

**Submission
No 3**

**OPTIONS TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO EXISTING AND ALTERNATE
ACCOMMODATION TO ADDRESS THE SOCIAL HOUSING SHORTAGE**

Name: Mr Grahame Gee

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The Committee on Community Services

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

Dear committee members

1. I am a credentialed mental health nurse working in the south Coast of NSW. I am writing this submission as a private citizen and not representing the views of the organisation I work for. However, the views expressed are informed by my interactions with clients in need of stable housing.
2. It is well recognised that stable housing is important for the physical and mental wellbeing of people. But for many people with serious mental health issues, access to stable housing is a significant challenge.
3. In the region in which I work, the cost of private rental accommodation has increased significantly. One of my clients reported that the cost of the property he currently rents is increasing by \$100.00 per week. Other clients have reported the difficulty of getting rental accommodation when they are competing with a large number of people seeking rental properties. Many due to the serious and chronic nature of their mental disorder are on the DSP. Such individuals feel that this puts them at a serious disadvantage, as potential landlords are likely to give their applications a low priority.
4. As well as increased cost of rental accommodation, some rentals are being converted to be rented on AirB&B and Stayz. This is reducing the stock of available rentals as at least one of my clients has been given notice to vacate their property for this reason.
5. The effect of housing insecurity is having a serious and negative impact on the mental health of my clients. I have clients who are forced to couchsurf, live in short term emergency housing, live with the prospect of eviction and live in holiday parks and tents. As a result it is difficult to keep in touch so as to monitor their mental health and arrange follow up appointments and Telehealth with their treating psychiatrists.
6. Weightloss and malnourishment due to the inability to access or pay for good quality food due to limited finances after paying for rent is not unknown. This in turn contributes to poor mental health outcomes.
7. As signatories to the UN convention on the Rights of Disabled Persons, access to stable accommodation for those suffering from serious and debilitating mental health conditions is an obligation under Article 19 of this convention:

Article 19: Living independently and being included in the community States

Parties to this Convention recognize the equal right of all persons with disabilities

to live in the community, with choices equal to others, and shall take effective and appropriate measures to facilitate full enjoyment by persons with disabilities of this right and their full inclusion and participation in the community, including by ensuring that:

(a) Persons with disabilities have the opportunity to choose their place of residence and where and with whom they live on an equal basis with others and are not obliged to live in a particular living arrangement;

(b) Persons with disabilities have access to a range of in-home, residential and other community support services, including personal assistance necessary to support living and inclusion in the community, and to prevent isolation or segregation from the community;

(c) Community services and facilities for the general population are available on an equal basis to persons with disabilities and are responsive to their needs.

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