



Statement pursuant to Standing Order 246A

Mr Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 246A, I wish to make a statement on behalf of the Standing Committee on Environment and Planning relating to its Inquiry into Draft Major Plan Amendment 04 – Missing Middle Housing Reforms.

This major plan amendment was referred to the Committee by the Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development on 28 October 2025 under section 70 of the *Planning Act 2023*. It is a significant planning reform that proposes changes that would reshape the character of our city and seeks to ensure our growing population has access to the right housing in the right location.

These reforms are not just technical amendments; they would influence how we live, how our neighbourhoods would evolve and how future generations would experience our city. These are part of the largest zoning reforms and Territory Plan updates in the history of self-government, more significant than those made in the recent review of the Territory Plan. Recognising their significance, the Committee resolved on 6 November 2025 to prepare a report on the draft amendment.

The Minister requested that the Committee undertake a targeted inquiry and report promptly, noting the extensive consultation already undertaken by the Territory Planning Authority and the strong support from both the community and industry. While the Committee acknowledges this, the consultation undertaken by executive government is not equivalent to the committee scrutiny provided for in the Planning Act. Committee scrutiny is done by parliamentarians that are outside of Cabinet, most of whom are outside of Government. This does not perform the same role as work done by Government to progress its own work.

Recent committee reports have found much to comment on regarding Government work and Government project management. It is disappointing that Government does not appear to understand the difference between the external scrutiny role undertaken by the Committee and Government community consultation and the need for external scrutiny in the current environment.

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The Draft Major Plan Amendment before this Committee is different from the one Government consulted on. This is a good thing – presumably Government has responded to comments made by the community on the first draft. But that means there are elements in here that have received no community consultation. It is important that those who contributed to earlier consultations have the opportunity to comment on the revised draft and that the new elements are scrutinised.

The timing of Government referring this work to the committee presents challenges. It came immediately before two weeks of Annual and Financial Reports hearings after which follows the final sitting week of the year, then school holidays and the December-January holiday period. Rushing to hold hearings in December or January would risk excluding key stakeholders and community members. Canberrans do not take kindly to Government consultations and scrutiny processes that are run in late December and early January. It is widely regarded as a means of stifling debate and excluding those who are away or are busy with caring responsibilities over this period. In addition, this parliament works hard to be family friendly. We typically do not hold hearings during school holidays. This should only be eroded where absolutely essential.

The Committee also notes that Government has been running the Missing Middle reform project since 2017. In his foreword to the Housing Choices Discussion paper then-Planning Minister Mick Gentleman said ‘People want different forms of housing in the suburbs, as well as in centres and mixed use areas. This includes town houses, terrace houses, secondary dwellings and apartments as well as a continuing demand for detached homes.’ In its 2018 response to the Housing Choices Collaboration Hub recommendation on housing flexibility the Government said ‘EPSDD will explore options for changing the Territory Plan to increase the mix of dwelling sizes available in residential developments, as well as providing flexibility to deliver a range of housing types’.

That was eight years ago.

Proposed Missing Middle zoning changes were not presented to this committee for inquiry until late October 2025. It is a shame the Government chose to refer it at this time of year and

after 8 years of work, but the timing of the Government's referral is not a good reason to call for no scrutiny or for curtailed scrutiny.

The Committee also notes the letter it received from the Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development dated 18 November. The Minister notes that if the Committee does not report until April 2026, and allowing time for Government to consider and action that report, 'it is reasonable to assume the major plan amendment would not be presented to the Legislative Assembly until the June 2026 sitting week. The Act also provides five sitting days after the major plan is presented for a notice of motion for a rejection motion to be given, which, even if the major amendment were presented on the first sitting of June, would carry-over to the September sitting.'

The Committee suggests that if Government is concerned about delays to some really important reforms during the three-month gap in the sitting calendar, it could add an additional sitting week.

This Committee will be diligent and will report as quickly as possible. This Committee will make best efforts to report ahead of its statutory deadline. But the scale of this task and the timing of the referral from Government means we cannot reasonably hold hearings until February 2026 and we may not be able to report until April. We will work as efficiently as possible and we suggest Government do the same.

Submissions for this inquiry close on 19 December 2025, and the Committee intends to hold public hearings in February of 2026.