

Media Release

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Commission of Audit Report Released

The peak body representing Australia's development industry has welcomed the recommendation of the National Commission of Audit to set up a central register of all Commonwealth property, with surplus property to be sold off. The Urban Development Institute of Australia has previously argued that the sale of surplus Commonwealth land would both help address Australia's housing shortage, and raise revenue for Government.

"UDIA has consistently advocated for the Government to undertake thorough and regular auditing of its assets, with a view to selling off surplus land for development where suitable," said UDIA National President Cameron Shephard. "It's great to see the report confirm the positive impact this would have on Commonwealth finances."

However, UDIA has strong objections to the recommendation that the Commonwealth abdicate its responsibility for housing to State Governments.

"Nationally, Australia has an enormous housing shortage, which is projected to grow to 370,000 dwellings by 2016," said Mr. Shephard. "In the context of getting best overall value for tax payer dollars, it's unclear how simply passing on this problem to state governments will reduce overall expenditure."

"Housing supply and affordability is a national problem that requires a national solution. There is a clear role for the Commonwealth in providing funding and facilitating the sharing of knowledge, research and best practice between states."

UDIA also supports the report's recommendation to privatise Defence Housing Australia, although if it were to act on this recommendation, the Government would have to ensure that it did not enter into leasing arrangements at above market rental rates as part of the sale, in order to get best value for tax payer dollars. DHA's existing first right of refusal for surplus defence land would also have to be removed as part of the sale, to prevent anticompetitive market practices.

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