

Ms Angela Moody
Productivity Commissioner and Chair
Queensland Productivity Commission
PO Box 12078
GEORGE STREET QLD 4003

10 July 2026

Dear Ms Moody,

Submission to the Queensland Productivity Commission's Public Inquiry on the Impact of the Australian Government's 2025 Environment Protection Reforms on Queensland

Stockland welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Queensland Productivity Commission's (QPC) Public Inquiry on the Impact of the Australian Government's 2025 Environment Protection Reforms on Queensland.

The interface between federal, state and local planning and environmental approvals is a critical regulatory lever towards delivering new urban development, particularly in relation to the shared objective to boost housing supply across Queensland and Australia. We recognise that the QPC will examine impacts across many sectors, but the QPC's Inquiry is a welcome opportunity to improve this regulatory framework and to achieve better outcomes for investment, development, and conservation for urban development and housing projects in Queensland.

This submission outlines Stockland's experience working with the approval system under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) to help constructively shape the QPC's investigations. It addresses three key points for the QPC's consideration:

- Stockland has welcomed the overdue and necessary reform of the EPBC Act to improve the regulatory framework for urban development across Australia, especially in the context of delivering the National Housing Accord;
- We are engaged closely with the Commonwealth Government on the detailed policy work and on live applications to help ensure these actually achieve their policy intent, and avoid repeating the mistakes of practice in recent years; and
- There are steps the Queensland Government can take, focused on the urban development sector, to align with the EPBC system which will make Queensland an even more attractive place to invest and deliver housing.

About Stockland

Stockland is one of Australia's largest diversified property developers, with a 70 year track record of delivering high quality projects and communities. Nationally, we have a \$58.8 billion development pipeline by forecast end value across the residential, logistics, town centres and data centres sectors.

Across Australia, we have significant experience working with the Commonwealth Government for approvals under the to support many of our masterplanned communities, land lease communities, logistics and town centre projects.

Stockland has a long history of investing in projects and infrastructure that supports productivity and economic growth in Queensland. We have more than \$3.9 billion invested in 45 projects across the state, delivering sustainable communities, affordable homes, retail town centres, and logistics facilities over our many decades in Queensland.

Stockland's support for EPBC Act reform

We have long supported reform of the EPBC Act. Not only is reform critical for improving protection of the natural environment and to ease the process of doing business, but a better EPBC system is one of the biggest levers the Federal Government can pull in pursuit of its 1.2 million new homes target under the National Housing Accord.

The majority of Stockland's exposure to EPBC approvals is in Queensland. We currently have 15 EPBC approvals in place for masterplanned community and land lease community developments encompassing over 50,000 homes across South East Queensland, as well as a further two currently under assessment for 4,800 more homes.

The time taken to approve EPBC applications has materially increased in recent years. Prior to 2022, EPBC Act approvals for current Stockland projects were determined in an average of 19 months. Since then, the average for projects determined since (including projects not yet determined) is nearly 37 months – significantly increasing the cost and uncertainty associated with major development projects.

In Stockland's experience, the growth in application timeframes has been driven by inconsistent application of the EPBC Act and its subordinate policies, a wider range of specialist comments across Government needing to be addressed by proponents (without assessing officers unable to push back on unreasonable requirements), and a reduced willingness to work collaboratively on negotiating outcomes or resolving issues.

Unlike state and territory planning systems which have statutory timeframes associated with applications, the lack of clarity in how long an EPBC Act application will take to be determined contributes greater risk and uncertainty to delivering development projects – with some applications now in the system for close to seven years.

This means there is an urgent need for the Commonwealth to implement EPBC reform to give greater certainty and confidence for the development sector to invest and deliver the homes needed to meet the National Housing Accord targets, as well as the other types of development and urban infrastructure needed to build successful communities.

How the Commonwealth Government can successfully achieve EPBC reform objectives

Although we have welcomed the legislative changes to the EPBC Act as having clear intent to improve the approval system, we remain engaged with the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) to ensure the detailed National Environmental Standards, regulations, and guidance notes help achieve that intent. This detailed process will be critical to ensuring individual applications are prepared and assessed to deliver on the Government's objectives.

For example, the shift in the legislative test from "no net loss" to "net gain" will set a higher assessment bar with little clarity at this stage about how this outcome will be measured. A number of key legislative terms are vaguely defined, or not defined at all, including "unacceptable impacts", "viability", the identification of "critical habitat", "irreplaceable" and "necessary to remain viable in the wild". The Offsets

Calculator, which will be critical to determining the quantum of offsets and feasibility (economic and environmental) of delivering projects, is yet to be consulted on.

In the meantime, we are also seeing a shift in how DCCEEW is resolving existing EPBC applications in response to the Commonwealth's focus on new housing supply. Stockland has had applications in the approval system for up to seven years which had languished in uncertainty, averaging a determination timeframe of close to three years, but a renewed focus on resolving old decisions has brought welcome confidence for projects to proceed.

We remain engaged with DCCEEW on concerns about the roll out of recent legislative reforms, and are eager to work closely to secure cultural and process improvements we are already seeing which suitably balance environmental conservation and urban development. But significantly more work is required to bed down the reform intent, and to ensure practical experience of applications reflects policy objectives.

Case Study: Stockland Shoreline Trails

Stockland Shoreline is a masterplanned community located at Redland Bay in the City of Moreton Bay. An adjoining site, known as The Trails, was acquired to provide an additional 300 lots. Development at this site was deemed to be a controlled action under the EPBC Act in November 2021 and subject to an assessment by preliminary documentation (PD).

The PD was submitted to DCCEEW in mid-2025, with key assessment issues relating to koala and greater glider habitat. Stockland proposed offsets equal to more than 100% of the total impact of the development, including revegetating and preserving a key wildlife corridor.

Following the Commonwealth Government's commitment to speed up decisions in 2025, we saw a significant shift from DCCEEW officers in their approach to assessment. This involved a greater focus on meeting agreed timeframes for steps and review, acknowledgement of unreasonable pushback from referrals, greater discretion to make decisions about the impacts of elements of the assessment process, and a willingness to get towards agreed outcomes.

Following public notification of the PD in January 2026, the final recommendation report was published in March 2026, and a decision made in late April 2026. This will allow us to progress with development of The Trails quickly, including delivering offset arrangements commencing housing supply.

Recommendations for the Commonwealth Government

- Speed up the delivery of new Standards, regulations, calculators and charge regimes which will be key building blocks of how the new EPBC regime is implemented in practice
- Set clear assessment determine benchmarks that give applicants like Stockland a stronger sense of process, costs, inputs and timeframes necessary to deliver successful EPBC applications
- Apply the mitigation hierarchy of avoiding, mitigating, repairing, and offsetting impacts in a way that recognises how EPBC controlled actions fit into longer term state and local urban development processes, to avoid double dipping on offsets or unreasonable delay in process following a detailed rezoning process
- Give further detailed guidance on how the mitigation hierarchy will be applied so that proponents can confidently identify sufficient avoidance in their proposals to meet the NES requirements
- Provide clear definitions and guidance for critical new terminology and concepts, including "unacceptable impacts", "viability", the identification of "critical habitat", "irreplaceable" and "necessary to remain viable in the wild" that have the potential to result in inconsistency in decision making

- Permit staging and sequencing strategies for offset delivery in relation to large urban development projects (i.e. some major masterplanned communities are over 10,000 lots) which will roll out over years or even decades
- Draft new Standards in a way that allows proponents to deliver innovative or restorative approaches to conservation that meet the standards for net gain at most efficient cost
- Ensure the new Standards strongly promote the establishment of strategic approaches to conservation through bilateral agreements, bioregional plans, and strategic assessments
- When developing a offsets calculator to determine net gain, consult closely with both practitioners and proponents in its design, and maintain full back-end transparency of the calculator's workings, so proponents can understand what they need to do to plan and deliver projects
- Ensure the Regional Offsets and Restoration Contributions Funds are designed with transitional arrangements in place to avoid unnecessary delay as delivery mechanisms are determined
- Focus on ensuring cultural and practice change within DCCEEW to secure the objectives for a better regulatory system set out by the Commonwealth Government
- Establish a consultative roundtable with key EPBC Act process users, including Stockland, to provide system-level feedback on how reforms are being implemented and to identify risks to a successfully operating regulatory system. This could run parallel with an expert technical group comprising leading consultants who work closely with proponents such as Stockland to improve professional practice and to allow for comprehensive feedback and improvement
- Work with industry to apply the lessons of the EPBC Strike Team focused on speeding up longstanding housing applications so that these are reflected in standard assessment practice going forward.

The Queensland Government can align its regulations to achieve supply objectives

The QPC's inquiry is a welcome opportunity to improve the overarching regulatory environment for doing business in Queensland, particularly in the urban development sector where there is a need to speed up approvals for new housing supply.

Compared to other states, EPBC is a more variable factor in Queensland when progressing projects through approvals. For Stockland, this means the vast majority of our EPBC applications relate to projects in South East Queensland. In part, this is because of a historical mismatch between Queensland Government decisions on urban release areas and contemporary Commonwealth decisions on environmental impact. Other states have worked to align regulatory systems that reduce the uncertainty and risk of running parallel but uncoordinated approvals (see case study below).

Case study: EPBC strategic assessments for urban development

In Western Sydney and Melbourne, strategic assessments were put in place in the mid-2000s by respective state governments working with the Commonwealth Government. Through this process, development and conservation opportunities were identified as a regional scale. Governments then use strategic planning processes to identify areas for urban development, while at the same time identifying areas for permanent conservation.

This boosts investor confidence with clear rules about where development can and cannot take place, and how offsets are secured and funded. Strategic assessments support supply at scale, as by taking a wider view, it can underpin decades of new housing supply. Once the strategic assessment is in place and certified, projects can proceed to development application without any further environmental approval, avoiding lengthy concurrent site-by-site EPBC applications.

In Melbourne alone, Stockland has delivered approximately 40,000 lots benefiting from upfront strategic assessment certainty. No project has faced its own EPBC approval.

In Queensland by comparison, the absence of strategic assessments makes determining impact and securing offsets less certain. Each proponent makes individual applications – making it harder to assess cumulative impacts and make interlocking decisions. The inconsistency of EPBC decisions over time, such as the changing requirements for offsets, mean initial decisions about supply set down by the Queensland Government, are undermined over time.

Recommendations for the Queensland Government

- Progress a bilateral agreement with the Commonwealth Government to certify the Queensland Government's environmental assessment regime.
- Use the South East Queensland Region Plan process, when identifying new urban footprint areas, to undertake the planning and environmental assessment work which could underpin a long term strategic assessment EPBC approval for the region's future growth areas.
- Use the review of the Queensland Offsets Policy to align, as best as possible, Queensland offsets policy with the new EPBC offsets regime to achieve common targets, calculations, and protection arrangements, while retaining a priority for achieving best practice regulatory settings.
- Engage with the development sector and the Federal Government to design clear offset mitigation criteria that deliver on development objectives while securing well protected environmental areas.
- Focus on species-specific guidance for koalas and greater gliders in South East Queensland to address key regulatory and approvals delays which hamper development projects.

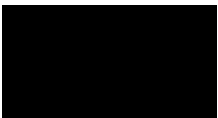
Conclusions and next steps

We commend the QPC for undertaking this Inquiry and welcome its contributions to help resolve regulatory uncertainty for the urban development sector.

We would be pleased to provide further input to the Inquiry and share our experiences using the EPBC system. Stockland is able to draw on our national exposure to discuss how better alignment across Federal and Queensland systems could be achieved to support key housing supply objectives.

Should you wish to discuss this submission further, Michael Bishop, National Manager Policy and Strategic Planning [REDACTED] is the contact for the QPC team.

Regards,



David Laner

General Manager, Masterplanned Communities,
Queensland and Northern New South Wales