



FAITH HOUSING AUSTRALIA

Submission on The Sydney Plan

February 2026





Submission on *The Sydney Plan*

Executive Summary

Faith Housing Australia welcomes the release of the draft Sydney Plan and supports its ambition to deliver more well-located homes, strengthen social infrastructure, and create inclusive, connected and resilient communities across Greater Sydney.

This submission highlights the strategic role that faith-owned land can play in delivering the Sydney Plan's objectives. Faith lands—particularly places of worship—are an established but under-recognised component of Sydney's social infrastructure network. Many are located in precisely the well-served, connected neighbourhoods identified by the Plan as priorities for housing growth.

These sites have an enduring social and cultural role and offer a practical opportunity to deliver social and affordable housing in well-served locations where land is underutilised. With supportive planning controls, clear rezoning pathways, and aligned housing subsidy, faith-based landholders can be effective delivery partners in achieving the Sydney Plan's housing and place objectives while retaining vital community and cultural functions.

The Social and Cultural Value of Faith Lands

The draft Sydney Plan recognises the importance of social infrastructure, community wellbeing, and connected neighbourhoods. Places of worship and other faith-owned lands make a significant contribution to these outcomes.

Places of worship and associated faith lands:

- Function as local hubs for connection, care and inclusion
- Support culturally diverse and intergenerational communities
- Complement government-funded services
- Provide continuity and stability in changing neighbourhoods

These functions align directly with the Sydney Plan's emphasis on liveability, inclusion and social wellbeing. Planning frameworks should therefore ensure the long-term viability of faith land while enabling sensitive adaptation over time.

Delivering Social and Affordable Housing in Well-Located Areas

The Sydney Plan identifies the need to:

- Increase housing supply in accessible locations
- Diversify housing types
- Make better use of existing land and assets

Many places of worship and associated faith lands are underutilised due to changing demographics, congregational needs, or legacy land use controls. These sites are often located close to transport, services, schools, and established communities—precisely the locations the Sydney Plan identifies as suitable for additional housing.

With appropriate rezoning and planning flexibility, faith lands can support:

- Social and affordable housing integrated into existing neighbourhoods
- Mixed-use outcomes that retain worship and community uses
- Delivery by mission-driven organisations with a long-term stewardship model

This approach supports the Sydney Plan’s focus on great places, inclusive growth, and housing that meets diverse needs, while maintaining the social value of existing community assets.

Sydney Plan Priorities and Faith Land Contribution

Sydney Plan theme	Contribution of faith lands
Deliver more well-located homes	Faith lands are often located near transport, services, and jobs, making them suitable sites for additional housing supply
Social infrastructure and wellbeing	Places of worship function as established social infrastructure supporting connection, care, and resilience
Inclusive and connected communities	Faith organisations support diverse populations and foster belonging across cultures and generations
Better use of land and assets	Underutilised faith lands provide opportunities for sensitive intensification without displacement
Housing diversity and affordability	Faith-based partnerships can deliver social and affordable housing with long-term stewardship
Climate resilience	Faith lands can support climate-resilient neighbourhoods through low-carbon, energy-efficient housing, urban greening, and their role as trusted community hubs during heatwaves, floods, and emergencies.

Strengthening Implementation and Delivery

To maximise impact, FHA recommends the Sydney Plan:

1. **Recognise faith lands as essential social infrastructure**
Consistent with the Sydney Plan’s focus on social infrastructure and community wellbeing, explicitly recognise places of worship and faith-owned land as assets that support inclusion, resilience, and strong neighbourhoods.
2. **Enable well-located homes through flexible zoning**
Support the Plan’s objective to deliver more homes in accessible locations by enabling social and affordable housing as a permissible use on faith lands, including through site-specific or precinct-based rezonings.
3. **Support mixed-use, place-based outcomes**
Align with the Sydney Plan’s emphasis on great places by encouraging developments that retain active worship and community uses while adding housing that responds to local context.
4. **Link planning reform with affordability mechanisms**
Reflect the Plan’s commitment to affordability by aligning planning flexibility with access to State and Commonwealth housing subsidies, concessional finance, and partnership models.

5. Provide clear pathways for delivery and implementation

In support of the Sydney Plan's implementation focus, provide clear guidance, standardised planning pathways, and partnership frameworks to assist faith organisations, many of which are volunteer-led, to participate in housing delivery.

Conclusion

The draft Sydney Plan sets an important direction for a more inclusive, connected, and sustainable city. Faith lands can play a meaningful role in delivering on this vision—supporting social infrastructure, strengthening communities, and contributing to the supply of social and affordable housing in well-located areas.

With the right planning settings and aligned investment, faith-based landholders can continue their long-standing role as community anchors while helping address Sydney's housing challenge. Faith Housing Australia urges the NSW Government to ensure the Sydney Plan explicitly recognises and enables this opportunity as part of its implementation.

FHA welcomes ongoing engagement as the Sydney Plan is finalised and implemented.

About us

Faith Housing Australia (FHA) is the peak body representing the faith housing sector, including:

- Faith-based organisations, including not-for-profit Community Housing Providers (CHPs) supporting more than 62,700 tenants and Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) assisting more than 83,800 clients. Many of these organisations have an impressive track record of providing support to the community over centuries
- Places of worship across all faiths who intend to use their land for housing justice
- Faith leaders of all religions and denominations who see housing as a critical component of social justice and an essential human right
- Any individual, organisation, foundation, or program committed to housing justice, including architects, planners, and other professional support organisations critical to the delivery of housing

The faith housing sector is an important contributor to housing supply in NSW across all forms of social and affordable rental housing, including transitional, emergency and crisis accommodation.

Housing comes first as an essential foundation, but their support for individuals and communities does not end there, providing a vast array of support services, including emergency relief, financial counselling, mental health and employment, with specialist supports for people with disability, victim-survivors of domestic violence, young people in out-of-home care and people breaking free of addiction.

FHA is committed to partnering with the NSW Government to address the urgent need for more social housing, affordable rental housing, and the vital supports needed to sustain tenancies and break the cycle of homelessness.

Contact

Amanda Bailey

Acting CEO

0429484632

amanda@fha.org.au

Front Cover image: St Mark's Darling Point collaboration with HammondCare to provide homes for older people experiencing homelessness on an underutilised site adjoining the church.