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MEDIA RELEASE

Committee seeks to alleviate the social housing shortage using existing and alternative accommodation

NSW is in the grip of a social housing shortage, with over 50,000 applicants on the social housing wait list. The shortage has been worsened by COVID-19, bushfires and floods. This requires a review of innovative and alternative short-term housing solutions. The Legislative Assembly Committee on Community Services has released a report on options to improve access to existing and alternate accommodation to address the social housing shortage.

In the report, the Committee makes 12 recommendations and 8 findings covering issues including the suitability of meanwhile use and other innovative housing; grants and co-contributions to fund social and affordable housing; barriers to additional supply of social and affordable housing; access to government land; and meeting the housing needs of specific community groups.

The Committee found that innovative solutions such as meanwhile use, tiny homes and home sharing are viable, short-term options, but that the need for long-term social and affordable housing must also be addressed.

Meanwhile use refers to the use of vacant or underused buildings to temporarily house those in need. The Committee found that meanwhile use is a useful option, but not all properties are suitable and not all cohorts will benefit from this type of housing. The Committee has recommended that a framework be put in place to ensure that meanwhile use housing is safe, appropriate and meets the needs of those being housed.

"The main barriers to the successful implementation of meanwhile use are the planning processes, time and funds required. This often deters community organisations from pursuing innovative options such as meanwhile use and tiny homes. We recommend that the Department of Planning and Environment works with local councils and community housing providers to reduce these barriers and speed up the planning process," said Committee Chair, the Hon. Melinda Pavey MP.

"We found there are specific needs in the community, especially for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who need housing that is culturally appropriate. We also heard that wraparound supports are needed for specific cohorts who are often vulnerable, including young people, women experiencing domestic and family abuse, the elderly, and people with disability".

The report also focusses on housing problems in regional NSW, especially for key workers. The Committee found that programs to increase the supply of housing in regional areas should prioritise affordable and social housing for key workers who need long-term housing close to their workplaces.

The Committee received 91 submissions and heard from 31 witnesses during three days of hearings.

The report can be found on the Committee's [website](#).

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