

**Submission
No 64**

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

Organisation: SGCH

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The Chair, Committee on Community Services
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000
communityservices@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Dear Ms Lindsay MP,

Thank you for your invitation to SGCH to make a submission to the inquiry into options to improve access to existing and alternate accommodation to address the social housing shortage. As the largest community housing organisation focused on Greater Sydney, we welcome this inquiry by the Committee on Community Services and the exploration of ideas to address housing need.

SGCH provides sustainable, safe and affordable housing for around 12,000 people in 7,000 homes across the Sydney metropolitan region. We work in partnership to deliver on our vision of providing 'great places for everyone'. We are recognised as a Tier 1 provider under the National Regulatory System for Community Housing. We bring capability and capital to work in partnership with governments, developers and builders, financiers and investors, community groups and individuals within the community. SGCH has worked with a range of partners to attract over \$475 million in investment since 2014 to deliver more social and affordable housing.

We continue to adapt to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic, with social, economic and health challenges on an unprecedented scale. The call to "stay at home" has reinforced the importance of the safety and security of a home. In crisis, access to a safe, sustainable and affordable home is a vital safety net, and in recovery, a crucial springboard.

Our submission is based upon our experience along the spectrum of housing need; we participate in transitional housing programs including;

- **Port Jackson Supported Housing Program** – a Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) program that provides 214 transitional housing tenancies for people who require a high level of support to stabilise their lives and develop the skills needed to maintain long-term tenancies when they exit the program.
- **Together Home** – a DCJ program through which SGCH is supporting 40 tenancies for people experiencing homelessness by providing safe and secure housing with wrap around support services.

PO Box 348, Hurstville BC NSW 1481
P 1800 573 370 F (02) 9585 1564

sgch.com.au
ABN: 32 565 549 842
ACN: 133 729 503

Hurstville Level 5, 38 Humphreys Lane, Hurstville NSW 2220
Bonnyrigg 4 Wall Street, Bonnyrigg NSW 2177
St Leonards Ground Floor, 14-16 Chandos Street, St Leonards NSW 2065
Redfern 11 Gibbons Street, Redfern NSW 2016

SGCH also offers our experience delivering the largest non-government pipeline of new social and affordable housing of over 1,000 units, including 560 new homes for the Social and Affordable Housing Fund. Since the start of 2021, we have delivered 335 new social and affordable homes across Sydney.

Last year, we saw the NSW Government invest in stimulus upgrades to a public housing site in Arncliffe earmarked for redevelopment to address short-term housing need. This is an example of options available to government that address both short-term need and long-term planning and we support the exploration of opportunities across the portfolio to upgrade existing assets and redevelop with uplift in line with the Land and Housing Corporation's Portfolio Strategy.

In our view as a community housing organisation meanwhile use and short-term options are vital to address crisis and transitional housing need however, the most efficient and effective way to address social housing shortage is to build more social housing.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic there were over 50,000 people on the NSW Housing Pathways waitlist. These are households who meet the eligibility criteria for social housing but for whom there is no appropriate housing available. The shortfall for housing options has only been exacerbated since the pandemic first and as we have seen with the current stay-at-home restrictions, it is those in our community in essential services and often casual workforces who are adversely impacted. There are health, financial, education, inclusion and wellbeing considerations we should be taking a long-term view to plan for as a community. The demand for secure, safe and affordable housing will only increase as we recover from the pandemic.

We believe the answer lies in creating certainty and scale to attract investment into social housing as essential social infrastructure for a well-functioning society and economy. If government get the policy settings right, community housing organisations can partner with government, community and the private sector to create a resilient housing system that gives everyone the security of a safe and affordable home.

While there is much to be done as Australia responds to the pandemic and establishes a new normal, SGCH continues to provide stability for the people and communities we serve during these uncertain times. Our role is integral to delivering strong economic, environmental and social outcomes for the benefit of our partners, customers and communities.

Yours sincerely



Barb McKenna

General Manager Customers & Communities