

Submission: Housing Land Supply Bill (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2026

1. About COTA Tasmania

The Council on the Ageing (Tas) Inc (COTA Tasmania) is the state peak body representing older Tasmanians. We are an independent, not-for-profit organisation working with and for older people, and with the wide range of organisations that support them.

For more than 60 years, we have been the leading voice for older Tasmanians, promoting positive attitudes to ageing, advancing social inclusion, and championing the rights, interests and value of people as they age.

We listen to the experiences of older Tasmanians, analyse emerging issues, and provide independent advice to Government, service providers and the broader community.

COTA Tasmania works across three main areas:

- policy and advocacy
- information and education, and
- community programs and partnerships.

2. Why this matters

Tasmania's demographics make the "how" and "where" of housing delivery especially important.

Tasmania has the oldest age profile in Australia, with a comparatively high share of residents in older age groups, and many communities (particularly outside Hobart) already sitting in high proportions of people aged 65+.

The Tasmanian Government's own population material notes that around 21% of Tasmanians were aged 65+ in 2023, and projections indicate that cohort will keep growing strongly over coming decades. The Government's projections dashboard predicts the percentage of people in the 65+ age group will rise from about 21.4% in 2023 to around 29.0% by 2053.

In practical terms, that means a growing number of households will need homes that support ageing well - step-free access, safe bathrooms, proximity to services, public transport, walkable streets and community connection - not simply more dwellings in any location.

At the same time, an ageing population intersects directly with housing insecurity and consultation access.

National evidence indicates rental stress among older Australians has been rising markedly over the past decade, which sharpens the urgency for social and affordable housing delivery - but also heightens the risk of poor outcomes if fast-tracking produces housing that is inaccessible, isolated from services, or hard to navigate without a car.

For COTA, this is the "join-the-dots" point for the Bill: streamlining processes to accelerate supply is welcome.

However, Tasmania’s age structure means the Orders and any bespoke planning provisions should actively embed age-friendly design and location principles.

Consultation/notice arrangements must also be genuinely accessible to people who are not online or who need additional support to participate.

3. Overall position

This submission focuses on the proposed changes to the process for making Housing Land Supply Orders under the Act.

COTA Tasmania supports the objective of reducing avoidable delays in rezoning eligible government land to increase housing supply, particularly social and affordable housing.

We also support faster delivery when it produces the right housing in the right places.

In order to ensure this outcome, COTA Tasmania seeks guardrails to ensure that “speed” does not reduce genuine opportunities for community input, exclude people who are not digitally connected, or lead to housing outcomes that are not appropriate for older people.

4. Key expectations

COTA Tasmania’s key expectations of the proposed amendments are that the streamlined process:

- **Preserves accountability and public confidence**
Streamlining should not reduce the practical ability of Parliament or the community to scrutinise and influence Housing Land Supply Orders before irreversible commitments are made. At the time an Order is made, the rationale, how submissions were addressed, and the implications of disallowance should be clearly and publicly explained.
- **Ensures inclusive participation and avoids “web-only” consultation**
Publication and notification arrangements must remain genuinely accessible to older Tasmanians and others who are not digitally connected. Notices and key documents should be available in accessible formats (not web-only), supported by hard-copy access points and a practical telephone option for assistance and submissions.
- **Delivers age-friendly housing in the right places**
Where Orders are intended to accelerate social and affordable housing, the framework should embed clear expectations that outcomes are age-friendly - incorporating accessible/visitable design, walkable neighbourhoods, proximity to services, public transport access, and climate resilience.
- **Provides clarity about material changes after exhibition**
If a proposal changes materially after public exhibition, the community should not be left feeling it was consulted on one proposal and delivered another. Clear guidance is needed on what constitutes a “significant change”, with examples, and re-exhibition should occur where changes alter character or effect.

5. Why this matters

5.1 Streamlining should preserve accountability and confidence

The consultation pack explains that the current process is vulnerable to Parliamentary sitting timetables (including periods when Parliament does not sit), creating delays for orders and therefore delaying social and affordable housing delivery.

COTA Tasmania understands the rationale for allowing an Order to be made after consultation, with parliamentary disallowance occurring afterwards, and notes the proposal that Parliament would then have fifteen sittings to disallow an Order.

However, streamlining should not reduce the practical ability of Parliament or the community to influence outcomes before irreversible commitments are made.

Recommendation 1 (accountability)

If the revised disallowance timing is adopted, require publication of a clear, plain-English statement at the time the Order in accessible formats describing:

- why the Order was made,
- how submissions were considered and responded to, and
- what would happen if disallowance occurs (including how implementation would be reversed).

5.2 Digital-first transparency needs “offline” access safeguards

The draft Bill includes expanded website publication requirements, including making submissions and ministerial responses publicly available on a Departmental website for at least 6 months in specified circumstances and after Orders are made.

While transparency is welcome, older Tasmanians are over-represented among those who have limited internet access or low digital confidence. A process that is effectively “online only” risks excluding those most affected by housing insecurity and cost pressures.

Recommendation 2 (inclusive participation)

Adopt minimum participation standards for every proposed Order process, including:

- notices and key documents must be available in accessible formats (ie not web-only),
- ensuring hard-copy availability of key documents at Service Tasmania locations, council offices and libraries (or by post on request) for the full exhibition period,
- a phone contact option for assistance to access documents and lodge submissions, and
- a plain-English summary accompanying technical documentation.

5.3 “Bespoke planning provisions” should be used to embed age-friendly outcomes

The consultation pack explains Orders may include unique/bespoke planning provisions inserted into a planning scheme via specific area plans or site-specific qualifications, and the Bill enables these drafting mechanisms to be included more directly.

This creates a significant opportunity to design housing areas that work well for older people - but only if the government explicitly expects age-friendly outcomes.

Recommendation 3 (age-friendly housing):

For Housing Land Supply Orders intended to support social and affordable housing delivery, the State Planning Office should set clear expectations through guidelines or required decision criteria for accessible/visitable dwellings and age-friendly outcomes in developments enabled by an Order, including:

- universal/accessible design (eg visitable dwellings, step-free access, safe bathrooms),
- walkability and safe public realm (footpaths, lighting, seating),
- proximity to services (health care, shops, community facilities),
- access to public transport, and
- climate resilience (heat/cold mitigation).

5.4 “No surprises” if an Order materially changes after exhibition

The draft Bill provides that the Minister must not make an Order if alterations would significantly change the character or effect of the exhibited proposal unless the altered Order has also been publicly exhibited.

Recommendation 4 (“significant change” guidance):

Publish guidance and examples clarifying what changes are “significant” (for example, changes affecting density, access, traffic impacts, community facilities, or the planning controls to be applied), to increase confidence that communities are not consulted on one proposal and delivered another.

6. Conclusion

COTA Tasmania supports reforms that can reduce avoidable process delays and enable government land to be used for social and affordable housing sooner.

To maintain trust and improve outcomes for older Tasmanians, COTA Tasmania urges the State Planning Office to strengthen safeguards for accountability, ensure genuine access for people who are not digitally connected, and embed age-friendly expectations into Order-making and any bespoke planning provisions.