

## ABS Feature article on the size of land blocks

The Australian Bureau of Statistics has recently released a feature article entitled "Are we building on smaller blocks?"

The overall answer is an unsurprising yes, within which in the last couple of years the average site area has increased modestly from a trough reached at the beginning of the decade.

In 1993-94 the average site area of new houses in Australian capital cities was 802sqm. This compares to 735sqm in 2003-04 and a low of 702sqm in 1999-00. Hence over the last four years the average site area has ticked up moderately, but looks to have stabilised at around the 735sqm mark, still some 67sqm smaller than 11 years previously.

The decline in average site area has been quite noticeable for most growth Statistical Local Areas (SLA's). For example, in Melton - East, Melbourne, the average block size of a new house has fallen from 716sqm in 1994-95 to 571sqm in 2003-04; the average block size of a new house in Bankstown, Sydney, has fallen from 667sqm in 1998-99 to 614sqm in 2003-04.

A minority of SLA's have bucked the trend. Tea Tree Gully - North in Adelaide has seen an increase in average block size from 596sqm in 1993-94 to 735sqm in 2003-04. Swan, in Perth, had an increase from 710sqm in 1994-95 to 814sqm in 2003-04.

In aggregate terms the only capital city where average block size has increased is Brisbane. The site area of new houses in the Brisbane Statistical Division increased from 923sqm in 1993-94 to 964sqm in 2003-04, substantially above the national average for Australian capital cities.

AVERAGE SITE AREA OF NEW HOUSES, Selected Growth SLA's (a)

SLA(b)	1993-94	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04
	m2	m2	m2	m2	m2	m2	m2	m2	m2	m2	m2
<b>New South Wales</b>											
Bankstown (C)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	667	665	666	590	608	614
Liverpool (C)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	573	565	540	514	564	549
Gosford (C)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	763	719	720	728	717	743	718
<b>Victoria</b>											
Melton (S) - East	n.a.	716	748	718	776	656	627	570	608	618	571
Hume (C) - Craigieburn	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	843	712	692	654	621	610	602	549
Whittlesea (C) - South	n.a.	623	618	588	592	582	538	525	540	346	565
Manningham (C) - West	n.a.	n.a.	1,155	977	919	663	828	778	739	773	705
Casey (C) - Berwick	n.a.	n.a.	722	717	739	749	741	697	684	664	721
Casey (C) - Cranbourne	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	643	588	532	607	578	613	588	648
<b>South Australia</b>											
Tea Tree Gully (C) - North	596	634	626	658	656	646	604	542	545	630	735
<b>Western Australia</b>											
Swan (C)	n.a.	710	720	722	709	662	627	727	718	728	814
Wanneroo (C) - North-West	666	654	639	654	677	660	613	645	613	599	588
Cockburn (C)	725	695	640	719	639	612	606	597	622	593	604
Melville (C)	880	826	791	780	659	591	642	594	602	557	575
Rockingham (C)	694	681	698	845	696	705	712	746	697	685	682
<b>Northern Territory</b>											
Palmerston (C) Bal	n.a.	732	990	736	707	687	697	665	599	698	764

(a) Growth areas were selected based on the number of new house approvals and the level of site area reporting.

(b) Some SLA's have changed name and area over the period of analysis. The SLA names shown are current for 2003/04.