

Public Hearing: Options to improve access to existing and alternate accommodation to address the social housing shortage

2 December 2021

Legislative Committee on Community Services

Questions taken on notice

Question (Page 9 of transcript)

Mr DAVID HARRIS: Yes, well I will kick off. So your submission addresses the need for crisis and key worker accommodation, which we have heard through a lot of different submissions. You have talked about that there is a need for innovative models and some are being trialled. Can you tell us a little bit more about what models are being trialled and where they might be up to? Whoever is the expert in that field? I won't go to anyone particularly. Maybe nobody?

The CHAIR: No?

Ms BRILL: Look, I'm sorry. Look, I think in terms of the broader—sorry, for Hansard, Deborah Brill from Land and Housing Corporation. I am involved in teacher and police housing so I am happy if that is helpful to talk with you a bit about that? But perhaps if we could also take on notice for the Committee, regional New South Wales is doing a piece of work around key worker housing which is taking a whole of Government approach. So we could certainly take on notice for you some of that broader work. In terms of teacher and police housing, we are spread quite [inaudible 63:23] across the state—

ANSWER: The Department of Regional NSW (DRNSW) has commenced a Key Worker Housing Pilot program. Consultants Astrolabe Group have been engaged to develop a strategic business case to address key worker housing challenges in four pilot regional locations:

- West Wyalong
- Gunnedah
- Broken Hill
- Walgett.

The Key Worker Housing pilot project will:

- Identify the current assets available to key workers (teacher, police and local health) in each location
- Identify current and projected key worker housing requirements in each location
- Develop a gap analysis
- Propose a three-year pilot program, tailored to each targeted regional area to meet key worker housing needs.

The Key Worker Housing Pilot program is intended to deliver learnings that will inform the Government's overall approach to housing in regional areas.

Innovative accommodation model being trialled: The NSW Land and Housing Corporation (LAHC) has purchased a site in South Kempsey to deliver 22 new homes that will accommodate participants in the Ginda Barri program and alleviate housing pressure in the local community. The hybrid model of social housing will be delivered in partnership with a local education provider, Macleay Vocational College, and community housing provider, Community Housing Limited. The project will assist vulnerable young mothers, including those at risk of homelessness, by providing secure fit for purpose housing and greater support to pursue their education and transition into employment. Ginda Barri is an innovative program for young

mothers, and mothers to be, to assist completing their education, gain vocational skills and develop positive parenting skills. Community Housing Limited will be responsible for tenancy and asset management, and implementing a local allocation strategy for the general social housing tenancies that ensures the participants in the Ginda Barri program have suitable neighbours.

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Mr DAVID HARRIS: So in—I was at a Housing roundtable on Tuesday and the community housing providers told us that they have the finance and the wherewithal to do projects, they just have no land. This is on the Central Coast. So has there been any progress made on the Crown Land 2031 Action Plan in terms of identifying land that might be appropriate for these purposes? Because it seems that there is a will to produce more stock, it is just that they are being held back by the fact that they cannot access land.

Mr HEWETT: Ben Hewett again. Yes, that is part of the process that our team, Housing and Property Group, which includes Crown Lands, are involved in trying to identify Government land to assist with that process. Again, I cannot talk to the specific projects yet around that but we are definitely exploring those issues. Deb might be able to speak to that a little bit further but otherwise we could take that on notice and talk to Crown Lands.

ANSWER: Crown Lands is committed to identifying suitable Crown land for housing supply, including social and affordable housing, in areas of demand across NSW. *Crown Land 2031* is the NSW Government's 10-year strategy to ensure that Crown land is used to deliver social, environmental and economic benefits for communities. Activating Crown land for housing is consistent with the key priority of accelerating economic progress in regional and rural NSW and will be achieved initially through focussing on strategic reform of asset management and land allocation. The first three-year action plan under the strategy is expected to be released in early 2022. Crown Lands will seek to partner with other agencies to meet housing need across the state and contribute to the priorities of the *Housing 2041* strategy.

Question (Page 14-15 of transcript)

Ms JENNY LEONG: What we lose is three-bedroom—we lose three-bedroom homes and we get one one-bedroom unit and then it is talked up that there is an increase in dwellings but there is not an increase in beds so it would be useful to get the—even if you need to take it on notice, it would be useful, either from you or Jason, to get the actual bed numbers in growth, not the [door] numbers.

Mr STANMORE: Well we can that on notice and to be honest, it is a—probably a Land and Housing Corporation and possibly AHO. Land and Housing Corp who need to provide that detail and I am sure they would be happy to do that. I think one of the things—one is that the dwelling, the average density size of dwellings, has been decreasing over a couple of decades. So we actually do have a lot of social housing where we actually have some spare bedrooms in them. So part of destocking is to make sure that we—the social housing stock is providing the right size bedrooms and most of them tend to be small dwellings now. One and two bedroom dwellings as opposed to the old three and four bedroom dwellings. So Land and Housing Corporation, obviously Deb and that, can take you through that and provide further details on notice if you want in regard to that.

Ms BRILL: Excellent. Hello, Deborah Brill from Land and Housing Corporation. To answer the questions about bedrooms, we can absolutely take that on notice and provide you with advice on that. I mean, I do appreciate there has been a focus on Land and Housing Corp building new builds in terms of number of bedrooms. We are building new developments to the priority waitlist

that exists at the moment and the projection of what households will look like in the future who will need social housing. So we are weighting our new builds towards one and two-bedders because that is what the priority waitlist is telling us is required. So for us counting the number of dwellings and the number of dwellings that are occupied to the best extent possible, is a better measure of how we are meeting housing need than the number of bedrooms.

Ms JENNY LEONG: Sorry, Chair. But just with respect, Deb and just in relation to that, I just think it is really important to keep this on the record. The reason why the demand on the priority housing waiting list is for one-bedroom dwellings is because we are targeting as a Government—the priority of the Premier is to target rough sleepers who are typically older single men. If our Premier’s priority was different and we were looking at housing children, then the priority waiting list would not be one-bedroom dwellings for single older men but if that is—and I just really worry about that because I appreciate that is where we are at because that is the current priority housing waiting list but that is because the Premier’s priority was set to address rough sleepers and the demographic of those rough sleepers are single men, not people with children.

Ms BRILL: Look, Jason may be happy to talk a bit more about how the priority waitlist is constructed but the waitlists—sorry, how a person gets on priority is not only measured by the Government’s priority around homelessness. There are a range of factors that are taken into account to build that priority waitlist. Jason, did you want to elaborate on what—how DCJ considers the construction of the waitlist?

Mr KARA: Yes and I am just looking to see if I can grab some figures but I have not been able to find them. Maybe if you can talk a bit longer.

Ms JENNY LEONG: I do not want to—I just realised the time. I do not want to jump in. If Jason wants to take that on notice, other people have got their hands up so I was going to say, I am happy to get that on notice so we can move on.

ANSWER: Eligibility policy for social housing is available publicly in the Social Housing Eligibility and Allocations Policy Supplement on the DCJ website at:

www.facs.nsw.gov.au/housing/policies/social-housing-eligibility-allocations-policy-supplement.

Priority housing is determined by an urgent housing need that cannot be resolved in the private market. Criteria used to determine this include:

- Unstable housing circumstances (including homelessness and living in crisis or emergency accommodation)
- At risk factors (including domestic & family violence and threatening behaviour towards applicant)
- Existing accommodation is inappropriate for basic housing requirements (including overcrowding, lack of essential facilities or disability requirements)
- Clients who are Stolen Generations Survivors and Clients who have experienced institutional child sexual abuse.

To assist in relation to dwelling and bedroom, numbers, the publicly available figures are below (Source: FACSIAR). The current summing is for total dwellings but bedrooms can be calculated.

Social housing residential dwelling	Studio/1 bedroom	2 bedroom	3 bedroom	4+ bedrooms	Total
As at 30 June 2017	38,626	46,304	53,274	13,426	151,630
As at 30 June 2020	39,695	46,944	52,153	13,280	152,072
Changes	1,069	640	- 1,121	- 146	442
% change	2.8%	1.4%	-2.1%	-1.1%	0.3%

LAHC can advise that from the sales of Millers Point properties, at November 2021, there has been a growth of around 1,700 bedrooms in addition to over 530 bedrooms planned to be delivered from Millers Point sales proceeds.

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Mr JUSTIN CLANCY: Thank you, Chair, and thank you to each of you for being with us today. I want to touch on a different theme. Southern Youth and Family Services in their submission touched on speculative vacancy and that is dwellings that remain vacant. They cite a figure of 68,000, 70,000 homes—dwellings vacant in Sydney due to speculation. I just want to explore, does Government have a, I suppose a sense or a way of auditing or getting a sense of the number of vacant dwellings within Sydney? Perhaps some of the reasons why that might be the case and whether Government has a response to that, please?

Mr WALTON: Luke Walton here from—

Mr HEWETT: You go, Luke. **Mr WALTON:** —the Planning part of DPIE. We can take that on notice and see if we have those sorts of figures. I do not—I am not aware of that but we can definitely look into that for the Committee and let you know.

ANSWER: Vacancy rates are sourced from the Australian Bureau of Statistics and collected through the Census. The NSW average is 9.3% vacant properties, but it is higher in holiday places such as Eurobodalla (29.5%) and some inland regions such as Central Darling (27.8%). The share of vacant homes is lowest in some areas of Western Sydney (e.g. Wollondilly, Penrith, The Hills Shire, Campbelltown, Fairfield, Blacktown, Liverpool, Camden around 4% to 5%). This data was drawn from the 2016 Census. Data from the 2021 census is not yet available.

Reasons for vacant homes vary by LGA, but include: holiday homes, use for business or business travel, occupants where on holidays on census night, the house might have just been built and not sold or buyers haven't moved in yet, renovations are underway or the home cannot otherwise be occupied.

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The CHAIR: Can I just ask, and this is probably a question for LAHC. Is there any software developments that are being worked on in relation to some of our stock that may be sitting empty awaiting works to be undertaken? Where there is blocks of units that are older? Because I just felt like, in 2019 when I was campaigning, that some of the housing that I was actually doorknocking was empty. So do we have any up-to-date software systems in place that is bringing some of these empty places to light? I mean, it just seems that perhaps that could be an easy fix that we do have stock but somehow it is sitting idle that we could have people in. Can anyone speak to that at all?

Ms BRILL: Deborah Brill from Land and Housing Corporation. Look, I cannot talk about your area specifically but if you do have questions about vacants in your area, I am happy to take—you know, specific questions of that, I am happy to take that on notice. Broadly, in terms of our approach to vacant properties, we work really hard to make a decision about what happens to vacant properties quite quickly. So we set ourselves a KPI around how quickly a vacant property is able to be—have any repairs and maintenance required so that it can be re-let. If it is determined that the house is not in a condition or not in a location which is going to meet current or future need, we then look to move it through the sales process so that the funds from that house can be recycled and put into new developments. So we are conscious that that is an area

that we need to watch and move on as quickly as practicable. Some housings do stay vacant because we are planning to redevelop the site and there is a lag, I suppose, between the previous tenant leaving the house and the development process commencing. Whether that is planning through Council or whether it is the tender process to get a new build happening but we work very hard to keep our occupancy rate as high as possible and that sits at around 98 per cent.

ANSWER: If there are any specific examples the Chair wishes to provide, we can provide a more specific answer to that individual case.

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Mr JUSTIN CLANCY: Chair, please? Justin here and I appreciate we are running out of time but—and Roland, I might ask if it is possible to take on notice, I would be interested in Treasury's assessment of initiatives such as Western Australia's Keystart program with the low-deposit home loans and other home loan assistance that the Western Australian Government has adopted. Thank you.

Mr STANMORE: Yes, I will take that on notice, thank you.

ANSWER: Answer has been provided by Mr Stanmore directly to the Committee.

Legislative Assembly Committee on Community Services – Options to improve access to existing and alternate accommodation to address the social housing shortage

Question on Notice: **Due 21 December 2021**

QoN #	Transcript Page	QUESTION
1	18	<p>“I would be interested in Treasury’s assessment of initiatives such as Western Australia Key Start program with the low-deposit home loans and other home loan assistance that the Western Australia Government has adopted.”</p>
		<p>RESPONSE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Western Australia Keystart program including the low-deposit home loan scheme provides some benefit for the specific individuals who can access the scheme. However, it is not a scheme that NSW Treasury is currently considering. The NSW government previously ran a scheme in the 1980s and early 1990s called HomeFund that tried to support home ownership by lowering the cost in the early loan years. That scheme ceased in 1993. • The Western Australia Government also provides a First Homeowners Grant of \$10,000 under certain eligibility conditions for a new home. • The NSW Government offers a similar First Homeowners Grant – a grant of \$10,000 for first home buyers purchasing a new home worth up to \$600,000, and for first home buyers purchasing vacant land and building a new home worth up to \$750,000 in total. • The NSW Government also supports home ownership as those buyers purchasing their first home are eligible for duty exemptions for purchases up to \$650,000, and concessional duty for a new or existing home valued up to \$800,000. • NSW Treasury also focus on assessing/advising on social housing support measures aimed at the low and very low income levels (most who would not access a Western Australia style Keystart program towards home ownership due to their low incomes). The NSW Government announced significant increased social housing assistance in the 2020-21 Budget and the recent Economic Recovery package.