

There are some dangerous misconceptions among a few in the tiny homes community that approvals are not required and that we should be able to live however and wherever we choose. None of these are valid if we want to live in a civil society.

Fortunately, the majority accept that we have a collective responsibility to each other as well as our natural environment and so aim to comply. Unfortunately, we often find that the regulatory framework does not offer a simple pathway for achieving compliance through planning and/or building approvals. This is in part due to a problem of definition; are mobile tiny homes buildings or vehicles, permanently or temporarily habitable? There is also an out dated principle, embedded in law, of a dwelling as fixed infrastructure of a minimum size constructed as an “improvement” on a parcel of land. These perception issues knock on to problems obtaining finance and insurance.

HERE'S HOW YOU CAN HELP TO FIX THIS

Until mobile tiny homes are recognised in legislation and regulated the problems of compliance, approval, finance and insurance will persist. No matter how sympathetic, local government officers cannot issue approvals unless there is an established legal framework for doing so.

Legislative reform in Australia has to pass through three levels of government and so it can take a very long time. The low hanging fruit may seem to exist in local government by-laws which are usually the quickest (a relative term) to change. Indeed some local government jurisdictions are quite pro-active in their approach to tiny homes, but tiny's are not even on the radar for many and actively resisted by some.

Perhaps negative positions have been entrenched by bad experiences with a minority from the “free-thinking” set who have attempted to fly under the radar? Perhaps it is all just too hard and therefore easier to say no and keep heads in the sand?

The reality is that local laws are an inconsistent mixed bag. Adjacent shires can have radically different requirements. A top down approach is the best way forward. We need a federal agenda to provide consistency in scope, structure and outcomes. The states can then integrate this into their planning laws, which then trickle down to local government, who are on the front line managing applications for approval.

Legislative reform is an ongoing process in Australia. Government mantras consistently reference housing affordability, accessibility and supply which are in turn linked to issues around poverty and homelessness. Seemingly endless processes of enquiry and review churn on and on. Part of this process involves stakeholder engagement. Rest assured that well-funded lobby groups representing industry stakeholders such as traditional housing, pre-fabricated home builders, caravan and recreational vehicle supply chains have the ear of government and will actively lobby to defend their member's interests. Some of these groups may even feel threatened by the tiny house movement and so seek to paint it as an undesirable fringe aberration that needs to be stamped out.

The Australian tiny homes community must have a seat at the table and a consistent voice that is widely heard if anything is to change. Of the thousands currently signed up to Facebook groups under the tiny homes topic it seems to me that most would prefer to live in a civil society where their choices are supported by law, not threatened by it.

If that is you, please consider supporting the Australian Tiny House Association to produce reliable information for lobbying local, state and federal politicians.

Politicians respond better when they hear unified and numerous voices calling for action. You need to start letting them know that you want to be responsible, do the right thing, improve housing choices, to contribute to your community, but to do so you need urgent help to establish a tiny homes legal framework for the benefit of everyone.