

Media Release



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IS A FEAR OF HEIGHTS HOLDING BACK WA'S URBAN DEVELOPMENT?

When it comes to increasing urban densities, West Australians seem to have a fear of heights exceeded only by Tasmanians according to recently released figures from the ABS¹.

Just 14% of Western Australia's building approvals in the past year have been for dwelling units over four storeys high. This compares with 65% in the ACT and 61% in Victoria. Only 9% of Tasmania's approvals were for dwelling units over four storeys.

The ABS' figures also reveal that Perth has the lowest percentage of non-house dwelling² approvals of Australia's cities, showing that Perth has a long way to go to meet the State Government's ambitions to increase density, the UDIA said today.

The figures show that in May just 20% of building approvals were for non house dwellings such as apartments and town houses, a figure that's consistent with Perth's annual figure of 18%. By comparison, 84% of building approvals in Canberra in May were for non houses dwellings, while 52% of Brisbane's approvals were for non house dwellings.

"Perth's percentage is easily the lowest of Australia's capital cities," said UDIA CEO Debra Goostrey.

"At 18% it's well below the next lowest, which is shared between Hobart and Adelaide, where non house approvals are 31%," she said.

"The government needs to create enough opportunities for medium and higher density developments across the metropolitan area to ensure sustainability and to meet the changing needs of our growing population," she said.

"We need more of the sort of developments being proposed for areas such as Canning Bridge and Fremantle which will bring renewed life and vibrancy to these areas," she said.

"Providing fast and efficient public transport is the key to making transit-oriented developments such as Canning Bridge work and it's crucial that the government commits to continually improving and expanding the rail network."

Ms Goostrey stressed that higher density developments should not be seen as just being suited to inner city areas such as East Perth, as there are good examples of higher density as far afield as Cockburn, Brighton and Ellenbrook, as well.

She welcomed a rise in Western Australia’s seasonally adjusted dwelling approvals figures for May.

According to figures released Monday by the ABS, Western Australia had a 3.0% increase in dwelling approvals in seasonally adjusted terms. It comes off the back of a 5.1% increase in April (seasonally adjusted).

“We’ve now seen two modest increases in a row in the seasonally adjusted figures, which is an encouraging indication that a little bit of confidence is returning to the West Australian market,” said UDIA CEO Debra Goostrey.

“This is a welcome sign for a housing market that’s been subdued for awhile,” she said.

1. 8731.0 - Building Approvals, Australia, May 2011
2. The ABS defines “other residential building” as a building other than a house primarily used for long-term residential purposes. An other residential building contains more than one dwelling unit. Other residential buildings are coded to the following categories: semidetached, row or terrace house or townhouse with one storey; semidetached, row or terrace house or townhouse with two or more storeys; flat, unit or apartment in a building of one or two storeys; flat, unit or apartment in a building of three storeys; flat, unit or apartment in a building of four or more storeys; flat, unit or apartment attached to a house; other/number of storeys unknown.

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