

**Submission  
No 18**

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

**Organisation:** Canterbury Bankstown Council

**Date Received:** 6 August 2021

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The Chair  
Committee on Community Services  
Parliament House  
Macquarie Street  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Ms Wendy Lindsay MP,

**Parliamentary Inquiry into Social Housing –  
Canterbury Bankstown Council Submission**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Parliamentary Inquiry into options to improve access to existing and alternate accommodation to address the social housing shortage.

The *NSW Housing Strategy* identifies social housing as State-owned infrastructure and acknowledges that it is the role of the Land and Housing Corporation (LAHC) to deliver social housing.

In 2020, the LAHC's portfolio included about 126,000 social housing dwellings, 1,500 crisis and transitional housing properties, and a range of community and commercial properties (Source: LAHC, *Portfolio Strategy*).

Within the Greater Sydney Region, Canterbury Bankstown accommodates a significant proportion of the LAHC's portfolio:

- The LAHC is a major landowner and owns over 4,900 properties in Canterbury Bankstown, which equates to 3.6% of properties in the local government area (Source: Canterbury Bankstown Council).
- There are 11,473 social housing dwellings in Canterbury Bankstown, making it the largest social housing stock compared to other local government areas in the Greater Sydney Region (Source: NSW Government, District Data Profiles).
- There are major housing estates in Riverwood and Villawood.

However, despite the existing supply, there is a social housing shortage in Canterbury Bankstown.

According to the NSW Department of Communities and Justice's guide to expected waiting times for social housing at 30 June 2020, the waiting time for a one bedroom dwelling is 5–10 years and the waiting time for all other dwellings is 10+ years. There are over 2,800 applicants on the waitlist for social housing.



In considering the Terms of Reference, Council raises the following issues to address the social housing shortage:

### **Issue 1: Better utilise State owned land for social housing**

According to the *LAHC Portfolio Strategy*, the LAHC proposes to use its properties more wisely by:

- Building more smaller homes, including on sites that have just one large home on a large block.
- Holding onto some of the well-located land for the future.
- Selling land to buy other homes or better located land (including greenfield sites), as this will enable the LAHC to house more people and families.

In relation to barriers to additional supply, the issue is the LAHC is yet to better utilise its land for social housing in Canterbury Bankstown, particularly its many properties close to public transport and centres. This is inconsistent with the Greater Sydney Region Plan's Strategy 11.2 (page 72), which requires state agencies to prioritise the delivery of social and affordable housing close to public transport and centres.

For example, in 2011 the LAHC and Council signed an agreement to jointly master plan the Chester Hill Village Centre under the Housing Affordability Fund program. The LAHC owns around 440 properties in the village centre. The purpose of the program was to fast-track a review of the planning rules to enable the LAHC to reconfigure its stock to increase the supply of social and affordable housing in the area. A proportion of the stock could be sold as affordable housing.

Council reprioritised its resources to accelerate the master planning process. The Department of Planning, Industry and Environment approved the planning rule changes in 2016. The changes included upzonings and increased building heights/densities to accommodate a mix of private, affordable and social housing on State owned land. Five years later, the LAHC is yet to redevelop its renewal sites, indicating that the delivery of social and affordable housing in the area is no longer a State priority.

A second example is the Community Plus program at Riverwood. The *NSW Housing Strategy* and *Future Directions for Social Housing in NSW* propose to increase the social housing supply through the Communities Plus program.

In summary, the program leverages land values to renew and grow social housing in mixed tenure neighbourhoods. It targets a 70:30 ratio of private to social housing as part of the redevelopment of LAHC renewal sites, and is done at no cost to government.



The issue is the program results in sites being overdeveloped, with a very high proportion of private housing and very limited growth in social housing, which should be the main objective of the program. For example in the Riverwood State Significant Precinct, the envisaged development of 3,900 dwellings will not even result in an increase of the existing 994 social housing stock.

Given the LAHC is one of the biggest landowners in the state, the LAHC should address this issue by divesting its properties to fund programs like Riverwood to deliver more social and affordable housing. The review should also ensure the social and affordable housing stock is retained in perpetuity.

#### **Recommended Actions:**

- Require the LAHC to prioritise the delivery of social and affordable housing close to public transport and centres.
- Review the Community Plus program to increase the ratio of social and affordable housing being provided.
- Divest LAHC properties to fund programs like Riverwood to deliver more social and affordable housing.
- Ensure the social and affordable housing stock is retained in perpetuity.

#### **Issue 2: Clarify the intent of 'meanwhile use'**

The *NSW Housing Strategy* proposes temporary supportive accommodation, which is the use of a vacant or underused building to provide temporary residential accommodation. The Terms of Reference refer to 'meanwhile use'.

In relation to options to better support 'meanwhile use', the issue is temporary supportive accommodation and other temporary measures must be coordinated through a strategy to be effective. To address this issue, the strategy should:

- Develop clear targeted groups.
- Ensure existing buildings can be made suitable for the intended use.
- Define 'temporary supportive accommodation' or 'meanwhile use' under a State Environmental Planning Policy or the Standard Instrument Local Environmental Plan, and confirm if this land use requires development consent.
- Coordinate vacancies of temporary accommodation stock, such as vacant student accommodation, hotels, motels, private boarding houses, secondary dwellings and private dwellings. An example of vacant student accommodation is the former Western Sydney University (WSU) Milperra Campus site. The WSU is relocating its campus to Bankstown, which means the existing student accommodation on the Milperra site could support 'meanwhile use'.

**Recommended Actions:**

- Define 'temporary supportive accommodation' or 'meanwhile use' for the purposes of planning rules.
- Coordinate the delivery of temporary supportive accommodation and other temporary measures through a strategy to be effective.

**Issue 3: Retain affordable housing in perpetuity to provide permanent housing solutions**

The *NSW Housing Strategy* seeks to deliver more affordable housing to create transitional housing choices for those waiting for permanent housing solutions, and for those trying to leave social housing and move into private rental or affordable housing that better suits their needs.

Whilst the Affordable Rental Housing State Environmental Planning Policy (SEPP) encourages infill development to provide affordable housing by offering bonus floor space, the issue is the availability of the affordable housing supply is limited to 10 years. This does not provide permanent housing solutions for people on very low to moderate incomes, including key workers.

To address this issue, the NSW Government should review the Affordable Rental Housing SEPP to ensure the affordable housing stock is:

- Retained in perpetuity if infill development is to achieve the bonus floor space.
- Managed by registered community housing providers.
- Supported by a search engine to assist people looking for dwellings certified as affordable housing.

These comments also apply to the Draft Housing SEPP, which proposes to limit the use of the affordable housing component of infill development for affordable housing to 15 years.

**Recommended Actions:**

- Review the Affordable Rental Housing SEPP and Draft Housing SEPP to ensure the affordable housing stock is retained in perpetuity.
- Establish a search engine for dwellings certified as affordable housing.



If you have any enquiries, please contact Council officer [REDACTED].

Yours sincerely



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