



QUEENSTOWN  
LAKES DISTRICT  
COUNCIL

# Quarterly Monitoring Report

National Policy Statement on Urban  
Development Capacity

December 2019

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### *Data Sources and Ongoing Monitoring*

This quarterly report draws on data contained on the Ministry for Business, Innovation and Employment’s [Urban Development Capacity Dashboard](#). It also includes data collected by QLDC and sourced from CoreLogic and Colliers. Some indicators are updated quarterly, while others are updated annually or less frequently. Indicators updated annually are included in the more comprehensive June Quarter report only. The September, December and March Quarter reports are more condensed. Over time, QLDC may add, remove or replace indicators included in these regular reports to better align them with local data and local issues.

Any queries on this report should be directed to the Planning Policy Team.

## Executive Summary

This is the seventh Quarterly Monitoring Report prepared under the National Policy Statement on Urban Development Capacity (NPS-UDC)<sup>1</sup>. As a high growth area, Queenstown Lakes District Council (QLDC) must develop a robust, comprehensive and frequently updated evidence base to inform planning decisions in urban environments (Objective B1). Specifically, QLDC must monitor on a quarterly basis:

- a) Prices and rents for housing, residential land and business land by location and type; and changes in these prices and rents over time;
- b) The number of resource consents and building consents granted for urban development relative to the growth in population; and
- c) Indicators of housing affordability (Policy B6).

In order to understand how well the market is functioning and how planning may affect this, and when additional development capacity might be needed, QLDC must also use information provided by indicators of price efficiency in their land and development market, such as price differential between zones. This relates to Policy B7 of the NPS-UDC and these indicators are available from the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment. As they are updated infrequently, QLDC has provided a review of these in its three yearly Housing and Business Development Capacity Assessment reports. Further detail on Council's monitoring and evidence base requirements can be found on the <https://huddashboards.shinyapps.io/urban-development/#>

The June 2019 Quarterly Monitoring Report provides the latest detailed overview of key trends and indicators in QLD. Key changes that have occurred between September 2019 and December 2019 are summarised below:

- Median house prices for the District rose by another 3% (\$12,187) to reach \$991,125.
- The number of dwellings sold has reduced by 11 dwelling since YE September 2019 to 261.
- The number of dwellings in the District increased by 446 (up 2.08%) to reach 21,921.
- Dwelling sales as a share of the count of total dwellings continued to decrease.
- Average weekly rents increased by another \$6/week (up 2%) to \$565. Rents are highest in Queenstown.
- The transition from renting to home ownership has decreased by 0.61 of a percentage point.
- First home buyer affordability is the same with an estimated 84% of first buyer households having a below average residential income after paying housing costs.
- There has been a decrease in rental affordability according to the HAM – Rent indicator.
- 265 dwelling consents and 72 commercial building consents were issued (December quarter).

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<sup>1</sup> The first Quarterly Monitoring Report was June 2017.

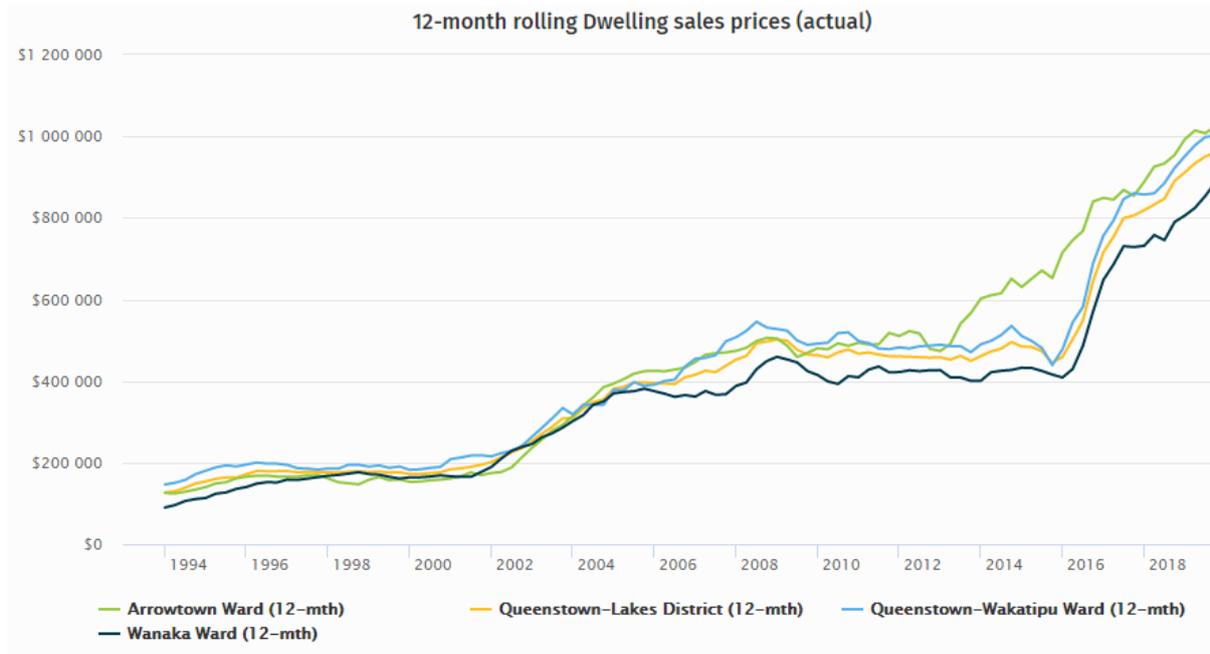
- Consent growth has been decreasing since a high point in 2018 and currently is not keeping pace with actual demand (consents), however that could be the built in lags and will need to be further monitored.

The next quarterly report (March 2020) will provide an update of these local indicators.

## Sales Prices, Housing Stock, Rents and Affordability

### 2.1 Sales Prices

**About this indicator:** This indicator shows the median prices of residential dwellings sold in each quarter. This median price series is not adjusted for size and quality of dwellings. Prices are presented in nominal terms; they have not been adjusted for general price inflation.



#### Latest Results:

- In the year ending December 2019, the median house price for QLD was \$991,125.
- This is an increase of 3% (\$12,187) above the previous quarter (September 2019) and a 3% (\$7,019) decrease compared to the same time a year ago.
- Median dwelling prices are highest in the Arrowtown Ward (\$1,042,500 December 2019), followed by the Queenstown Ward (\$1,027,500) and lowest in the Wanaka Ward (\$936,000).
- Over the last 12 months, prices have increased strongly in Arrowtown (4%, \$43,625), and reduced in both Wanaka and Queenstown (-3%, \$23,750) and (-0.4%, \$4,000) respectively.

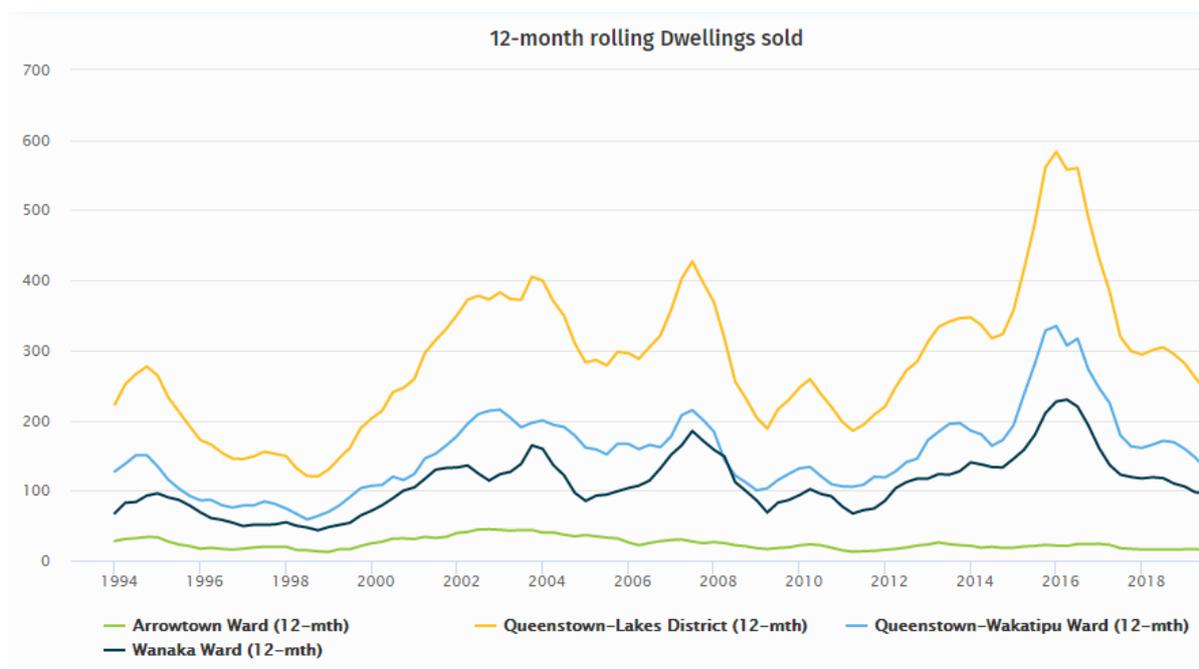
#### Commentary:

House prices in QLD are impacted by strong household growth, demand from international and domestic buyers (i.e. holiday homes) and increasing visitor numbers. Within QLD, median sales prices in the Wakatipu Ward have consistently been higher than the median in the Wanaka Ward, certainly since 2005. Median prices in the Arrowtown Ward are again the highest in the District. Over the past four quarters, median prices have increased at a similar

smooth rate in Wakatipu and Wanaka (with Wanaka slightly faster), while prices have shown both positive and negative movement in Arrowtown during the same period.

## 2.2 Dwellings Sold

**About this indicator:** This is the quantity of all dwellings sold.



### Latest Results:

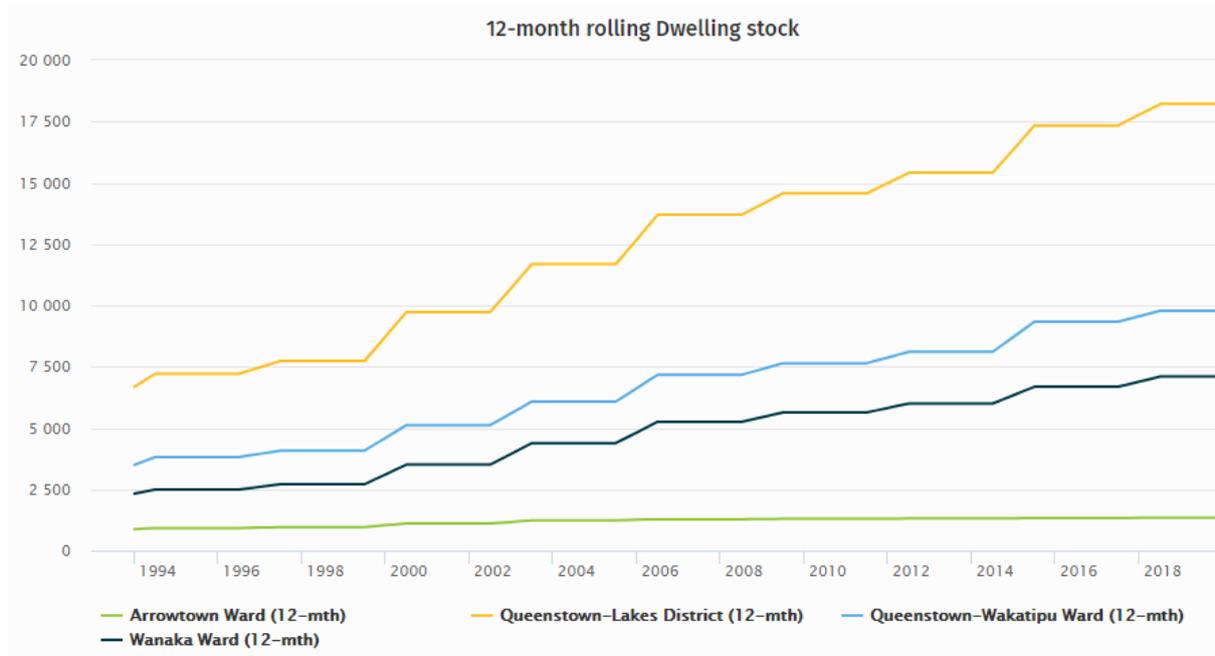
- In the December 2019 quarter, the total number of dwellings sold in QLD was 261.
- This is a decrease of 11 compared to the previous quarter (September 2019) and 21 less dwellings sold when compared to the same time a year ago (December 2018).
- Over the last 12 months, the count of dwellings sold in Queenstown Ward has decreased by 39 dwellings sold (-24%), from 160 (YE December 2018) to 121 (YE December 2019).
- In Wanaka, the count has increased from 116 to 120 (3%) and Arrowtown has also decreased from 22 to 20 (-9%)

### Commentary:

The number of dwellings sold in the Queenstown and Wanaka Wards is continuing its decline from the high point in 2016. An analysis of the building consent records below indicates that there has been a period of decline between YE December 2017, and YE December 2019 but the count of new dwelling consents is still relatively high. This indicates that the trend was being driven by fewer existing houses coming onto the market or fewer sections being used for construction company-led 'build and sell' dwellings and more being used for commissioned building contracts where the owners occupy the dwelling upon completion. Overall, it is still a 'sellers' market' and this is supported by the dwelling price indicator where prices continue to escalate in the face of strong demand.

## 2.3 Housing Stock

**About this indicator:** This is the estimate of dwelling stock. It is the total count of dwellings allowing for new builds each quarter and taking into account any demolition of dwellings. Dwellings include standalone houses, attached dwellings and apartments. This indicator informs growth in overall dwelling supply.



**Latest Results:** (Note: There is rolling average which only shows one year of change, with two years of none, resulting in only one change being shown every three years)

- In the year ending December 2019, the total number dwellings in QLD was 19,046.
- The last year of change data was in 2017, the next year of change data will be in 2020.
- Given that change data is only available every third year, raw data has been accessed from the Ministry Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for the number of properties at a District level.
- As per the data from HUD, in the year ending December 2019, housing stock totalled 21,921, this is up on the previous year (YE December 2018) by 863 dwellings (4.10%) (21,058).

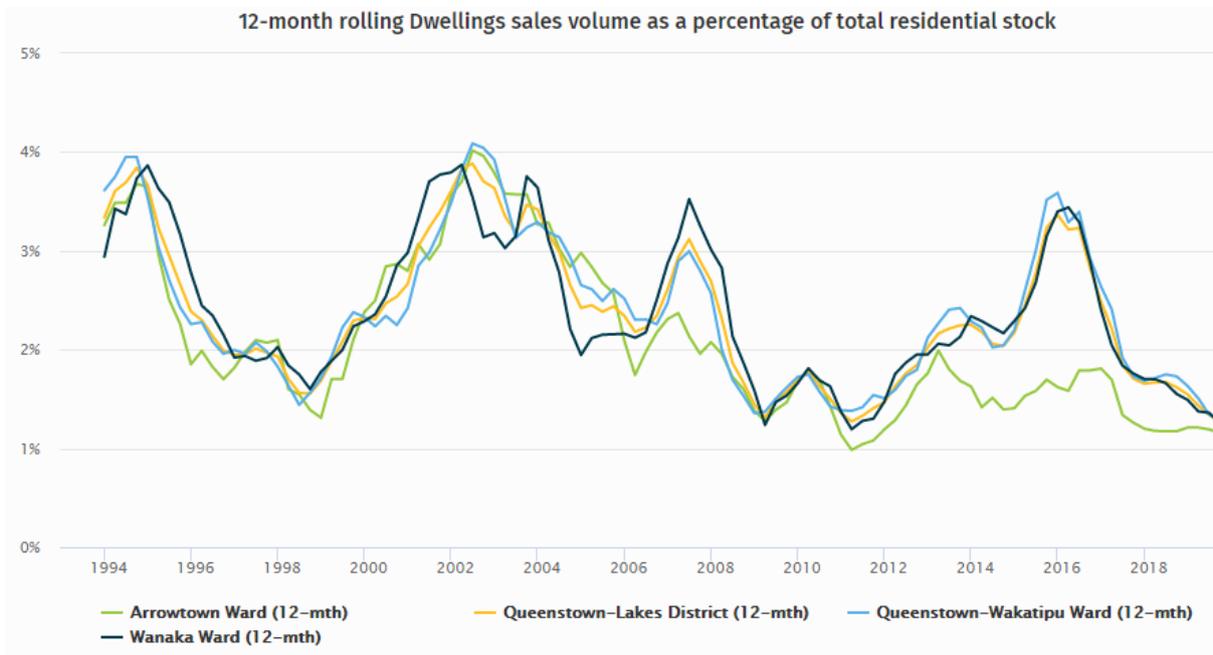
### Commentary:

The increase in the average sales price, the amount of zoned land available and high demand for property are the key factors that impact on this trend. The growth of the District's overall housing stock continues to increase at a steady rate although the Arrowtown Ward has contributed very little to this growth (relative to the other Wards) due to limited vacant land capacity within its urban growth boundary. Queenstown Ward currently makes up 54% of the total dwelling stock, while Wanaka and Arrowtown make up 38% and 7% respectively (no change from the previous quarter). Over time, it is expected that Arrowtown will account for

a relatively smaller share of the total given the significant Greenfield and infill growth capacity enabled in Wanaka and Queenstown.

## 2.4 Dwelling Sales as Share of Dwelling Stock

**About this indicator:** This indicator measures the quantity of all dwellings being bought and sold relative to the total stock. It is a measure of activity in the local housing market.



### Latest Results:

- In the year ending December 2019, the total number dwellings sold in QLD as a share of the dwelling stock was 1.232%.
- This is down on the previous quarter (September 2019) of 1.265%. The same time a year ago (December 2018), the percentage share was higher again on 1.545%.
- The latest figures for Wanaka and Queenstown are 1.207% and 1.278% respectively. Arrowtown continues recent trends of a lower share of dwellings bought and sold (1.018%) (December 2019).

### Commentary:

This indicator shows a similar trend to the dwellings sold indicator above, with a declining ratio of dwellings sold relative to total dwelling stock. That is, a declining share from the recent peak in early 2016. The much lower 'churn' of the market in Arrowtown again reflects a very stable market with strong demand and limited opportunities for growth.

## 2.5 Dwelling Rents

**About this indicator:** This indicator reflects nominal mean rents as reported in new rental bonds lodged with MBIE. The mean used is a geometric mean. The reason for using this mean is that rents cluster around round numbers and tend to plateau for months at a time. This makes analysis of time series difficult and using the geometric mean is a way of removing this clustering effect. The data is for private bonds only and so excludes social housing.



### Latest Results:

- The average weekly dwelling rent in QLD currently stands at \$565. This is up \$6 per week compared to the previous quarter (September 2019). Compared to the same time 12 months ago (December 2018), average weekly rent has increased by \$43 or 8.2%.
- Rent in Wanaka is below the district average at \$530 per week. This has increased by \$70 compared to the same time a year ago (December 2018).
- The fastest rate of increase over the past 12 months is Arrowtown up 23.2% (\$104), and the lowest change is within the Queenstown Ward (up 6.7% or \$37).
- Average rent in Queenstown Ward is the highest and currently sits at \$591, Arrowtown sits slightly lower (\$553 per week).

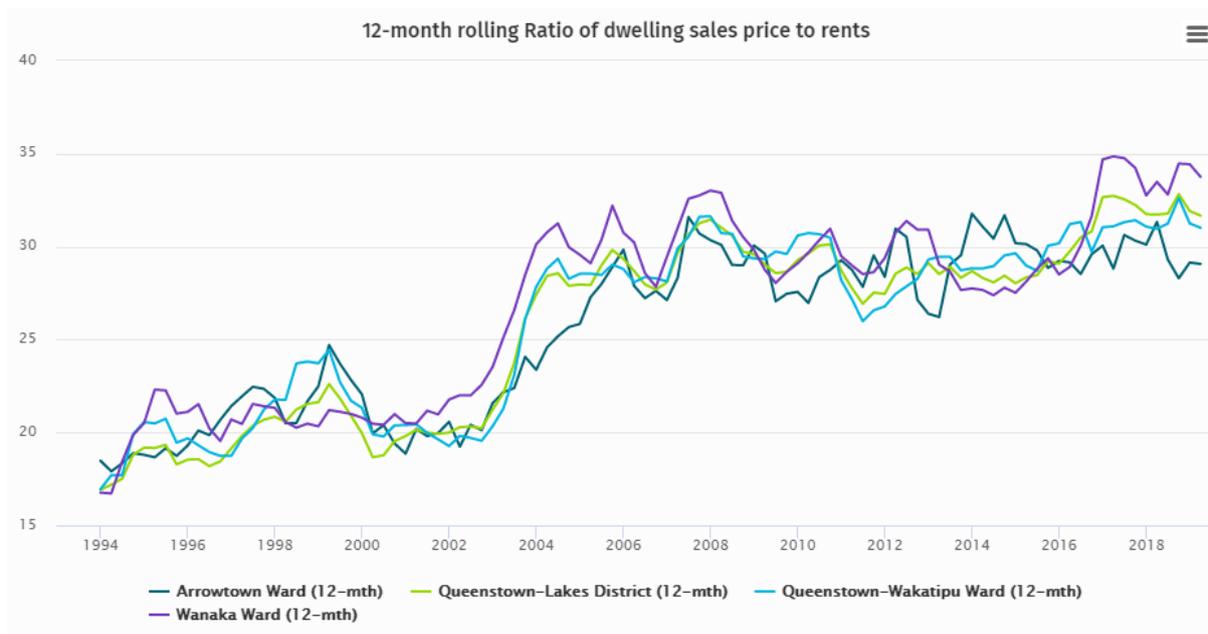
### Commentary:

Rising rents in QLD continue to be a significant concern given the large number of residents who are transient, such as seasonal workers and/or are low-income earners combined with relatively static wage growth. Rents are rising due to an undersupply of long-term rental properties and strong demand. This is despite the large number of unoccupied dwellings in the District which are retained as holiday homes or used for short stay visitor accommodation. Key implications of rising rents are overcrowding and difficulties with recruiting and retaining workers from outside the District. The rate of increase continues to rise in Queenstown but

has slowed in Arrowtown and Wanaka. It is too soon to know if this indicates a change to the strong upwards trajectory seen since 2014.

## 2.6 Sales Prices to Rent Ratio

**About this indicator:** This indicator measures the ease of moving from renting to home ownership, and also shows trends in possible investor yields. A higher house price/rent ratio reflects a larger gap between renting and buying. Higher ratios also indicate that rental yields for investors are lower.



### Latest Results:

- The QLD current price to rent ratio is approximately 36.177 (increasing from the previous quarter (September 2019) where it was 35.566. Compared to the same time a year ago (December 2018), the average ratio is down (from 37.594) (that is, the gap between renting and buying lessened slightly), but is higher than where it was this time almost three years ago (YE December 2016).
- Arrowtown is the hardest place to transition from renting to home ownership. The current ratio is 37.770.
- The ratio is trending down in Queenstown, Arrowtown and Wanaka in recent quarters, lessening the gap between the wards.

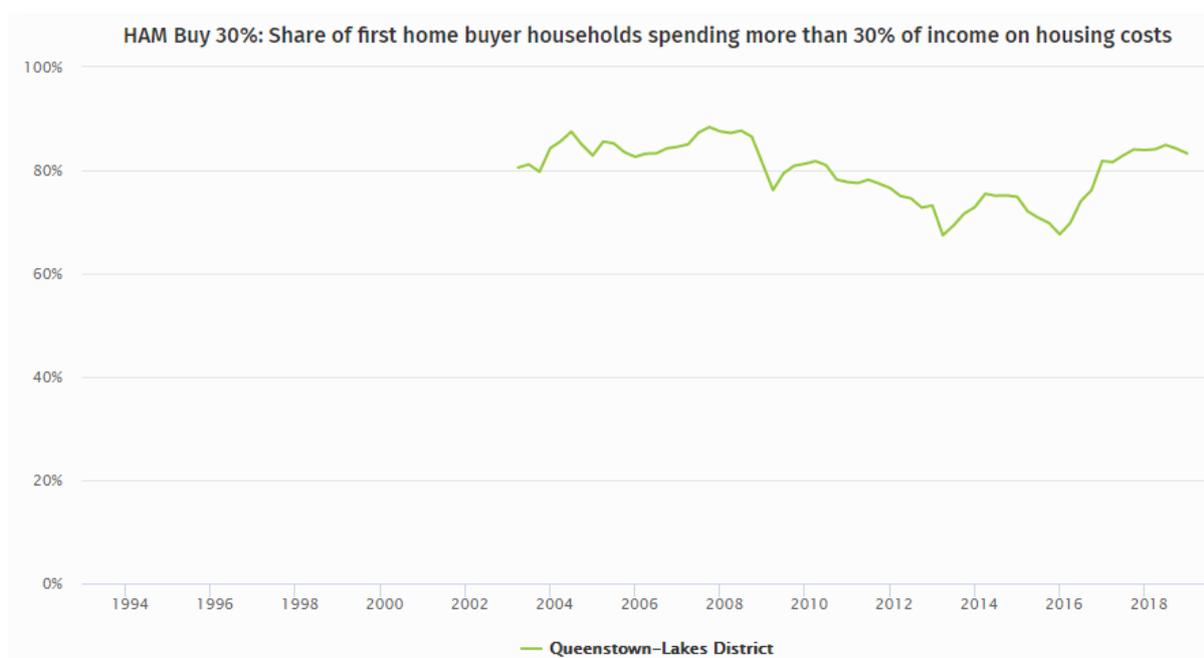
### Commentary:

This indicator is supposed to measure the ease of moving from renting to home ownership, comparing the average rental with the median sales price. There are inherent limitations in this measure; someone paying the average rental would not necessarily be in the market for the median house. Notwithstanding this limitation, the most recent results show a decline for the district which followed a period of strong rises (2015 – 2017) – yet overall the ratio has not

changed significantly in net terms since 2007. In more recent years (since 2012), the price to rent ratio has increased for all high growth areas, however QLD and Auckland remain high compared to the others. Transitioning from renting to home ownership continues to remain a struggle for QLD residents.

## 2.7 Housing Affordability Measure – Buy

**About this indicator:** The [HAM - Buy](#) measures trends in housing affordability for the first home buyer household. For potential home-owning households, HAM - Buy calculates the residual income after housing costs if they were to buy a modest first home in their area. Affordability is affected by dwelling prices, mortgage interest rates and the incomes of rental households. Average income is determined using the average New Zealand household, both homeowners and renters, nation-wide, in June 2013. A higher number indicates a lower level of affordability.



**Latest Results:** (There is a 12-month lag in this indicator - current data is for December 2018)

- The latest data shows that on average across QLD, 83.83% of first home buyer households would have a below average income after paying for housing costs.
- This percentage share has decreased in the last quarter by -0.47% percentage points.
- Compared to the same time a year earlier (YE December 2017), the percentage has decreased by 0.0011 percentage points from 83.93%.

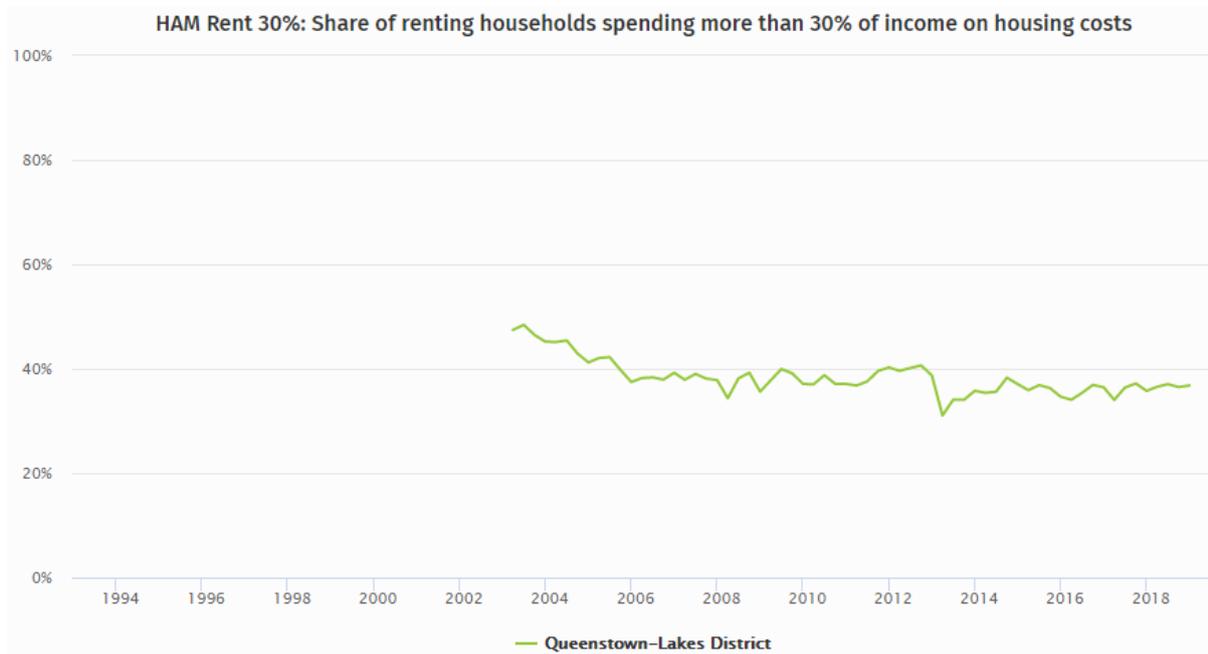
### Commentary:

This indicator needs to be interpreted with care as the average NZ income does not reflect local earning conditions in QLD – where the average income is generally lower due to the number of seasonal workers and people in the hospitality sector. There has been variability in this indicator over the time series with frequent ups and downs. However the data is showing

a consistent quarterly rise, and has surpassed Auckland which has decreased to 83.815 over the last 12 months. This is bad news for first home buyers when affordability for first home buyers was already very low within the QLD.

## 2.7 Housing Affordability Measure – Rent

**About this indicator:** The HAM - Rent indicator measures trends in housing affordability for the renting household. For renting households, HAM - Rent calculates what their residual income would be after housing costs. Average income is determined using the average New Zealand household, both homeowners and renters, nation-wide, in June 2013. A higher number on the chart indicates more households are below the average and a lower level of affordability.



**Latest Results:** (There is a 12-month lag in this indicator - current data is for December 2018).

- The latest data shows that on average across QLD, 36.80% of renting households would have a below average income after paying for housing costs.
- This percentage share has increased in the last quarter by 0.31 percentage points (from 36.49%).
- Compared to the same time a year earlier (YE December 2017), the percentage has increased by 1.04 percentage points (from 35.76%).

### Commentary:

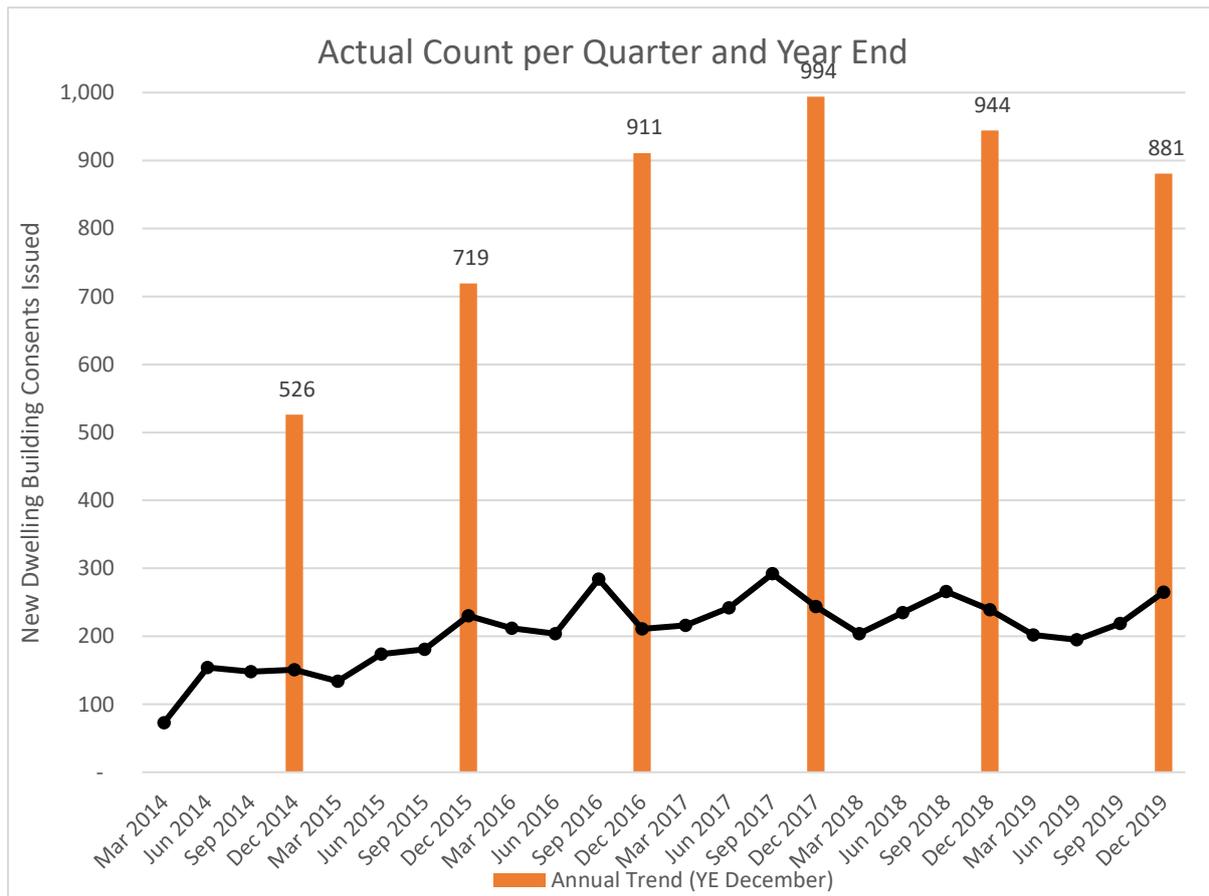
As above, this indicator needs to be interpreted with care as the average NZ income does not reflect local earning conditions in QLD – where the average income is generally lower. This measure indicates that rental affordability has remained relatively the same across the QLD between 2011 and 2018. Given that rental prices have been rising rapidly in the District during that time, this implies that average incomes (NZ) have been rising at a faster rate. This raises some concern about how accurate this indicator is in the context of QLD. Particularly as there

is evidence of overcrowding and sub-letting of bedrooms in Queenstown rental properties in particular to help manage/share high and rising costs.

### 3 Building Consents

#### 3.1 New Dwelling Consents Issued

**About this indicator:** This indicator tracks the actual count of new dwelling building consents issued by QLDC each quarter and year (compiled from total district monthly data). Estimated value of consents is also monitored.

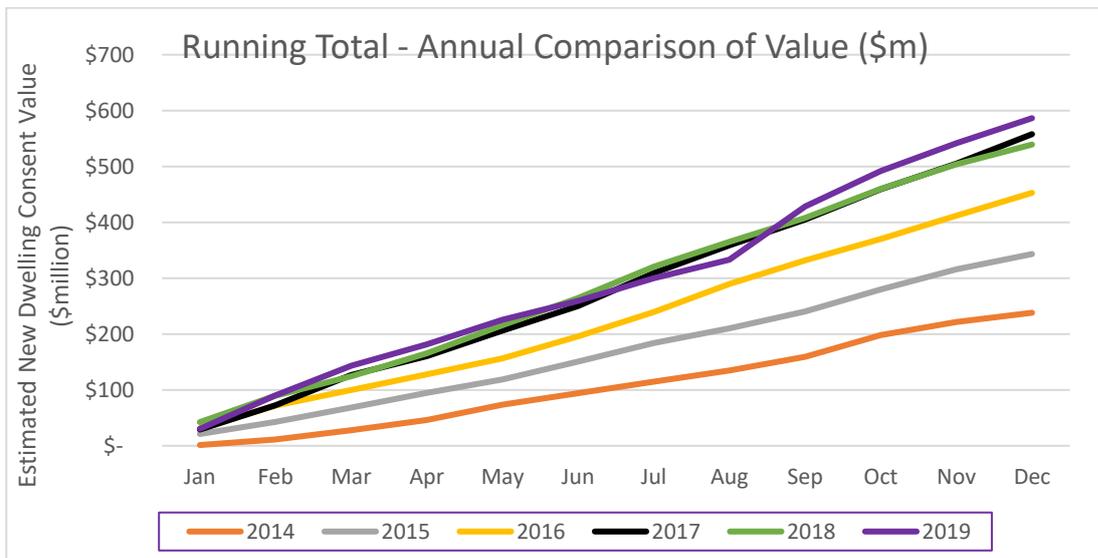
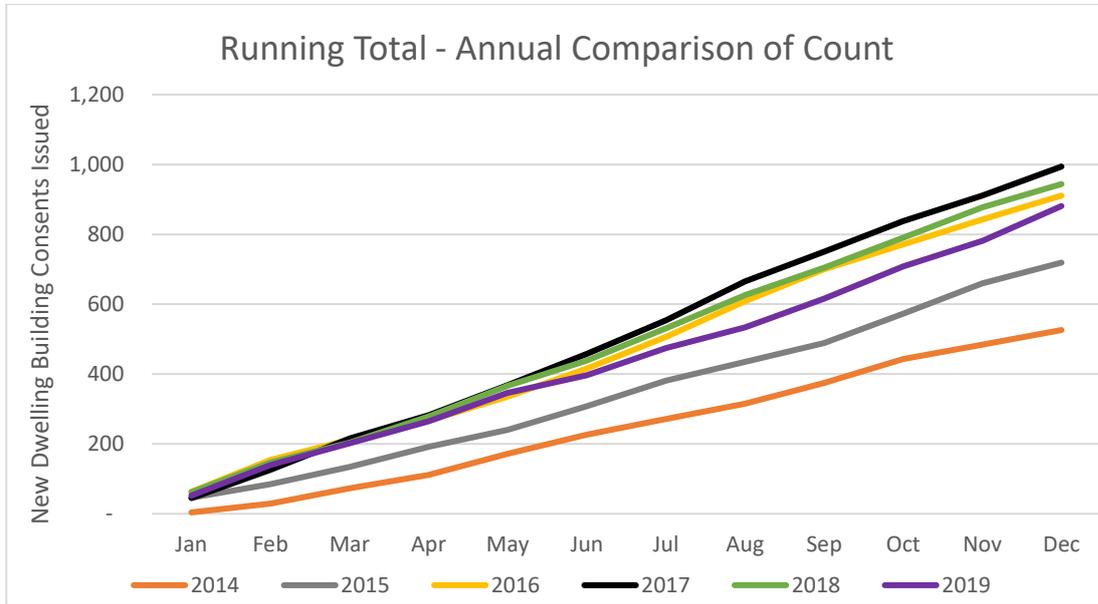


#### Latest Results:

- There were 265 new dwelling consents issued in the December 2019 quarter. This is 46 more consents issued compared to the September 2019 quarter (11%).
- This is up on the same quarter a year ago (December 2018) where there were 239 dwelling consents issued.
- Over the last 12 months (YE December 2019), there have been a total of 881 new dwelling consents issued. This is a decrease of 63 consents (-7%) compared to the previous year (944 in YE December 2018).
- In terms of the estimated value of new dwelling consents, the total value by December 2019 was approximately \$586m, which is higher than previous years
- The average value of a new dwelling consent issued in the December 2019 quarter was \$596,353. This was approximately \$26,835 high than the average value in the

December 2018 quarter (up 8%) and \$175,786 lower than the previous quarter (September 2019) (-29%)

- The average value of a dwelling each quarter in December 2019 was \$596,353. This was approximately \$47,408 higher than the average value a year ago (December 2018) (8%) and \$175,786 lower than a quarter ago (September 2019) (-29%).

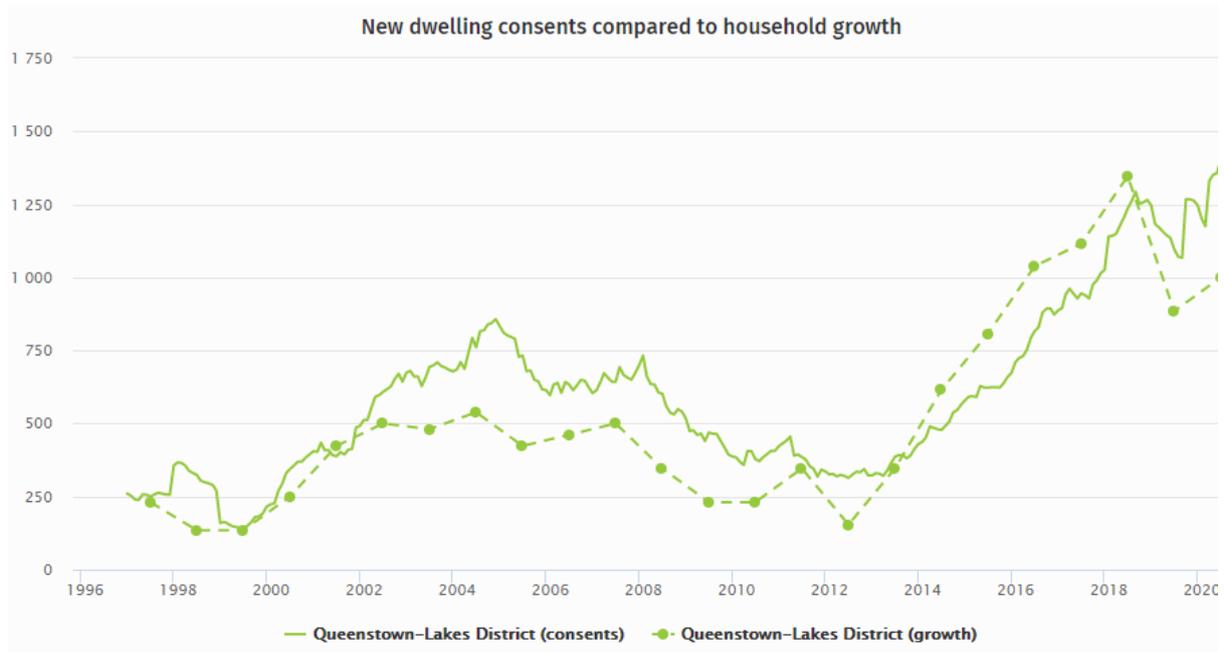


**Commentary:**

The count and value of dwelling consents got off to a good start in 2019 (similar to the count in early 2017 but less than 2018). However, by December, the running total is lower than previous years (2016 – 2018). Whilst consent numbers are lower, analysis shows that the consents are a much higher value. This could be an indication that build costs are higher and/or that larger residential dwellings are being constructed.

### 3.2 New Dwelling Consents vs Household Growth

**About this indicator:** This indicator approximates the demand for, and supply of, new dwellings. It measures changes in demand and how responsive supply is. The number of new dwelling building consents is lagged by six months (presented as a 12-month rolling average), to account for the time taken from consenting to completion. It is used as a proxy for supply. The most recent resident population (updated each June), divided by the local average housing size, is used as a proxy for demand.



#### Latest Results:

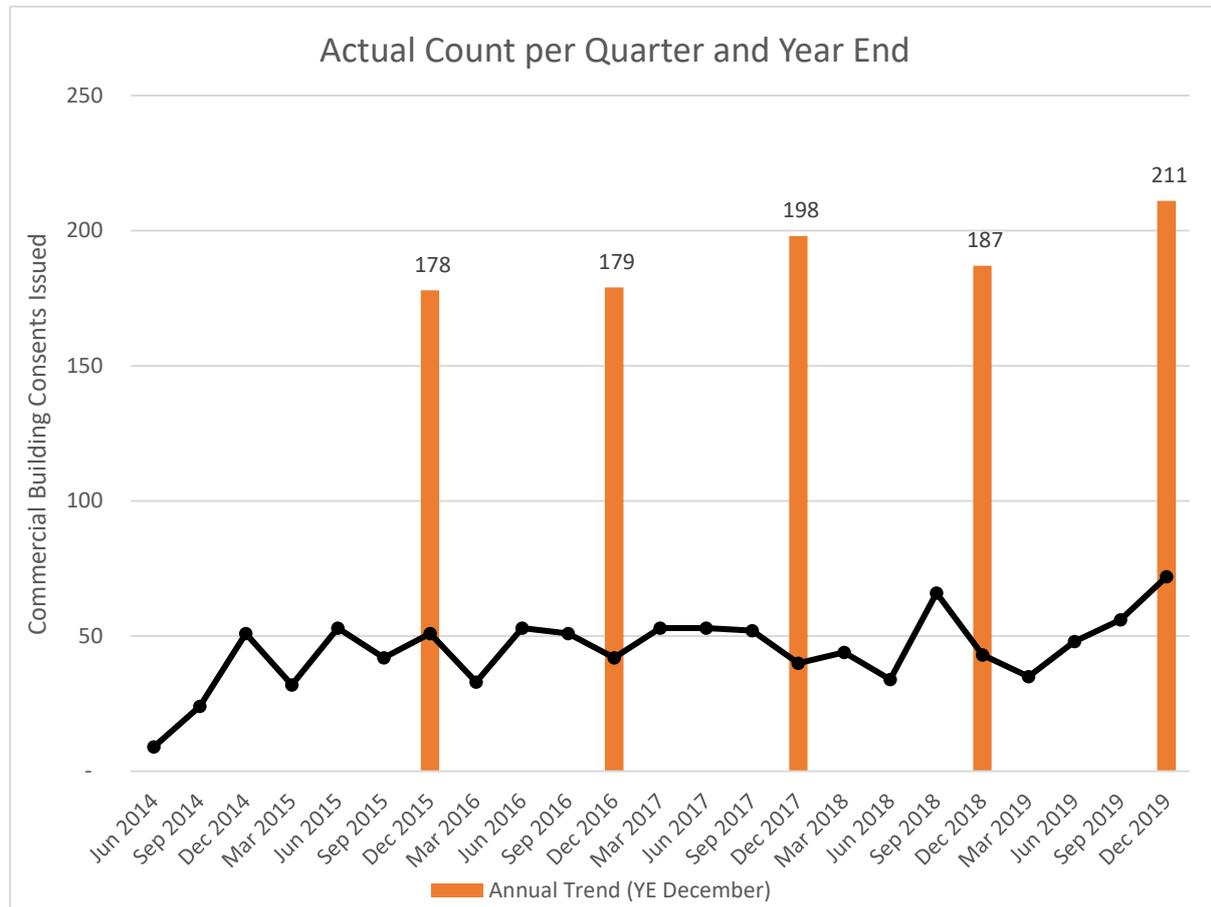
- This indicator contains new dwelling consents up to December 2019 and estimated household growth up to December 2019. Due to built in lags, care is needed when comparing new dwelling consent data with the previous indicator.
- The results show a steep decrease in dwelling supply since August 2017.
- Whilst annual growth has been climbing steadily since 2013, it declined steeply between 2018 and 2019. Whilst climbing again, growth does not appear to be keeping pace with actual demand (consents).

#### Commentary:

Since June 2013, household and new dwelling growth in QLD have been relatively close. That is, supply kept pace with resident demand (or vice versa) and consent and household growth have increased at generally the same rate. However, not all dwellings being built are available for resident households (i.e. they may be used for holiday homes, for non-local residents – including seasonal workers - or used for residential visitor accommodation). Care is therefore needed, as the two indicators are not directly comparable. Rising sales and rent prices indicate strong dwelling demand that may not be being met by the market.

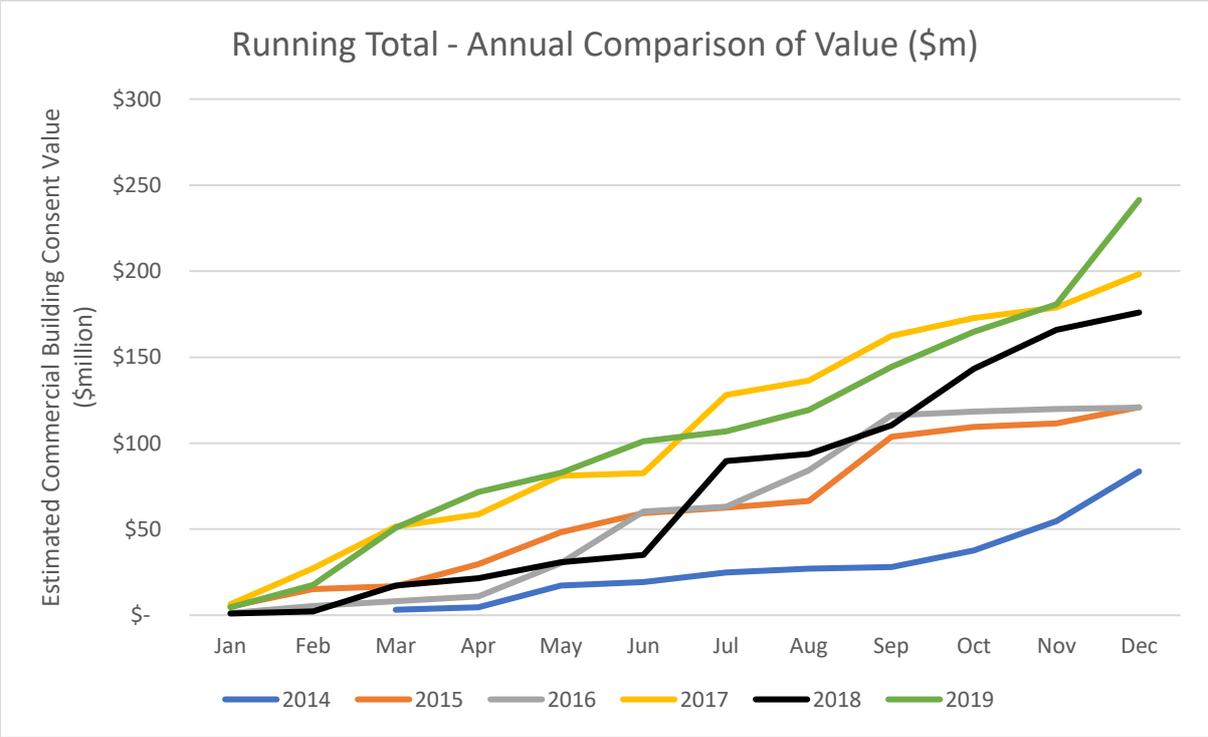
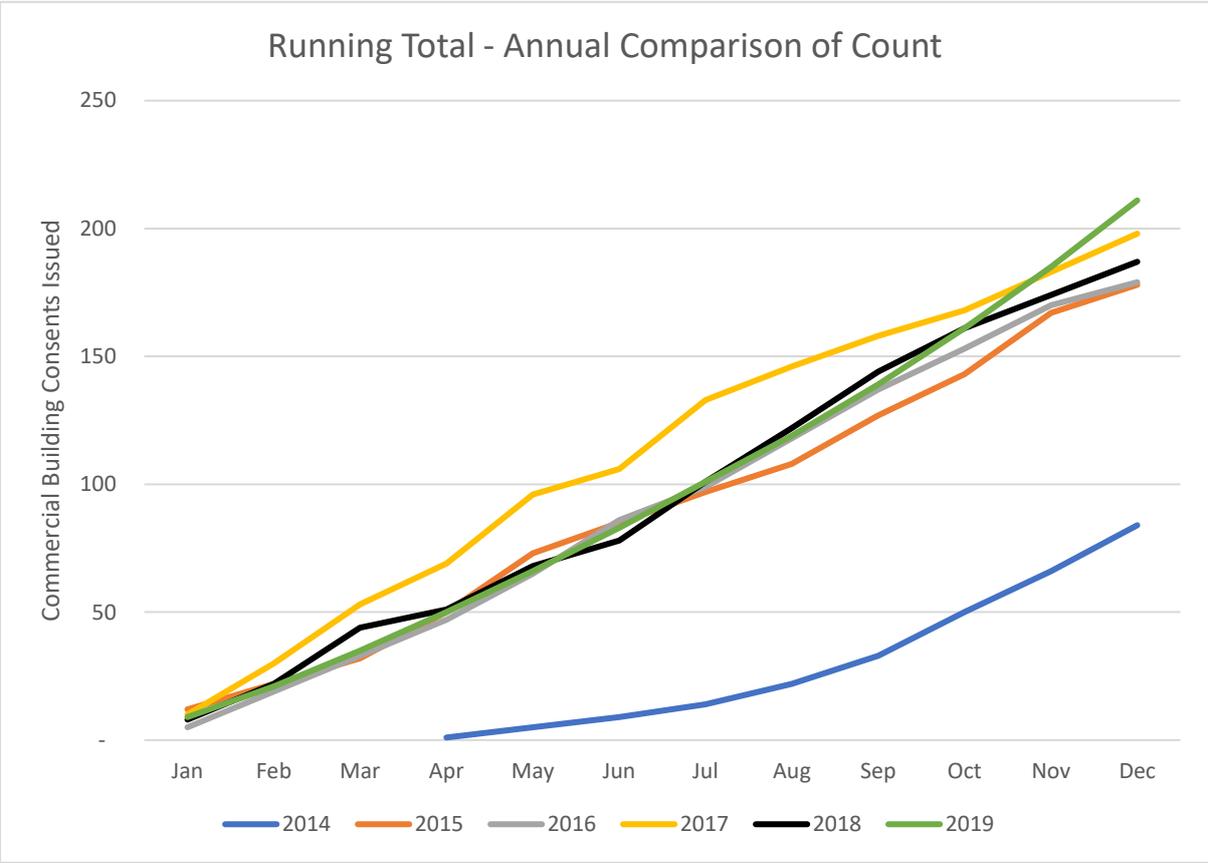
## Commercial Building Consents Issued

**About this indicator:** This indicator tracks the actual count of commercial building consents issued by QLDC each quarter and year (compiled from total district monthly data). Estimated value of consents is also monitored.



### Latest Results:

- There were 72 commercial building consents issued in the December 2019 quarter. This is 16 more consents issued compared to the September 2019 quarter (29%).
- This is substantially more than the same quarter a year ago (December 2018) where there were 43 commercial building consents issued.
- Over the last 12 months (YE December 2019), there have been a total of 211 commercial building consents issued. This is an increase of 24 consents (13%) compared to the previous year (187 in YE December 2018).
- In terms of the estimated value of commercial building consents, the total value in the December quarter was approximately \$97m, an increase on the December quarter in 2018 (\$65m).
- The average value of commercial building consents issued in the December quarter was \$1,347,277. It was also roughly \$575,780 (43%) more than the average value in the previous quarter (September 2019).



**Commentary:**

Commercial buildings have a less steady supply increase and are heavily influenced by a smaller number of large developments in new greenfield or brownfield commercial zones. Consent value is strongly influenced by the type of consent with greater variability in commercial consents than residential consents. Overall, 2019 outstrips the count and value of all commercial consents issued since 2014. The initial increase in 2017 prices was attributed to the increased levels of development in Frankton Flats and Three parks. The increase is an indication that developers are continuing to apply for and implement new consents and doesn't open up any concerns around the details and impacts of new government's policies and/or affordability and pricing constraints which can be drivers in slowing down growth.