

DRAFT SECOND READING SPEECH**HON KERRY VINCENT MP*****Tasmanian Homes and Housing Bill 2026*****check Hansard for delivery**

Honourable Speaker, I move that the Bill now be read a second time.

It gives me great pleasure to introduce the Tasmanian Homes and Housing Bill 2026 to the Tasmanian Parliament on behalf of the Minister for Housing and Planning, Mr Vincent.

This Bill is enabling legislation that transfers the housing functions currently vested in Homes Tasmania to Building Tasmania; implements the Machinery of Government change; and, importantly, provides continuity to the housing system.

The Bill preserves several important elements of the current legislation but also simplifies and streamlines the provisions to support the sound and timely delivery of housing. This is of vital importance when more housing is so badly needed.

It will establish Building Tasmania as a housing agency, service provider, delivery agent, and funding body. It will equip Building Tasmania with the powers it needs to acquire and develop assets, transact business, and facilitate the provision of housing, homelessness and crisis services.

The Bill also recognises that improving housing outcomes is not the responsibility of government alone. It recognises the important contribution of the housing and homelessness sector, community and not-for-profit organisations, the private sector, and all three levels of government, and supports them working together to improve housing outcomes.

The Bill sets out the housing functions that will transfer from Homes Tasmania to Building Tasmania. These functions reflect the agency's core roles as a provider, deliverer, facilitator and steward of the housing system, including to:

- own, manage and maintain social housing;
- assign and administer social housing tenancies;
- provide tenancy and community support services;
- establish and manage housing assistance programs;
- facilitate and fund housing and homelessness services;
- help coordinate, and as authorised, regulate the sector;
- partner with public, private and community sector entities;
- facilitate the development of land and housing for social housing and housing generally;
- manage inter-governmental, sector and industry relations;
- own, develop, manage and maintain assigned commercial and non-housing assets;

- contribute to whole of government priorities;
- undertake research, strategic and operational policy;
- meet the housing needs of specific client cohorts;
- plan the future development of land and assets;
- develop and deliver new capital housing options; and
- coordinate asset management and planning.

The title of the Tasmanian Homes and Housing Bill 2026 reflects the importance of providing homes and housing for Tasmanians, from crisis and transitional accommodation through to longer-term housing including home ownership options.

The key features of the Bill include provisions that:

- provide the legislative basis for Building Tasmania to become a housing ptransitional accommodation and homelessness services, and social and affordable housing;
- contains a new long title, with consistent but updated purposes and objectives that reflect the housing functions being transferred that support continuity;
- establishes the housing functions, powers, delegations, land management, and statutory provisions needed to vest responsibility for these functions in central government;
- streamlines the provisions that govern land management, capital investment and housing delivery, recognising the Royal prerogative, and giving the Bill currency to support the sound and timely delivery of housing;
- introduces a new form of land tenure for land owned and managed by the Crown, as housing Crown land, that will better equip the housing agency to deal with land;
- enables the continued employment of employees under the State Service Act 2000 and transitional and savings provisions dealing with assets, rights, liabilities; existing legal matters; instruments and statutory references;
- introduces a provision for the independent review of the Bill in the fourth year after its commencement;
- implements the necessary Machinery of Government changes and consequential amendments needed to facilitate this transfer process; and
- winds-up Homes Tasmania as a board-led, statutory authority and Public Non-Financial Corporation.

Collectively, these features will enable Building Tasmania to carry out its housing functions effectively and efficiently, while supporting the sound and responsible use of public resources.

The Government has deliberately adopted a two-stage approach to this reform.

Through this Bill, the first stage is focused on implementing the Machinery of Government changes and transferring the housing functions to Building Tasmania. This will enable the necessary consultation with affected employees on the new organisational arrangements and detailed transfer planning.

We want to progress this first stage promptly to provide as much certainty as possible for employees, the housing sector and those affected by the changes.

The second stage will provide the opportunity for a broader review of the housing policy and legislative framework, supported by more detailed consultation with the housing sector, industry and other key stakeholders. This Bill does not seek to pre-empt those broader policy questions.

The second stage will commence before the end of 2026 with an open Request for Input process, providing the housing sector, industry and other stakeholders with an opportunity to contribute to the broader reform, and expected to be completed by mid-2027.

This subsequent reform process will help to identify potential legislative and non-legislative reforms, and present several potential pathways for tangible action and outputs:

- additional reform or amendment of this housing legislation to further and enhance the statutory provisions it contains;
- the potential to pursue additional legislative reforms that impact other relevant or related pieces of legislation;
- short, medium and longer-term strategic actions to include in the next Tasmanian Housing Strategy Action Plan;
- future policy development suggestions that can be considered by the Minister for Housing and Planning, and Cabinet; and will,
- identify further ways in which together we can refine and enhance how the Tasmanian housing system works.

A staged approach to reform will enable the transfer of functions to proceed while preserving the opportunity for a subsequent reform that will give stakeholders and government the ability to consider how to enhance the housing system.

The transfer of functions is scheduled to occur on 1 July 2027. Given the task's scale, implementation planning will continue while Parliament considers the Bill. This proactive preparatory work will not pre-empt Parliament's deliberations.

Tasmania has a proud history of delivering homes and services for persons in need of housing assistance. This role has changed significantly over this period, and the Bill has been written to recognise this fact and maintain its currency.

The emergence of Community Housing Providers has seen us have the highest proportion of social housing nationally vested in these vital organisations, and the role of Specialist Homelessness Services and other providers has grown.

We need to be able to respond promptly to market and opportunities, including to engage in new or innovative partnerships with the private sector and those may arise through Australian Government programs or funding opportunities.

The sector continues to fulfil an essential role in delivering crisis and transitional accommodation; short, medium and long-term housing and homelessness services; maintaining established and facilitating new services and programs.

While the Bill's primary focus is on government's functions it also recognises the key role that other entities in the housing system fulfil, and responsibilities shared. The Stage 2 reforms will provide a pathway to further explore this dynamic and how to best shape its future.

The transfer of the functions to the General Government Sector means a new financial framework will apply. The Homes Tasmania Act 2022 financial provisions aren't needed, as they are covered by other public finance legislation and administrative arrangements, which include:

- the standard financial provisions that apply to other State Service departments will apply, including the annual business cycle of the State Budget, budget estimates hearings, financial audits and annual reporting;
- the housing functions will be funded by an annual operational appropriation to the housing output groups established in Building Tasmania, augmented by rent and income generated from other sources;
- the borrowing provisions in the Act will cease on commencement with capital investment funded through the State Budget's Capital Investment Program, together with Australian Government funding and other available funding sources;
- upon the commencement of this legislation, the housing debt and responsibility for debt servicing and repayment will transfer to the Crown and will be managed at a whole-of-government level; and
- the functions will operate under the same framework that applies across the General Government Sector, managed under the Financial Management Act 2016.

It is important to note that while the independent and financial reviews of Homes Tasmania do not have a direct impact on the Bill, the return of these functions to central government will help to address several of their recommendations.

Building Tasmania will remain an important player in the sector as a service provider, asset manager and funding body.

While consideration was given to amending the current legislation, a new Bill is preferred because of the extent of the amendments that would have been required. To do otherwise would have been an unnecessarily complex task.

Upon transfer, Building Tasmania will be responsible for:

- providing tenancy management services for approximately 5,000 social housing households;
- ownership of a portfolio of over 13,700 social housing dwellings; and
- implementing the pipeline of new housing and land opportunities to deliver on the government's commitment of an additional 10,000 homes by 2032.

Many of the Act's provisions that govern land management and delivery date back to the former Homes Act 1935.

The Bill's functions and powers preserve some of the current Act's provisions, but most have been replaced by whole of government provisions, like the Treasurer's Instructions and other, more contemporary, practices.

Importantly, these reforms do not alter the government's commitment to existing tenants, applicants for housing assistance, housing providers and services. The transition provisions mean existing tenancies, applications, contracts, deeds and partnerships will not need to be remade.

In conclusion, the Bill provides for responsibility for the development, delivery and management of housing and homelessness services to return to central government, and the provision of housing will be recognised as a human right.

Stable and secure housing is an essential need that supports wellbeing, builds strong communities and generates good educational, employment, health and economic outcomes.

As we all know, housing in all its forms is under significant pressure right across Australia. Demand by far exceeds supply and meeting this need is a challenge. Costs are rising and it's getting harder to enter the housing market.

These reforms, future collaboration and the commitment to implementing the Tasmanian Housing Strategy, reflect a whole-of-government and sector-wide response. They also build on the important work of the many individuals and organisations across the Tasmanian housing system.

Honourable Speaker, I commend the Bill to the House.