

11 November 2024

Our ref: [MC-LP]

The Hon Samuel O'Connor MP  
Minister for Housing and Public Works and  
Minister for Youth  
1 William Street  
Brisbane QLD 4000

[REDACTED]

Dear Minister

**Welcome to portfolio and legal profession issues**

The Queensland Law Society (QLS) congratulates you on your appointment as Minister for Housing and Public Works and Minister for Youth.

We take this opportunity to offer the assistance of the legal profession and in particular, QLS legal policy committees, where your responsibilities involve legislative and policy reform. The QLS legal policy committees examine policy and legislative proposals and also consider practical issues affecting the profession.

Members of our Property and Development Law Committee, Planning and Environment Law Committee, Elder Law Committee, Construction and Infrastructure Committee, and Children's Law Committee have substantial expertise in their respective areas, which might be helpful to progressing the policy objectives of the government.

In anticipation of your portfolio's program of reform, we provide a snapshot of current priority areas for your consideration.

**Housing Queenslanders**

QLS recognises the significant challenges for the Queensland community in accessing housing and the state government's role in developing the policy response to improve housing affordability and availability. QLS supports the continued analysis of options to respond to the housing crisis and related cost-of-living pressures, with a sound evidence base for legislative reform.

In the QLS 2024 Queensland State Election - Call to Parties 2024, QLS called for a commitment to establishing a legal stakeholder reference group of practitioners with expertise in tax law, property law, planning and environment law, elder law (including retirement villages and aged care), Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and experts from the legal assistance sector. Seeking input from a wide range of perspectives will identify the legal

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consequences of housing reform initiatives and deliver the greatest possible benefit of new proposals.

QLS recognises the significant challenges for older Queenslanders in accessing and maintaining housing. In particular, older, single women are among the fastest growing cohorts of homeless people. It is therefore important that any approach to housing addresses not only the immediate needs of older people facing homelessness, but also its myriad causes, including economic instability, domestic and family violence, and elder abuse.

QLS supports the development of appropriate policy responses to these issues, such as modernising the *Retirement Villages Act 1999* and developing an overarching strategy to regulate retirement villages and residential (manufactured home) parks, including addressing the disconnect between state and Commonwealth legislation with respect to retirement villages, aged care and the frameworks for ageing in place. QLS would also like to highlight the urgent need to develop options to improve dispute resolution in retirement villages and residential parks.

Our members recognise insecure housing to be a complex legal issue, requiring improved funding for community organisations to respond to the current housing crisis. QLS highlights the need for increased and sustained funding to the legal assistance sector and community organisations who support vulnerable community members with residential tenancy disputes.

### Building and construction industry

QLS welcomes the proposed regulatory review into the building industry. It is essential to monitor the effectiveness of the laws regulating building and construction in Queensland to ensure the laws are achieving their desired objectives. In particular, in light of recent building company insolvencies, it is important to ensure that the trust account framework under the *Building Industry Fairness (Security of Payment) Act 2017* is effectively protecting subcontractors and suppliers. QLS appreciates being consulted on this issue and other issues related to the building and construction industry, and would welcome the opportunity to continue to provide feedback based on our members' legal expertise and practical experience in the industry.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you at your convenience to discuss these complex issues further. Please do not hesitate to contact our Director of Advocacy and Legal Policy, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] to arrange a convenient time.

