

Media Release



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Time for an Honest Debate About House Sizes and the Environment

The Urban Development Institute of Australia NSW (UDIA NSW) has today responded to calls from the NSW Greens MP, John Kayle for the Government to impose limits on how large new homes should be. UDIA NSW Chief Executive Stephen Albin said that, “before we entertain a social engineering experiment, the facts about house sizes and energy consumption need to be considered.”

“The fact is, new homes in NSW are significantly more energy efficient than those built before the BASIX scheme was introduced. The vast majority of new homes in NSW have water tanks, are oriented to maximise passive solar access and provide cross ventilation, they are increasingly fitted with low energy emitting light fittings, and have water-saving taps. If the Greens want to discuss the carbon impact of housing, let the debate be grounded in fact.”

“To argue that developers should build smaller houses to lower the carbon footprint of housing conveniently ignores that fact that new homes are on average 40% more water and energy efficient than homes built before BASIX was introduced. New homes use on average 112 litres less water per person per day than homes built before BASIX and produce 1.2 tonnes less CO₂ per person per year¹.”

Stephen Albin said that, “developers and home builders produce houses that families want to live in – it’s a simple supply and demand equation and no different to any other business transaction. Statistics show that because of the cost of housing, more people are choosing to stay at home for longer and household sizes are increasing – this means bigger houses.”

“We do not want to have a situation where the Government is regulating house shapes and sizes. We live in a society where people want to make their own decisions about the kind of house they want to live in.”

“The NSW Government has been effective in mandating sustainability measures in new homes and the results have been encouraging – but they have not been without costs. BASIX has added thousands of dollars to the cost of a new home at a time when housing has been more expensive than ever before.”

“If the Greens are serious about the carbon impact of housing, they should focus on existing housing – where energy and water efficiency savings have more ground to gain.”

For Media Enquiries, please contact:

Lisa Marshall
UDIA NSW Communications Manager
0417 493 899
02 9262 1214

¹ Premier of New South Wales, 2008, *New Homeowners Save Five Billion Litres of Water*, NSW Government.