



FAITH HOUSING AUSTRALIA

Submission on A New Approach to Strategic Planning

February 2026





Submission on *A New Approach to Strategic Planning (Statewide Framework)*

Executive Summary

Faith Housing Australia (FHA) welcomes the NSW Government's proposal to modernise the strategic land use planning framework through a clearer, simpler and more delivery-focused three-tier structure spanning State, Region and Local planning. FHA strongly supports the intent to reduce duplication, improve accountability, and strengthen the link between strategic planning and on-the-ground outcomes.

This submission focuses on one critical opportunity within the proposed framework: the recognition and enablement of mission-driven and faith-owned land as part of NSW's housing, social infrastructure and resilience system. Faith-owned land represents a significant, underutilised public-interest asset base that can contribute to the delivery of social and affordable housing in well-located areas, aligned with statewide priorities.

FHA submits that the new State Land Use Plan should explicitly recognise faith land as essential social infrastructure with housing delivery potential, and embed clear, consistent pathways for its inclusion across regional and local planning instruments.

Faith Land as Strategic Social Infrastructure

Across NSW, faith organisations own and steward land that performs enduring social, cultural and community functions. Places of worship and associated land:

- Act as long-standing community anchors
- Support social cohesion, care and volunteering
- Serve diverse and often vulnerable populations
- Maintain a long-term commitment to place

These attributes align directly with the objectives of a modern strategic planning framework focused on wellbeing, inclusion, resilience and sustainable growth. However, current planning systems often treat faith land as a static or residual land use rather than as strategic social infrastructure capable of adaptive reuse.

The proposed framework provides a timely opportunity to correct this omission at a system level.

Embedding Faith Land in the State Land Use Plan

FHA recommends that the proposed State Land Use Plan:

- 1. Recognise faith-owned land as essential social infrastructure**
Explicitly acknowledge faith land alongside education, health and community infrastructure, recognising its ongoing social value and delivery potential.
- 2. Enable housing outcomes aligned with statewide priorities**
Confirm that social and affordable housing delivered by mission-driven organisations is a legitimate and desirable outcome on faith land where strategically justified.
- 3. Provide clear policy positions to guide rezoning and investment**
Establish clear statewide direction that supports councils and agencies to consider faith land for housing as part of planned growth, rather than through ad hoc or contested processes.

Cascading Priorities Across Region and Local Plans

To ensure effective delivery, statewide priorities relating to faith land should cascade through the planning hierarchy:

- **Region Plans** should identify faith land as part of the spatial response to housing need, sequencing development in alignment with infrastructure and services.
- **Local Strategic Planning Statements and LEPs** should translate this direction into clear zoning pathways, permissibility settings and development standards.

This approach reduces uncertainty for councils, faith landholders and communities, while supporting consistent outcomes across NSW.

Delivery-Focused Implementation

FHA supports the proposed emphasis on delivery through local plans and recommends that implementation be strengthened through:

- Model planning provisions for mixed-use faith land redevelopment
- Standardised rezoning and planning pathways
- Guidance materials tailored to volunteer-led and not-for-profit landholders
- Clear links between planning flexibility and access to housing subsidy and concessional finance

Conclusion

The proposed strategic planning framework represents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to align NSW's land use system with contemporary housing, social and resilience challenges. By embedding faith land within the State Land Use Plan and cascading this recognition through regional and local planning, the Government can unlock new housing supply while strengthening community infrastructure.

Faith Housing Australia welcomes ongoing engagement with the Department as the framework is refined and implemented.

About Us

Faith Housing Australia (FHA) is the national peak body for the faith housing sector. Our members include faith-based Community Housing Providers supporting over 62,700 tenants, Specialist Homelessness Services assisting more than 83,800 clients, places of worship seeking to use their land for housing, faith leaders across all denominations, and professional partners committed to housing justice.

The faith housing sector delivers social and affordable housing across NSW, including transitional, crisis and emergency accommodation, alongside wraparound supports such as financial counselling, mental health, employment assistance and specialist services. FHA partners with government to expand social and affordable housing and strengthen the supports needed to sustain tenancies and prevent homelessness.

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Front Cover image: Member, Sydney Anglican Property's Regents Park development, to be delivered with support from the Housing Australia Future Fund on a disused site.