFT is designed to facilitate faster planning decisions.

Introduced in 2025 with similar intentions to **Victoria's** GDFT, **New South Wales** introduced the NSW Housing Pattern Book which provide streamlined planning pathways for residential development that utilise the pattern book for low-rise and mid-rise housing.

The *Planning (Missing Middle Housing) Amendment Bill 2026* introduced by the **Australian Capital Territory** government amends the *Planning Act 2023* to improve the efficiency and operation of its planning system. The Bill is yet to be gazetted and is currently sitting before the Assembly. The Bill focuses on facilitating "missing middle" housing in established suburbs. The Bill is primarily procedural, focusing on streamlining approval pathways and reducing administrative barriers rather than changing zoning or density controls.

The Bill introduces targeted procedural reforms that aim to streamline planning approvals for small-scale residential development. By reclassifying subdivision proposals, removing lease barriers to secondary dwellings, and establishing fast-track pathways for minor lease variations, the lessens administrative requirements, making the approval process more efficient. While it limits some opportunities for public participation, it maintains oversight at key stages and seeks to balance efficiency with accountability in the planning system.

To support the Bill, the **Australian Capital Territory** Government has introduced changes to planning rules through a Major Plan Amendment to the Territory Plan. The Amendment was approved in May 2026 and passed the Legislative Assembly. The changes commenced on 1 July 2026 and are now in effect. It updated the Territory Plan to allow diverse, medium-density, low-rise housing within established RZ1 (Suburban) and RZ2 (Suburban Core) residential zones across Canberra.

In **South Australia**, the government introduced the *State Development Coordination and Facilitation Bill 2025* which aims to address challenges and delays in assessment and approval processes. It is overseen by a new Coordinator-General function, improving coordination and adding capability and capacity into the system. The legislation provides new mechanisms to help manage a growing number of urgent and significant projects, including housing.

## 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 jurisdictions have shorter prescribed timeframes for determining building applications, alongside clearer limits on post-development approval requirements, can reduce delays and provide greater certainty for proponents. This allows capital works and investment to be delivered into the economy sooner than would otherwise be possible.

# 4 Consistency in planning systems

Consistency in planning systems, along with certainty, is a foundation that underpins and drives efficiency.

## 4.1 Why we measured this

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 and the codes and requirements that will likely be applied.

From a business perspective, consistency is fundamentally about providing confidence. Planning systems that are standardised, predictable and aligned with broader economic objectives reduce investment risk and support development outcomes. The higher performing jurisdictions in this theme, demonstrate a balance between consistency and flexibility, maintaining clear and uniform planning frameworks while allowing strategic adaptation to support housing delivery, economic growth and the transition to a clean economy.

## 4.2 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.

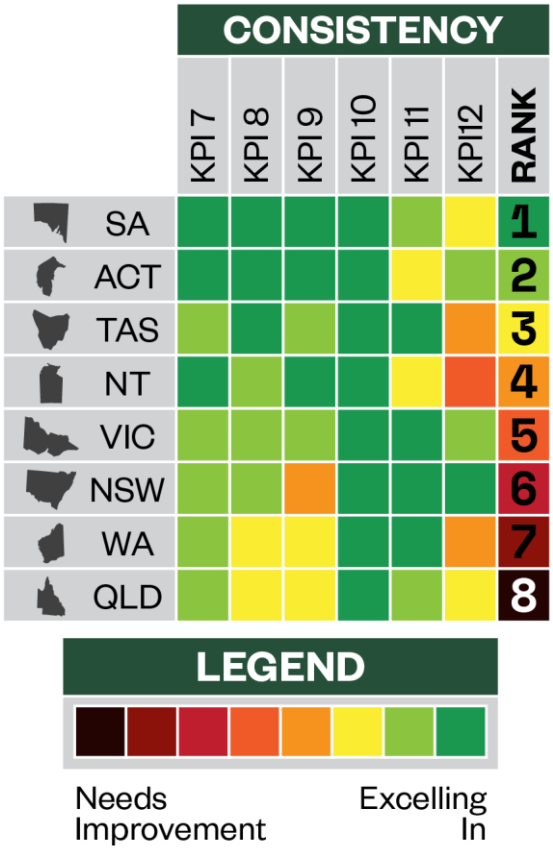



**Figure 5: Consistency scorecard**

## 4.3 Changes to the Consistency assessment methodology

This year, we have refined how we score some of the Consistency KPIs. As planning systems evolve, it is important to re-evaluate the way in which jurisdictions are scored as contexts and systems change. It ensures that we are scoring the jurisdictions fairly. The following changes have been made:

- **KPI 8** – Greater weight is now given to jurisdictions that provide at least some direction on land uses, zones and development types, compared with those that provide no direction. The scoring gap between these levels has therefore been increased.
- **KPI 9** – The scoring has been refined to better reflect the purpose and function of existing planning instruments, rather than simply the number of instruments in place.
- **KPI 11** – Jurisdictions with established, specific approval pathways are now rewarded more strongly than those that are only introducing targeted reforms. Existing pathways demonstrate that the jurisdiction has already embedded these approaches within its planning system.
- **KPI 12** – It is difficult to directly compare the scale of housing reforms across jurisdictions, as each is responding to different housing needs, growth pressures and planning contexts. The scoring has therefore been changed to a tiered system that recognises the relative scale and significance of reforms within each jurisdiction. This allows, for example, significant reforms in the ACT to be appropriately recognised relative to its size and growth pressures, rather than being compared solely with the larger reform programs of the states.

## 4.4 What we found

**South Australia** continues to rank first in Consistency in the planning scorecard due it 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 local councils, and therefore there is standardisation across the Territory. It scores poorly in KPI 11, due to its geographical and jurisdictional boundary constraints there is limited land availability for renewables, meaning it is not a priority for the government to implement streamlined approval pathways for clean energy transition.

**Tasmania** continues to score well in Consistency due to their introduction of a state-wide planning scheme, the Tasmanian Planning Scheme (TPS). This was introduced in 2017 and the roll out is almost complete with only the Kingborough Interim Planning Scheme to be transferred within the Local Provisions Schedules of the TPS.

**Queensland** continues to score 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 which aimed to set a structure for planning schemes were repealed, but it is still commonly referred to when drafting new planning schemes. Historically, the Queensland State Government has been slightly removed and unengaged from the planning system. Current reforms in **Queensland** seek to strengthen the State's role in planning by providing alternative decision-making powers where local councils currently hold primary decision-making authority.

The **Northern Territory** remains ranked fourth, mainly due to their standardised planning scheme for the entire territory, except Jabiru – which has the Jabiru Town Plan. What continues to hold the **Northern Territory** back is its limited housing supply initiatives.

**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. Its reforms focus 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.

**Victoria** continues to rank in the middle with a standard state-wide planning instrument and local level provisions which provides a consistent zoning, use and policy framework across the State. **Victoria** has initiated significant reform and programs targeted at increasing the housing supply through activity centres and streamlined planning pathways for particular developments.

**New South Wales** continues to rank towards the bottom due to the sheer quantity of planning instruments in its planning system. To put this into perspective**, New South Wales** has approximately 170 planning instruments (SEPPs and LEPs), whereas **Victoria** and **Queensland** have 79 and 77 planning instruments, respectively. This reduces consistency across approvals and from an investment perspective. **New South Wales** has embarked on significant reforms to deliver new housing supply through rezonings that are currently in process and lead the way across all jurisdictions in policy that aims to unlock more housing supply. 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.

## 4.5 What characteristics of the planning system support business confidence?

Consistent planning systems provide the certainty needed to support investment, productivity and economic growth. Standardised frameworks, clear planning controls and alignment with broader government objectives help reduce regulatory burden and enable more efficient development outcomes.

### Consistent planning frameworks and decision-making

Across most jurisdictions, there has been minimal change to the level of standardisation within planning instruments in the last few years. This suggests that many planning systems are stabilising, following recent reform to planning frameworks to create one centralised document with minimal variations (**Tasmania, South Australia** and **Australian Capital Territory**).

**Western Australia** is still currently in the process of standardising their land use terms and zoning across all planning schemes, which once implemented, will allow improved navigation of the planning codes and requirements for businesses working across the state. This level of reform and overhaul of the planning system is extremely time consuming and can take several years to implement. It is not expected to see the effects from this reform for another couple of years.

In **South Australia,** businesses can obtain the planning codes and standards needed to build their development from one centralised document. This is regardless of which part of the state they may choose to operate in. This consistency helps businesses 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.

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. 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.

## Alignment with housing supply priorities

**New South Wales** demonstrates the most active planning reform program aimed at increasing housing supply through the Transit Oriented Development (TOD) program. As of 30 September 2025, new planning controls have been adopted for 30 of the 37 identifies stations. It was reported by the New South Wales Government that the TOD program has resulted in close to 20,000 homes being in the pipeline, which included 4,000 that have approval.

This is also supported by the Low and Mid-Rise Housing Policy commenced on 28 February 2025. It introduced new planning controls to encourage more dual occupancies in low-density zones statewide, as well as terraces, townhouses, apartments and shop top housing in well-located residential areas that have shops, amenities and good public transport. Over the next 5 years, the Low and Mid-Rise Housing Policy is estimated to deliver more than 112,000 new homes.

Last year's report highlighted the infancy of **Victoria's** Activity Centre Program which identified 60 activity centres for intensified development and increased dwellings. This included new zoning and overlays within the identified activity centres. Plans for 58 of the centres have now been finalised, with plans for the remaining two proposed train and tram zones in inner Melbourne being developed.

The **Australian Capital Territory's** missing middle housing reforms make changes to the Territory Plan to remove long-standing barriers to allow low-rise, medium-density housing in established residential zones across Canberra. The reforms will enable more housing choice with clearer requirements and streamlined approval pathways.

These reforms are supported by broader **Australian Capital Territory** Government measures to improve housing supply and access, including expanded stamp duty exemptions, time-limited remissions of Lease Variation Charges for missing middle development and initiatives to support faster and more cost-effective delivery of new housing.

## Enable the clean economy transition

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 Australian Government directions. Initiatives that streamline energy related developments, such as solar and wind farms, will help businesses transition 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. Currently in draft, **Western Australia** has developed a Renewable Energy Planning Code and supporting Guidelines to set out a framework for assessing renewable energy development in **Western Australia**. Once finalised and adopted, the Code will establish consistent statewide standards for renewable energy projects, providing improved certainty and consistency for businesses.

The Development Facilitation Program (DFP) was introduced in 2020 in **Victoria** as a planning body with the purpose of accelerating approval of priority projects to stimulate the economy. The DFP is an accelerated assessment pathway under Clause 53.22 (Significant Economic Development) designed for priority projects in identified sectors aimed at injecting investment into the Victorian economy. Renewable energy projects were introduced into the DFP in 2024.

On 11 December 2025, the **Queensland** Government announced the implementation of the *Planning (Battery Storage Facilities) and Other Legislation Amendment Regulation 2025* (Amendment Regulation), delivering much-needed clarity on how stand-alone battery storage facilities will be assessed and approved in the wake of **Queensland's** recent planning reforms for both wind and solar renewable energy projects. The intent of the changes is to increase consistency of assessment, facilitate public involvement in applications and provide improved community benefits.

## 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 the 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'.

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.

# 5 Certainty in planning systems

Along with consistency, certainty is the other pillar that supports and drives efficiency.

## 5.1 Why we measured this

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 the goal posts are continually shifting, or where decision makers and referral agencies reach different integrations, significant delays can arise and confidence in the system can quickly deteriorate. This undermines community confidence in the planning systems and can reduce business willingness to invest.

## 5.2 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:** Policy commitment versus legislative action in the last 24 months.
- **KPI 20:** System wide versus targeted reform impact.

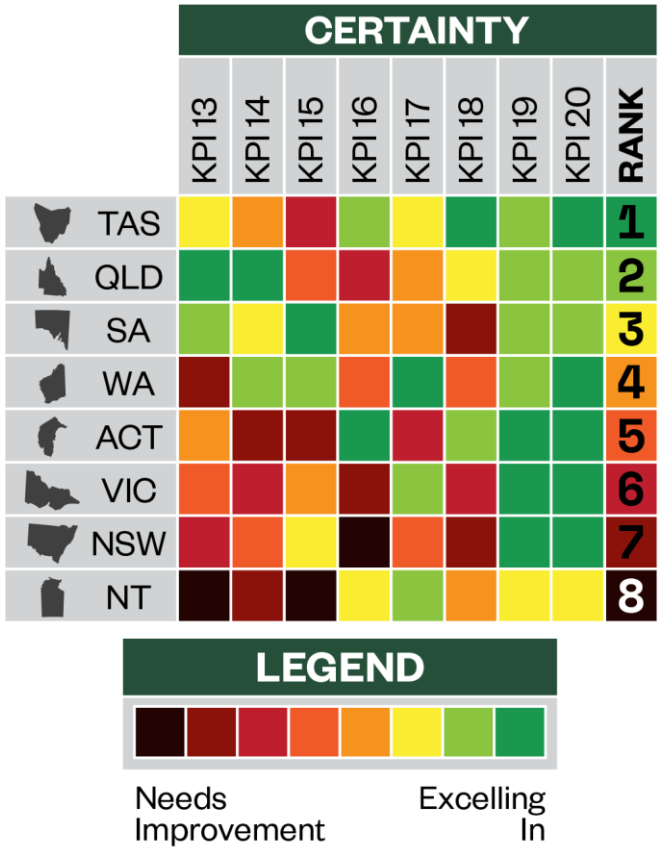



**Figure 6: Certainty scorecard**

## 5.3 What we found

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

**Queensland** continues to rank highly in this theme. 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 pursue costly and further time-consuming judicial proceedings. It is unique as it relies on Accepted,

Code and Impact assessment categories under the *Planning Act 2016*, rather than Complying Development Certificates found in **New South Wales** or localised Residential Design Codes (R-Codes) in **Western Australia** and ResCode in **Victoria**. Accepted development requires not planning development application, though building approval may still be required. Code assessed development requires a development application assessed against the relevant codes in the planning scheme, without public notification in most cases, and carries a 20 business day decision period, once the application is properly made.

**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.

**South Australia's** prescribed development application assessment timeframes range from 5 days to 95 days and 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.

**Western Australia** retains a strong score for KPI 14 following reforms to their planning processes and now the Relevant Authority must request additional information with 7 days of receiving application.

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. In 2026 the ACT has also used the charge as a deliberate incentive, applying a time-limited 50 per cent reduction to eligible missing middle developments in the RZ1 and RZ2 zones. The **Australian Capital Territory** has improved to fifth in this theme, up from sixth. Its Territory-wide instrument, development contributions frameworks and prescribed timeframes for development applications and plan amendments all score well. It continues to be held back by the absence of a prescribed building approval timeframe, where it scores the lowest of all eight jurisdictions.

**Victoria** continues to score poorly in for prescribed timeframes for rezoning and planning scheme amendments (KPI 18). The *Planning Amendment (Better Decisions Made Faster) Act 2026* will address this directly, creating three planning scheme amendment streams with defined timeframes and three permit streams with deemed approval at 10, 30 and 60 business days. The commencement date for those provisions is 29 October 2027, so they have not been scored in this edition.

**New South Wales** ranks seventh in this theme and scores lowest of all jurisdictions on developer contributions (KPI 16). This reflects the relatively high cost of contributions, frequent changes to schemes and the uncertainty these create for development compared to other jurisdictions with lower costs and more stable systems. NSW's 'Minister's Statement of Expectations' approach to development application assessments, rezoning timeframes and strategic planning is a new and innovative policy used to influence council performances. However, it largely sets an expectation for what councils should achieve by a future date and relies on benchmark guidelines, rather than establishing clear and enforceable timeframes within the planning framework. The P*lanning System Reforms Act 2025* moves NSW in the right direction, introducing standard and model conditions of consent, a 14-day determination period for minor modifications from 21 March 2026, and powers to create fast-tracked targeted assessment pathways. It does not however, introduce a legislated timeframe for rezonings (planning proposals).

All jurisdictions have at least announced planning reform of various nature, and in 2026 all but the **Northern Territory** score well on the conversion of announcements into legislative action. **South Australia, Tasmania** and the **Australian Capital Territory** have all implemented system wide reforms and are now operating in them. **South Australia** and **Tasmania** have both consolidated their planning schemes to form one statewide planning scheme (**Tasmania** is almost complete other than Kingborough) and the **Australian Capital Territory** in 2023 passed the *Planning Act 2023*, with the new Act and Territory Plan having commenced in 2023 and 2024 respectively.

**New South Wales** and **Victoria** have now passed the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment (Planning System Reforms) Act 2025* and *Planning Amendment (Better Decisions Made Faster Act 2026* respectively. Both states score full marks for their wide reach of reform and for converting commitments into legislation. However, it is noted that neither is fully in force yet and the full intended effects of these reforms are yet to be realised.

**Western Australia** continues to implement the *Planning and Development Amendment Act 2023* and has added the *State Development Act 2025*, enabling system-wide changes to application processing, housing delivery and standardisation. **Queensland** have also delivered on planning reform announcements which directly target housing delivery through streamlining particular planning processes within their schemes. **Northern Territory** remains furthest behind in terms of announcement and delivery of meaningful planning reforms to enable certainty for businesses and applicants in line with national housing targets.

## 5.4 What characteristics of the planning systems support business confidence?

Five characteristics distinguish the jurisdictions that deliver certainty: delegation is clear, independent and knowable in advance; timeframes are legislated and therefore measurable; incentives and disincentives fall on both sides of the assessment; consultation is proportionate to scale and impact; and contributions are set rather than negotiated.

### Delegation that is clear, independent and known in advance

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. The *Planning System Reforms Act 2025* has since restructured the layer above this, abolishing the Sydney district and regional planning panels and removing the Regionally Significant Development pathway, so that responsibility is consolidated with local consent authorities and, for larger matters, the Minister and the Independent Planning Commission (IPC).

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. The *Planning Amendment (Better Decisions Made Faster) Act 2026* moves partly in this direction by subjecting lower-impact applications to deemed approval timeframes, which limits how long a decision can sit unresolved, but it does not create an independent panel layer.

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.

In **South Australia**, the government introduced the *State Development Coordination and Facilitation Bill 2025* which aims to address challenges and delays in assessment and approval processes. It is overseen by a new Coordinator-General function, improving coordination and adding capability and capacity into the system. This reform transforms the assessment process by changing it from reactive to proactive, meaning projects in areas identified as fit for such development can proceed with certainty and pace when applied for.

## Legislated timeframes that can be measured and enforced

**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.

**Tasmania** has very efficient development approvals with median approval times across local councils below 40 statutory calendar days where there has been public notification and around 20 days where the proposal is complying. These timeframes do not include the considerable number of complying single dwelling developments that are 'as of right' and do not require the issuing of planning permits and can proceed directly to building approval.

## Incentives and disincentives that fall on both sides of the assessment

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.

**South Australia** allows an applicant to serve a deemed planning consent notice, after which the authority has 10 business days to grant consent and may still attach conditions. **Victoria's** three permit streams will, on commencement, carry deemed approval rather than deemed refusal. **New South Wales** will expand complying development so that certain variations to development standards can be resolved through a deemed approval process.

The national direction of travel is away from deemed refusal, which places the cost of inaction on the applicant, and towards deemed approval, which places it on the authority.

## Consultation proportionate to scale and impact

Consultation and third-party involvement are a substantial part of the planning process. Planning processes have always benefited from a democratic and collaborative approach, but at times it is the involvement of a few who derail or delay a project to satisfy their own objectives in lieu of broader objectives and net community benefit. The characteristic that supports business confidence is not less consultation, but consultation matched to the scale and impact of the proposal, and to consultation already undertaken at the strategic planning stage.

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, **Victoria** made several amendments to their main assessment tools for residential development and introduced a deemed to comply tool, that sets certain expectations of applicants and in turn, provides certainty to all parties on outcomes and removes third party appeal rights.

The largest single consolidation of consultation requirements is underway in **New South Wales.** The *Planning System Reforms Act 2025* replaces more than 100 separate community participation plans with a single statewide Community Participation Plan applying across all planning authorities and functions, harmonising exhibition and consultation requirements and tailoring engagement to the scale and impact of the proposal. The Plan was finalised in August 2026 and is effective from 1 September 2026. For a business operating across multiple local government areas, this removes a genuine and largely invisible source of variation in timeframes and process.

The **Northern Territory's** six exempt classes of planning scheme amendment achieve the same objective through a different method, removing the 28-day exhibition requirement where policy support and prior consultation already exist.

All jurisdictions should continuously review their consultation, notice and third-party involvement regulations to ensure planning processes remain democratic, collaborative and transparent, while managing community expectations, avoiding unnecessary delays, and facilitating sound investment and public-benefit decisions. Systems that match the depth of consultation to the significance of the proposal are more likely to hold, and to give business a reliable expectation of how long notification will take.

## Contributions that are published rather than negotiated

Developer contributions remain the least settled component of certainty. The **Victorian** Government is standardising developer contributions through Infrastructure Contribution Plans (ICPs) for the train and tram zone activity centres across Melbourne, as part of the Activity Centre Program. The new system is designed to provide direct funding to councils and the state government and provide developers with financial certainty with the use of standardised contributions. The new contribution rate will be applied

to eligible planning permits from January 2027 for the first 10 pilot activity centres and July 2027 for the 48 train and tram zone activity centres in Stages 1 and 2 of the Activity Centre Program.

# 6 Transparency in planning systems

Technology continues to transform planning systems by streamlining development applications, improving access to planning information, and enabling governments to monitor system performance in near real time.

## 6.1 Why we measured this

Digital planning platforms, open data and spatial technologies allow applicants to better understand planning requirements and assessment progress, while providing governments with evidence to identify bottlenecks, allocate resources and continuously improve planning processes.

The increasing maturity of digital planning systems also provides opportunities to leverage automation, artificial intelligence (AI) and machine-readable planning data to improve productivity across the development assessment process. AI-assisted tools have the potential to support applicants in interpreting planning controls, preparing development applications and tracking approvals, while enabling governments to identify trends and improve decision-making. These benefits are dependent on governments continuing to invest in high-quality, structured planning data and transparent reporting frameworks.

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.

## 6.2 What we measured

- **KPI 21:** The extent of online 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.

## 6.3 What we found

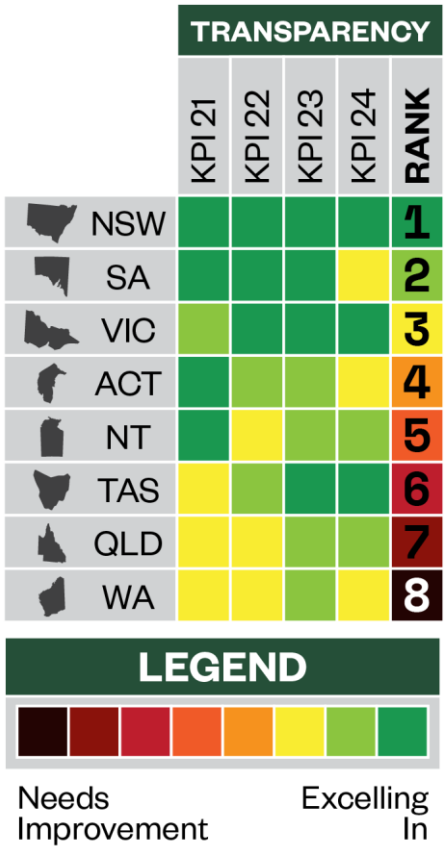



**Figure 7: Transparency scorecard**

**New South Wales** and **South Australia** remain the highest-performing jurisdictions for planning system transparency. **New South Wales** continues to demonstrate Australia's most mature digital planning ecosystem through the NSW Planning Portal, Major Projects Portal, comprehensive online lodgement and tracking functionality, and the publication of planning performance data that supports monitoring and system improvement.

The scoring methodology for KPI 21 introduced in 2025 continues to separate jurisdictions with genuinely centralised online portals from those with limited or council-by-council portals. **New South Wales, South Australia, Northern Territory** and the **Australian Capital Territory** all score full points on this measure because a single portal serves the whole jurisdiction. We continue to interpret that 'majority of LGAs' as those LGAs within the greater city regions, as the development and resourcing between city regions and regional areas is significantly different and therefore the need for sophisticated online portals differs. 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, and **Western Australia** is continuing to build its Planning Online lodgement portal as part of its reform program.

**Tasmania** ranks sixth for transparency, unchanged from 2025. It underperforms on the development application portal and on open data about development applications (KPI 21 and KPI 22), while it scores highly on the metrics that measure building approval permits and planning scheme amendments (KPI 23 and KPI 24). The State continues to invest in its centralised portal called *PlanBuild*. The Enquiry Service is available state-wide and provides zone and code information for any property, but Application Services (the online lodgement and tracking portal) remains live only for the City of Hobart, TasWater, and Heritage Tasmania. The staged rollout to remaining councils runs to the end of 2027, with councils such as Huon Valley transitioning during 2026.

Jurisdictions that publish regularly updated, machine-readable datasets continue to perform strongly for KPI 22. **New South Wales** remains the national benchmark through its Planning Portal datasets, council performance dashboards and has further strengthened transparency through the launch of the NSW Agency League Table. The dashboard publicly reports the performance of 22 State agencies and electricity providers responsible for processing Critical Integrated Referrals (CIRs), complementing the existing council performance dashboard and increasing visibility across the housing approval pipeline. This represents an important evolution from measuring council performance alone towards greater accountability across the entire development assessment process.

From 1 July 2026, the DCA in **New South Wales** will provide a single, coordinated response to referrals that would have previously gone to multiple agencies across the NSW Government. The Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure indicate that the DCA's performance will not be shown between July 2026 and January 2027 to allow a transitional period to build the data needed for reporting.

**Victoria** and **South Australia** continue to publish development activity information, although the frequency, consistency and accessibility of datasets vary between jurisdictions.

**Queensland** continues to lag in providing centralised planning performance data. Development application information is generally published individually by councils, making statewide comparisons difficult. The Queensland Government does not currently provide comprehensive open planning performance datasets, with industry continuing to rely on information collected by external organisations.

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. **Western Australia** ranks last for transparency, which is the single clearest constraint on it moving above fourth place overall.

**South Australia** and **Northern Territory** scores have not changed this year 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. This is the one measure on which **South Australia**, otherwise second for transparency, scores nil, and it is a straightforward gap to close.

## 6.4 What characteristics of the planning system support business confidence?

### Open data that is machine readable, current and comparable

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 the case for change and policy reform. Reform supported by planning data leads to better outcomes, including better 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 AI will also greatly serve planning and non-planning actors to work better together.

**New South Wales** and **Victoria** are providing an increasing number of Application Programming Interfaces (APIs) for planning data, and **New South Wales** has extended performance reporting beyond councils through the NSW Agency League Table, which public reports the performance of 22 State agencies and electricity providers responsible for processing Critical Integrated Referrals. The NSW DCA now consolidates over 800 referral requirements into a single list and commits to a coordinated whole-of-government response within 28 days. Without published agency level performance data, neither government nor industry would have any means of verifying whether that commitment is met in practice. Where the State takes responsibility for a defined part of the assessment timeline, measuring council performance alone is no longer sufficient.

**South Australia** has strengthened its position through its Performance Indicators Annual Report, and the Department for Housing and Urban Development has advised it is working to make more performance data accessible via the PlanSA portal. Housing Roadmap enhancements are to include a code amendment dashboard, adding to the existing Land Supply Dashboard and Code Amendment Map Viewer.

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.

Jurisdictions investing in AI for development assessment and investing in data governance at the same time will realise the benefit; those doing the former without the latter will scale their existing data problems.

### Digitised instruments that connect planning through to building

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, state, regional, district and local strategic 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 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. **Queensland** has minimal open data on development application and building approval performance, which makes it difficult for the State and industry to measure whether its otherwise strong statutory timeframes are being met in practice.

**South Australia**, which delivered Australia's first statewide ePlanning platform, is extending that digital footprint into a fully digitised, dynamic and interactive Regional Planning Program.

## Published performance that holds the system to its own commitments

There is currently a growing gap between government processes 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.

**New South Wales** and **Victoria** have each legislated the most significant reform of their planning Acts in decades, and in both cases the benefits will not appear in measured indicators for several years. Without published, consistent and comparable data on determination timeframes, referral performance, scheme amendment timeframes and building approvals, neither government nor business will be able to establish whether those reforms delivered the intended productivity gains, or whether any measured improvement is attributable to market conditions instead.

National Housing Accord data reveals that approvals across Australia rose 9% over the past 12 months while completions fell 2%, and 18% of the National Housing Accord target has been built against 25% approved. Approvals data alone are a poor proxy for delivery. Jurisdictions publishing commencement, completion and occupancy data alongside approval data keep the gap between what has been approved and what has been built visible to government and business alike.

# 7 Conclusion

The 2026 Regulation Rumble report records the first change of leader since the scorecard began. **Tasmania** is now the best performing planning jurisdiction for business, narrowly ahead of **South Australia.** The two states continue to demonstrate the scorecards central finding that consistency and certainty are important foundations for a planning system that supports business. A single state-wide planning instrument and legislated timeframes across the entire approval process are worth more to business than targeted reforms.

The most significant national development of the past 12 months is that **New South Wales** and **Victoria** have both legislated system-wide reform of their planning Acts. While this is a genuine and welcome shift, it has not yet made a measurable difference. Both states score at the top of the scorecard for converting commitments into legislation and on the system-wide reach of that legislation. However, both remain in the lower half overall – **Victoria** now ranks last and **New South Wales** second last – with the slowest building approval and major development application determination timeframes of the jurisdictions, respectively.

Nationally, approvals are rising while completions fall. **Western Australia** shows reform translating into genuine delivery, with completions up 16% and 22% of its Accord share already built – with only **Western Australia, Victoria** and the **Australian Capital Territory** projected to meet its target in 2029. **South Australia** and **Queensland** have also shown an increase in housing completions. The Productivity Commission's July 2026 interim report on housing supply regulation finds that slow, complex, and poorly coordinated approvals delay housing and can make development unviable. It finds that Australia does not build enough homes where people want to live, and that regulation is a key lever available to governments – necessary for safety and quality, but capable of stopping development outright or deterring it through slow, costly and uncertain processes. The Commission sets out four principles for a best-practice system: adopt a 'build' mindset, regulate only where necessary, coordinate housing with infrastructure, and keep the approval process simple.

For the Business Council of Australia and its members, three priorities follow from this year's edition of Regulation Rumble. First, jurisdictions that have legislated reform (**New South Wales** and **Victoria**) must now complete implementation, because business cannot invest against an Act that is not yet in force. Second, jurisdictions that do not have legislated timeframes for rezonings and planning scheme amendments (**New South Wales** and **South Australia**) must do so, as this is a clear differentiator between the top and bottom of the Certainty theme. Third, transparency remains weak in **Western Australia** and **Queensland**, with no centralised open data on assessment performance, **South Australia** with no open data on building approvals, and **Tasmania**, whose state portal has not been rolled out across the state in full yet. Without this open data, neither governments nor business can monitor if planning reform has been effective.

# 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 of 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
- could be measured over time to demonstrate changes in performance.

For this 2026 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<br>**Measurement:** Least Average Standard (<$30m) DA assessment time over 3-year average | 30% |
| **KPI 2:** Quicker decisions enable business to move forward and reduce holding cost:<br>**Measurement:** Least Average Major DA (>$30m) assessment time over 3-year average | 30% |
| **KPI 3:** Quicker decisions enable business to move forward and reduce holding cost.<br>**Measurement:** Lowest average Building Approval Time Frame experienced by applicants over 3-year average | 10% |
| **KPI 4:** Quicker decisions enable business to move forward and reduce holding cost.<br>**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<br>**Measurement:** ABS building approvals per capita | 10% |
| **KPI 6:** Decrease in decision times demonstrates commitment to reform and improvement<br>**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.<br>**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.<br>**Measurement:** State has standardised zones, land uses and development categories | 20% |
| **KPI 9:** Limited number of local planning instruments beyond standard instruments reduces inconsistencies.<br>**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.<br>**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.<br>**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.<br>**Measurement:** Scope of planning reforms and programs are consistent with Government policy to significantly increase housing | 10% |
| **Certainty (25%)** | |
| **KPI 13:** Statutory timeframe is prescribed for planning authorities to make decisions.<br>**Measurement:** Least # days Deemed refusal/approval timeframes for Development Applications. | 20% |
| **KPI 14:** Ability to stop assessment and seek additional information is constrained. | 20% |

| Business themes and KPIs | Allocated weight |
|---|---|
| **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. | |
| **KPI 15:** State has mechanisms for delegations in place, including to centralise significant complex matters to State level.<br>**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.<br>**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.<br>**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.<br>**Measurement:** Least # days prescribed for Deemed refusal/approval timeframes for rezoning applications. | 15% |
| **KPI 19:** Policy Commitment v Legislative Action (Last 24 months)<br>**Measurement:** Number of announcements that then led to legislative action. | 5% |
| **KPI 20:** System-Wide v Targeted Reform Impact<br>**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.<br>**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.<br>**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.<br>**Measurement:** State Government Publish open data on rezonings lodged and assessed across State/Jurisdiction. | 20% |
| **KPI 24:** Open data on performance by Building Regulators and Local Councils promotes accountability and performance improvements.<br>**Measurement:** State Government Publish open data on building applications lodged and assessed across State/Jurisdiction | 10% |

# Appendix B: Jurisdictional scorecard

### Score Card – Tasmania

**Overall rank: 1st**

| Performance Measure | Ranking 2026 | Ranking 2025 | Ranking 2024 | Ranking 2023 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Efficiency | 1st | 2nd | 3rd | 1st |
| Consistency | 3rd | 3rd | 3rd | 3rd |
| Certainty | 1st | 1st | 3rd | 4th |
| Transparency | 6th | 6th | 4th | 8th |

### Score Card – South Australia

**Overall rank: 2nd**

| Performance Measure | Ranking 2026 | Ranking 2025 | Ranking 2024 | Ranking 2023 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Efficiency | 4th | 3rd | 1st | 3rd |
| Consistency | 1st | 1st | 1st | 1st |
| Certainty | 3rd | 3rd | 1st | 2nd |
| Transparency | 2nd | 2nd | 1st | 1st |

### Score Card – Northern Territory

**Overall Rank: 3rd**

| Performance Measure | Ranking 2026 | Ranking 2025 | Ranking 2024 | Ranking 2023 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Efficiency | 2nd | 6th | 7th | 5th |
| Consistency | 4th | 4th | 4th | 3rd |
| Certainty | 8th | 5th | 5th | 5th |
| Transparency | 5th | 5th | 7th | 5th |

### Score Card – Western Australia

**Overall Rank: 4th**

| Performance Measure | Ranking 2026 | Ranking 2025 | Ranking 2024 | Ranking 2023 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Efficiency | 3rd | 1st | 2nd | 2nd |
| Consistency | 7th | 8th | 5th | 6th |
| Certainty | 4th | 4th | 5th | 2nd |
| Transparency | 8th | 7th | 5th | 4th |

### Score Card – Australian Capital Territory

**Overall rank: 5th**

| Performance Measure | Ranking 2026 | Ranking 2025 | Ranking 2024 | Ranking 2023 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Efficiency | 7th | 7th | 4th | 7th |
| Consistency | 2nd | 2nd | 2nd | 2nd |
| Certainty | 5th | 6th | 6th | 1st |
| Transparency | 4th | 4th | 3rd | 5th |

### Score Card – Queensland

**Overall Rank: 6th**

| Performance Measure | Ranking 2026 | Ranking 2025 | Ranking 2024 | Ranking 2023 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Efficiency | 5th | 5th | 6th | 4th |
| Consistency | 8th | 7th | 8th | 8th |
| Certainty | 2nd | 2nd | 2nd | 5th |
| Transparency | 7th | 8th | 6th | 8th |

### Score Card – New South Wales

**Overall Rank: 7th**

| Performance Measure | Ranking 2026 | Ranking 2025 | Ranking 2024 | Ranking 2023 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Efficiency | 6th | 8th | 8th | 7th |
| Consistency | 6th | 6th | 7th | 7th |
| Certainty | 7th | 8th | 7th | 8th |
| Transparency | 1st | 1st | 1st | 1st |

### Score Card – Victoria

**Overall rank: 8th**

| Performance Measure | Ranking 2026 | Ranking 2025 | Ranking 2024 | Ranking 2023 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Efficiency | 8th | 4th | 5th | 6th |
| Consistency | 5th | 5th | 6th | 5th |
| Certainty | 6th | 7th | 4th | 5th |
| Transparency | 3rd | 3rd | 2nd | 3rd |

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