

Opinion

Don't listen to the scaremongering. Developer licensing will improve housing

By Rebecca Vassarotti

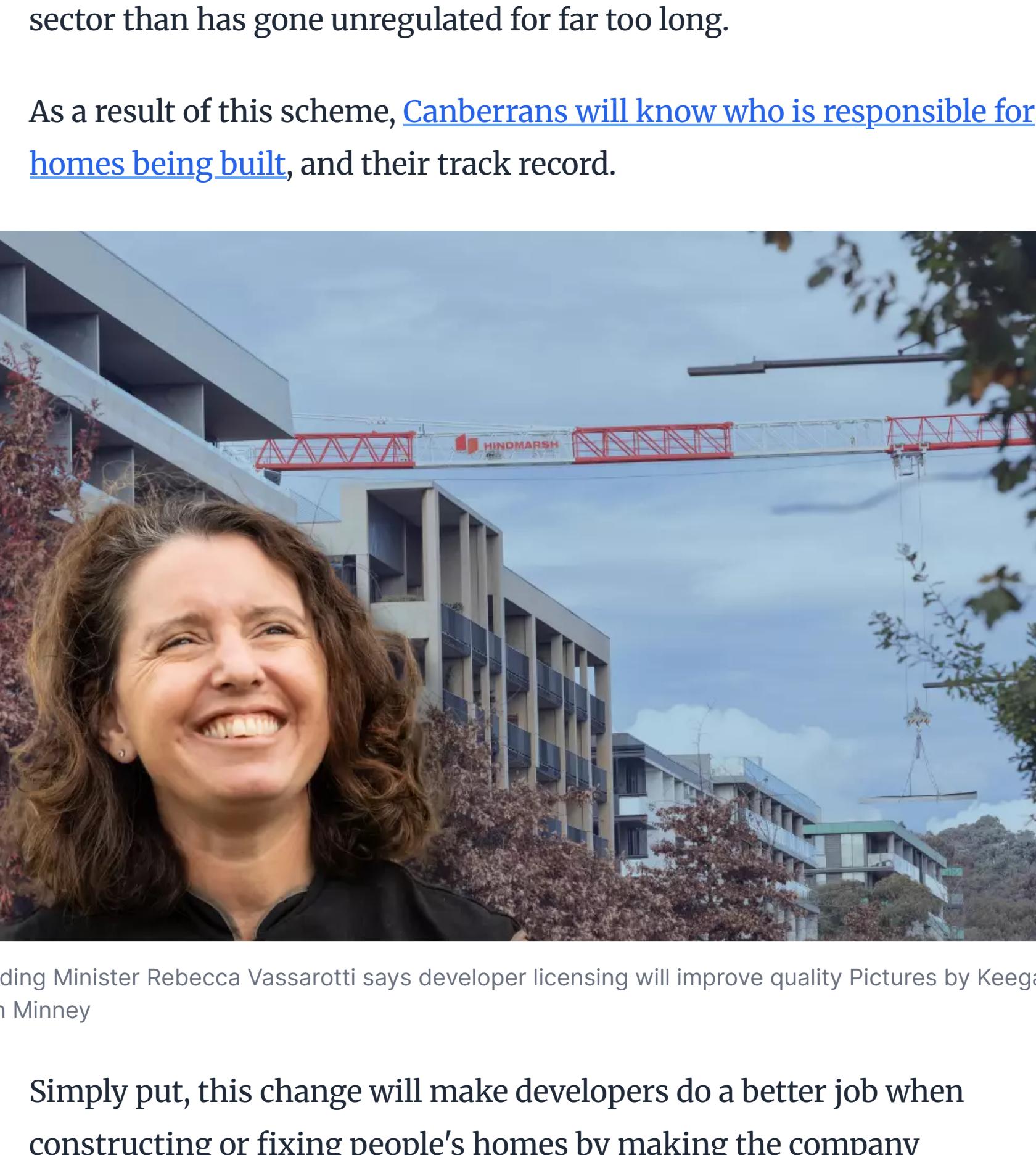
December 21 2023 - 5:30am

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As you catch up with friends and family over the holiday period, chances are someone in your circle will have a horror story to share about their new home.

Shoddy work, obvious defects and dangerous construction all have a massive impact on the ability of renters and home owners alike to live in their home.



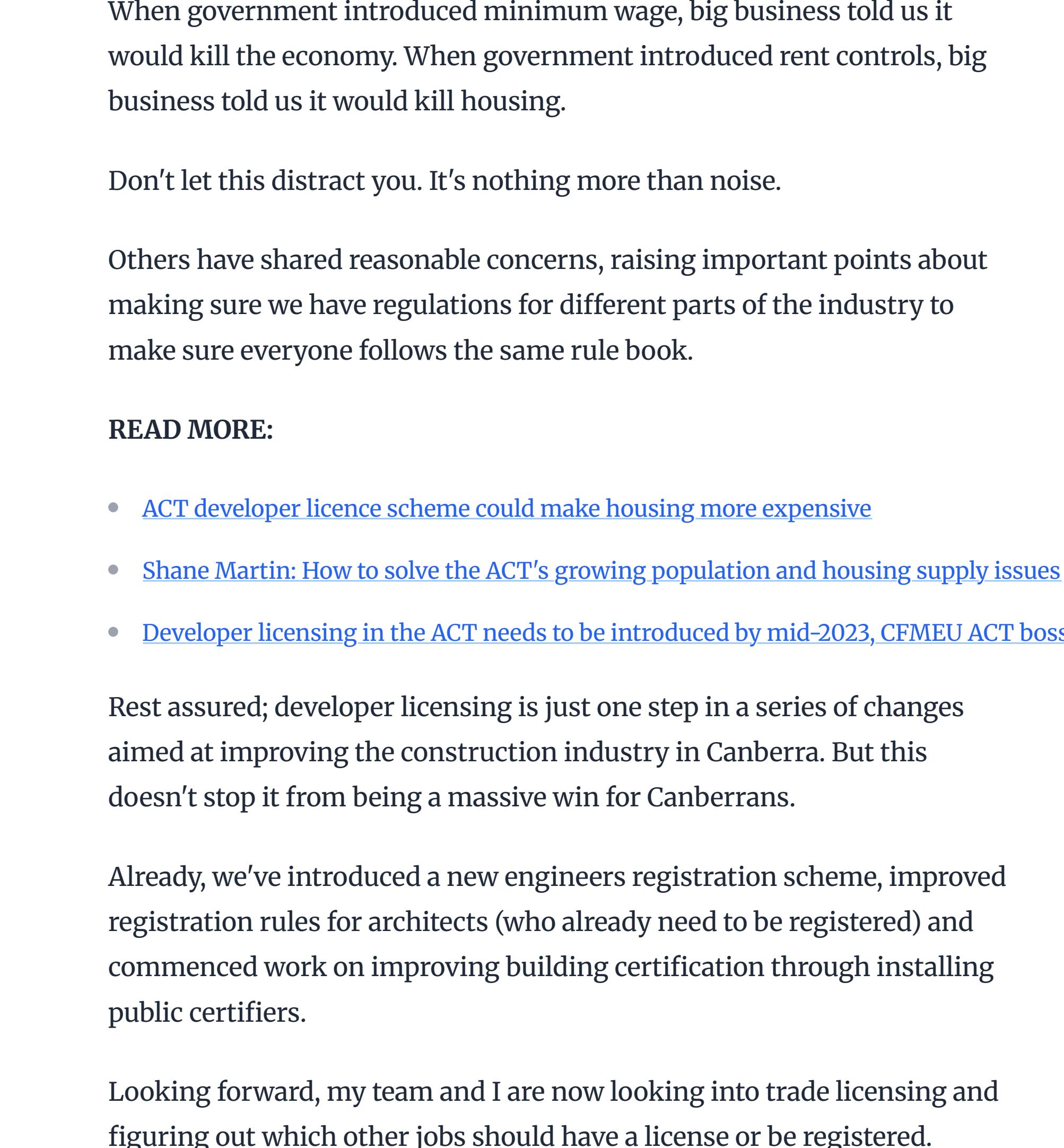
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But the stress really hits when Canberrans have to negotiate getting these things fixed.

That's why last month I introduced legislation to create the first developer licensing scheme in the country.

This scheme will deliver better transparency and accountability for a sector than has gone unregulated for far too long.

As a result of this scheme, Canberrans will know who is responsible for homes being built, and their track record.



Building Minister Rebecca Vassarotti says developer licensing will improve quality Pictures by Keegan Carroll, Karleen Minney

Simply put, this change will make developers do a better job when constructing or fixing people's homes by making the company accountable for shoddy builds.

That means that if developers don't do the right thing, they will have their license taken away from them.

Developer licensing is good for people, it's good for workers, and it's good for the community.

The industry response

Since announcing this change, attempts at distraction have been rife. Polls have shown that up to 90 per cent of Canberrans support developer licensing. Nonetheless, industry has been hard at work trying to muddy the waters and distract from this positive change.

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The head of the Property Council was on ABC Radio recently, claiming this move will stop all housing investment as we know it. This ridiculous kind of scaremongering is nothing new. It's a classic example of big business trying to mislead working people.

When government introduced minimum wage, big business told us it would kill the economy. When government introduced rent controls, big business told us it would kill housing.

Don't let this distract you. It's nothing more than noise.

Others have shared reasonable concerns, raising important points about making sure we have regulations for different parts of the industry to make sure everyone follows the same rule book.

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- Developer licensing in the ACT needs to be introduced by mid-2023, CFMEU ACT boss says

Rest assured, developer licensing is just one step in a series of changes aimed at improving the construction industry in Canberra. But this doesn't stop it from being a massive win for Canberrans.

Already, we've introduced a new engineers registration scheme, improved registration rules for architects (who already need to be registered) and commenced work on improving building certification through installing public certifiers.

Looking forward, my team and I are now looking into trade licensing and figuring out which other jobs should have a license or be registered.

Combined with our new developer licensing scheme, I'm confident these reforms will begin to close the loop on building accountability. In a sentence: I hear you, I'm with you, I'm working on it.

Rebecca Vassarotti is the ACT Minister for Sustainable Building and Construction.

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