

Submission to the Legislative Scrutiny Committee

Northern Territory Government: Inquiry into the *Lands and Planning Legislation Amendment (Red Tape Reduction) Bill 2026*

Submitted by: National Association of Women in Construction

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1. Purpose and NAWIC's standing

The National Association of Women in Construction (NAWIC) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Legislative Scrutiny Committee's inquiry into the *Lands and Planning Legislation Amendment (Red Tape Reduction) Bill 2026* (the Bill).

NAWIC is a national not-for-profit association with Chapters in every Australian state and territory, including the Northern Territory (NT). NAWIC advocates for women's participation, retention and progression across all areas of the construction industry. Through its national network and Northern Territory Chapter, NAWIC works with industry, government and other stakeholders to build a construction sector that is safe, skilled, inclusive and capable of delivering the housing, infrastructure and community assets required by the Northern Territory.

NAWIC's interest in the Bill is targeted and practical. The Bill affects key elements of the environment in which construction work is planned, approved, certified, monitored and delivered. These settings influence the confidence of investors and businesses, the dependability of the construction pipeline, professional standards, building safety and the sector's capacity to recruit and retain skilled workers.

NAWIC supports the Bill's stated objectives of increasing administrative efficiency, modernising regulatory functions, adopting a risk-based approach, reducing approval timeframes and providing greater certainty in decision making.

Our submission is confined to the provisions most relevant to NAWIC's remit:

- building practitioner compliance and accountability;
- building permits, occupancy certification and reporting authority processes;
- planning hearings, meetings and decision timeframes; and
- governance and delegation arrangements for the Northern Territory Planning Commission and Development Consent Authority.

NAWIC does not comment on the Bill's place naming or valuation provisions, nor does it seek to provide specialist planning law or building certification advice.

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NAWIC submits that red-tape reduction should remove unnecessary delay, duplication and ambiguity. It should not weaken building safety, practitioner accountability, transparent decision making or meaningful consideration of material stakeholder evidence.

2. Construction, workforce and Bill relevance

Construction is a significant direct employer in the Northern Territory and an essential enabler of housing, infrastructure, commercial development and community facilities.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics' latest Labour Account estimates show that, in the June quarter 2026, the Northern Territory construction industry had 13,600 main jobs, 600 secondary jobs and 500 job vacancies. This indicates both the material scale of the sector and continuing demand for construction labour.

Construction activity also remains substantial. Australian Bureau of Statistics data show that construction work done in the Northern Territory was \$791.2 million in the June quarter 2026, an increase of 2.7% over the preceding quarter.

Women accounted for 14% of the Northern Territory's direct construction workforce in the most recent published industry level gender data, compared with 37% of workers across all industries in the Territory. This highlights both the scale of women's under representation in construction and the workforce opportunity available to the sector.

The Bill is not, and should not be presented as, a women's workforce participation measure. However, it is relevant to NAWIC's remit because it affects regulatory arrangements that help determine whether construction is seen as a well governed, professionally accountable, safe and predictable sector in which people can build long term careers.

For women considering, entering or progressing in construction, the quality of the sector's regulatory environment matters. Strong building standards, clear responsibilities, fair compliance processes, credible professional accountability and transparent planning decisions contribute to confidence in the industry. Efficient, reliable approval processes can also assist employers to plan work, workforce needs, training and career opportunities more effectively.

NAWIC's submission therefore supports practical efficiency reforms while seeking assurance that essential safeguards for safety, accountability, transparency and decision quality are retained.

3. Clauses 8 and 14: Practitioner compliance and accountability

Clause 8 inserts a new Division 1A into Part 3 of the *Building Act 1993*. It gives the Director general powers to investigate matters relating to compliance with the Act and Regulations

in the carrying out of building work, including the conduct of building practitioners. The provisions require the person under investigation to be told the purpose of the investigation and given at least five working days to respond. They also require the Director to give written reasons for a final decision.

Clause 14 provides that where a corporation is found guilty of specified professional misconduct, its directors and persons concerned in its management are taken to have committed professional misconduct unless they establish that they had no knowledge of the misconduct and could not have prevented it through due diligence.

NAWIC supports these amendments in principle.

The construction sector's ability to attract and retain talent depends on confidence that professional conduct, building standards and workplace practices are taken seriously. Women's participation is affected by many factors, including access to work, career development, workplace culture and flexibility. A credible regulatory system is not a complete answer to those issues, but it is an important foundation for a sector that is safe, respected and professionally accountable.

The Bill appropriately combines stronger compliance capability with basic procedural safeguards, including notice, an opportunity to respond, written reasons and a due diligence defence for directors and managers.

Recommendation 1: The Committee should support clauses 8 and 14, subject to clear implementation guidance for building practitioners and businesses on the Director's investigation powers, document requirements, procedural steps and the operation of the due-diligence defence.

4. Clauses 16–18 and 29–49: Permits, certification and safety

Clauses 16 to 18 amend building-permit, permit-amendment and inspection requirements. Among other matters, they clarify that relevant reports, approvals or consents must be obtained and considered before permits or relevant amendments are determined.

Clause 29 and related regulations in clauses 34 to 49 clarify reporting authority obligations, including the role of the Northern Territory Fire and Rescue Service in relevant building permit and occupancy certification processes. The Bill also introduces notification and information sharing requirements where a certifier grants a permit or certification in circumstances involving a reporting authority.

NAWIC supports these provisions.

Clear, consistent and well-understood permit and certification processes reduce avoidable rework and uncertainty. At the same time, the Bill retains core safeguards relating to building quality, fire safety and responsible decision making.

This balance is important to construction workforce confidence. A sector that maintains high standards while improving practical process efficiency is better placed to create stable work, invest in skills and offer credible long term careers to a broader range of people.

Recommendation 2: The Committee should support clauses 16 to 18 and 29 to 49, while encouraging the Government to provide practical and accessible implementation guidance for practitioners, certifiers, reporting authorities and smaller construction businesses.

5. Clauses 61, 62 and 69: Planning processes and decision quality

Clause 61 changes the process for hearings after the Northern Territory Planning Commission receives submissions in relation to planning scheme amendments or exceptional development permits. A hearing must be held where the Chairperson considers it would assist the Commission's understanding of issues in submissions or provide further useful evidence or information.

Clause 62 reduces the Minister's timeframe for deciding a planning scheme amendment from 90 days to 30 days.

Clause 69 similarly changes the requirement for meetings in relation to development applications where submissions have been received. A meeting must be held where the relevant decision maker considers it would aid understanding of issues raised in submissions or provide further useful evidence or information.

NAWIC supports the objective of proportionate, timely planning processes. A dependable pipeline of approved and deliverable projects supports construction businesses to plan workforce needs, recruit staff, invest in training and make informed decisions about capacity.

For women in construction, predictable pipelines matter because access to sustained work, development opportunities and visible career pathways is necessary for retention and progression. In a sector where women remain substantially under represented, greater certainty around project delivery can assist employers to make longer term workforce investments rather than relying on short-term responses to fluctuating demand.

However, efficiency should not mean reduced decision quality. Submissions can provide material technical, industry, workforce, local and community evidence. Transparent consideration of such evidence supports confidence in planning decisions and may identify project-delivery risks early.

Recommendation 3: The Committee should satisfy itself that clauses 61 and 69 preserve meaningful consideration of material stakeholder evidence and are supported by clear, consistently applied and transparent criteria for deciding whether to hold a hearing or meeting.

NAWIC also supports more timely decisions on planning scheme amendments, provided that the shorter timeframe does not compromise assessment quality, proper consideration of submissions or consistency with the strategic framework.

Recommendation 4: The Committee should seek assurance that sufficient capability and processes will support implementation of clause 62, so that the 30-day timeframe does not compromise robust assessment, transparency or consideration of relevant submissions.

6. Clauses 74–78: Governance and delegation

Clause 74 allows the Northern Territory Planning Commission to delegate any of its powers and functions to the Chairperson or another member. Clauses 75, 76 and 78 extend standard appointment terms for members of the Northern Territory Planning Commission and Development Consent Authority from two years to four years.

NAWIC recognises that delegation and longer appointment terms can support continuity, institutional knowledge and more timely decision-making. These outcomes can be valuable in a smaller jurisdiction where specialist capability is limited and decision certainty is important to industry.

Effective governance also supports trust in the institutions that influence construction and development. This matters to all industry participants, including women seeking to establish and advance careers in a sector where transparent leadership, accountability and confidence in decision-making are essential.

At the same time, planning decisions can materially affect communities, housing supply, infrastructure and construction activity. Broad delegation powers should therefore be exercised within clear and accountable governance arrangements.

Recommendation 5: The Committee should satisfy itself that clause 74 is supported by clear written delegations, appropriate recording of delegated decisions and transparent accountability arrangements within the Northern Territory Planning Commission.

NAWIC supports clauses 75, 76 and 78, which may improve continuity and institutional capability.

7. Conclusion

NAWIC supports the Bill's overall purpose of reducing unnecessary delay, duplication and uncertainty in the Territory's building and planning systems.

NAWIC supports the Bill's building compliance, practitioner accountability, permit and certification provisions. We also support more efficient planning processes and governance arrangements, provided these reforms retain appropriate safeguards for building safety, professional standards, transparent decision making and meaningful consideration of material stakeholder evidence.

The Bill is relevant to NAWIC because an efficient, safe and well governed construction sector is better able to deliver a sustained project pipeline, build workforce capacity and provide credible long-term career opportunities. With women comprising 14% of the Territory's direct construction workforce, this objective has both workforce and economic significance.

NAWIC thanks the Committee for the opportunity to make this submission.

Sources

Australian Bureau of Statistics, Labour Account Modelled State and Territory Estimates by Industry, June Quarter 2026, released 4 September 2026.

Australian Bureau of Statistics, Construction Work Done, Australia, Preliminary, June 2026, released 26 August 2026.

Jobs and Skills Australia, Industry Profile — Northern Territory, released 27 March 2025. Employment and gender data are based on ABS Labour Force Survey estimates for the four quarters to February 2025.