

To:

Legislative Assembly Select Committee

on Essential Worker Housing

Parliament of New South @Wales

Response to Supplementary question for City West Housing

- Do you have any recommendations for how the Affordable Housing Ministerial Guidelines could be amended to help increase the availability of affordable housing for essential workers?

Who is an essential worker?

In my original submission I proposed a broad definition of essential worker and referenced City West Housing's approach which is to focus on a range of workers who meet income eligibility requirements and who perform essential services in the local government area in which the affordable housing is located. This includes cleaners, local council staff, services industry workers, nurses and childcare workers who impact positively on the productivity of an area.

In responding to this question I have taken this broader definition and not necessarily focussed on what are often referred to as 'key workers'.

In City West Housing's view, the Ministerial Guidelines as drafted are sufficiently broad to facilitate the funding and delivery of affordable rental housing for a range of low income working households ("essential workers") and through a range of different funding approaches.

Greater specificity and tighter targeting might see the delivery of more affordable housing targeted to particular cohorts but not necessarily an increase in overall supply. Maximum flexibility is important to enable the community housing to be nimble when working out how to fund projects and who they should be targeted to.

Government(s) can always utilise program design / funding documents if they wish to target particular cohorts (incomes, client type) , such as Homes NSW's Community Housing Innovation Fund funding round that targeted housing for women and children escaping domestic and family violence.

Areas for consideration

There are certain occupations who need access to affordable rental housing close to their place of work (for example nurses, police) but for whom the Ministerial Guidelines don't necessarily work.

For example:

- a nurse may exceed income eligibility after becoming an affordable housing tenant by virtue of a pay increase and/or working overtime. She still works at the local hospital but has lost access to affordable housing and now has to travel long distances at all hours to get to and from work or pay an unaffordable rent to live closer,

- a junior police officer may find themselves ineligible for affordable housing up front because they work regular night shifts and the overtime pushes them above the income eligibility threshold. They work in the inner city and cannot afford to rent an apartment on their own nearby. Consequently they take to sleeping in their car on days they are rostered on early shifts,
- two police cadets on alternating rosters (night/day) wish to share a one bedroom affordable apartment in the inner city close to the local area command. While individually they fall below the income eligibility threshold together their combined household income exceeds the limit making them ineligible.

Some greater flexibility around household composition, the ability for two or more adults who are not related to share an apartment and/or consideration around income eligibility limits that factor in workers whose income from salaries and wages fluctuates could be helpful.