

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

**Organisation:** Armidale Women's Homelessness Support Service

**Date Received:** 13 August 2021



**womensshelter**  
A R M I D A L E

**Submission to:** The inquiry into options to improve access to existing and alternate accommodation to address the social housing shortage.

Committee on Community Services  
Parliament House,  
Macquarie Street,  
Sydney NSW 2000

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## Introduction

The Management Committee of the Armidale Women's Homelessness Support Service (AWHSS) is pleased to respond to the invitation from the Committee on Community Services to provide a submission to the Committee's Inquiry into options to improve access to existing and alternate accommodation to address the social housing shortage.

Armidale Women's Homelessness Support Service provides support to women in risk of homelessness, offers a women's shelter and management of transitional housing within the Armidale district to provide support for the overflow of clients from the shelter in partnership with the local community housing provider, Homes North.

This submission incorporates the advice and information from the management committee, the manager, and staff of the Women's Shelter Armidale (WSA). We have also gathered information from several other service providers, representatives of the local Aboriginal community, and real estate agents within the community to provide a comprehensive report on the social housing needs within Armidale.

This submission has been prepared by two members of the AWHSS management committee. Dr Helena Menih (Lecturer in Criminology, Latrobe University – formerly University of New England) is a specialist in research on women's homelessness. Her current research is examining the barriers for women seeking to access women's shelters in rural communities and the issues for service providers in rural areas based on a case study in Armidale. Dr Elaine Barclay (retired Associate Professor in Criminology, University of New England) is a specialist in rural crime and community studies.

## Our approach to the submission

This submission outlines the key issues pertaining to the availability of social housing in Armidale as well as the problems faced by local service providers in meeting the needs of people facing housing stress. We acknowledge that the problems of homelessness and limited housing options would be greater in the city and in coastal communities, but Armidale and other inland rural and regional communities experience some unique issues that we outline in this submission. We also offer some suggestions to improve access to existing and alternate accommodation that would address the social housing issues in Armidale which *may* be relevant to other communities. We are mindful that no two communities are the same, as our previous research has highlighted the importance of 'place' in understanding why some communities face more social problems than others, and why some services/programs work in some communities, yet fail in others.

This submission has three components:

1. A profile of the Armidale community highlighting the social housing needs.
2. A summary of the issues faced by Women's Shelter Armidale (WSA) and associated support services when supporting people in crisis facing housing stress.
3. Recommendations for options to improve access to existing and alternate accommodation to address the social housing shortage in Armidale and beyond in accordance with the Committee on Community Services's Terms of Reference.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss any aspect of this submission and respond to any questions that arise.

## The Armidale Community

The Armidale Regional Council area is located in the New England Region of New South Wales, 518 kilometres north of Sydney and 464 kilometres south of Brisbane. The Armidale region encompasses a total land area of about 8,600 square kilometres. It is predominantly rural and includes the small townships of Guyra and Tingha, and villages at Ben Lomond, Black Mountain, Ebor, Hillgrove and Wollomombi.

The Estimated Resident Population for the Armidale Regional Council area in 2020 was 29,704 (ABS, 2021a). The 2016 census revealed that the Armidale Regional Council usual resident population was 29,449, living in 12,738 dwellings with an average household size of 2.38. Armidale has long been a tree change community but with the advent of the pandemic, the city has experienced an influx of new residents (largely from the city) encouraged by the ability to work from home and the prospect of a rural lifestyle. Local real estate agents confirmed that Armidale is currently experiencing a strong housing market. Rising house prices have led to an increase in rent although according to local real estate agents, this increase is only 5 to 10 percent. The median weekly rent in Armidale is \$330 (NSW Rent and Sales Report, June 2021).

The 2016 census found 7.9% of the population identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. Since February 2018, Armidale has welcomed over 600 Ezidi refugees from Iraq and Syria under the Federal Government's Humanitarian Settlement Program. Together with the presence of international students from many countries attending the University of New England, Armidale is a culturally diverse community, and this has implications for service providers such as WSA who need to provide culturally safe support for community members. It also places a high demand on access to temporary and social housing.

The local economy is derived from education, agriculture, retail and professional services. Armidale is a centre for education with the University of New England, five private schools, a secondary college, and seven primary schools. Education and training are the largest employers, generating 2,795 local jobs in 2019/20. Data from the year ending June 2020 shows that there were 14,970 jobs available in the Armidale Regional Council area. Yet in the 2021 March quarter, the unemployment rate in Armidale Regional Council was 5.4% (ABS 2021). The SEIFA Index of Disadvantage for Armidale Regional Council area in 2016 was 976 (ABS 2016c). Drought, bushfire, economic decline in recent years and now the pandemic has had a noticeable economic impact. There has been a reduction in the agricultural prosperity in the district and the central business district has witnessed a substantial loss of local businesses. Apart from a tomato farm at Guyra, employment options in the district are limited for unskilled workers.

In recent years, local service providers have experienced a noticeable increase in poverty, with the numbers of community members seeking support as they struggle to live on minimal incomes and trying to cope with rising living costs, particularly high energy costs. Those unable to pay rent find themselves on a cycle of homelessness. As evident in other parts of Australia, an increasing proportion of those facing homelessness in Armidale are older women. Notably, since the drought and bushfires, many community members are seeking support for the first time in their lives.

The lack of public transport in rural areas is an issue for those without their own means. There is a town bus service in Armidale but the costs of taxis are excessive. Service providers are scattered across the community which creates a barrier to access for individuals living outside current bus routes, and especially mothers with small children, the elderly, or those with complex support needs.

In addition, many homeless people tend to move between the coast and Armidale according to the seasons. However, the loss of the coast bus service has meant that those without their own transport have to remain sometime in Armidale, often without accommodation. This is particularly important for our local Aboriginal community which holds strong family links with the community in the Kempsey area, and people travel back and forth accordingly; a common trend in many rural and remote communities.

## Women's Shelter Armidale

WSA provides crisis and short-term accommodation and support for women and children. Exit housing is through Transitional Housing managed in partnership with the local community housing provider, Homes North. The current Shelter is a retrofitted 1960s two-story home which is not fit for purpose and requires significant renovation to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse and high needs client group in Armidale. Four bedrooms and one bathroom are on the second floor accessed by stairs that are a challenge for women who are disabled, elderly, pregnant, or have infants or small children. Community members with several children are crammed into small rooms with limited space between beds. The difficulty of congregated living creates additional stress for traumatised clients and their children and is particularly inappropriate for our culturally diverse community, especially for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women who form 54% of WSA clients.

COVID safety requirements for physical distancing and meticulous hygiene are impossible to meet and places clients and staff at risk. Armidale is, at time of writing, in lockdown. The need to quarantine clients with any symptoms or any other communicable illness has led WSA to house clients in hotels/motels (where available). This is an expensive exercise. This relocation has also removed or limited the WSA's availability to support several clients with complex needs. Many clients require on-site support and much needed case management.

In addition, the shelter cannot accommodate male adolescents within a family group, and can only house one client requiring ground level access (e.g. clients with disabilities). Consequently, some community members have historically remained in violent situations because the shelter is not properly equipped to accommodate their needs. We are aware that some community members for many reasons, elect not to access the shelter for support. The cases and circumstances we outline here are based on our past clientele.

Climate extremes in Armidale, particularly the cold winters, heightens the need for adequate housing. Currently Armidale is experiencing temperatures of minus 6 degrees. During the current winter in Armidale, WSA has been fully occupied at all times and a number of clients had to be referred to alternative options in caravan parks or hotels. It is particularly disturbing for local service providers to know that people, including women and children, are currently living in cars in Armidale. In addition, the Youth Refuge that would normally support young women, recently became uninhabitable due to fire, and new accommodation has only just been established, but with a consequent loss of service continuity.

However, we are pleased to report that AWHSS has just received funding to add 4 self-contained units with private bathroom, kitchen and living facilities to the Shelter. These additional short-term accommodation units will double the number of clients that WSA can accommodate and expand our ability to provide comprehensive case management to aid the clients in developing a long-term plan to avoid further vulnerabilities which often result in homelessness and other well-being issues. There will be less need to turn away community members not suited to congregate living which will decrease the use of temporary and brokerage accommodation.

While we are excited about the expanse of crisis accommodation, there remains a significant shortage within the Armidale district of transitional housing as well as social housing to provide for clients beyond the crisis support provided through the shelter. We are especially concerned with lack of safe transitional and social housing available for our most vulnerable clients.

The following issues of concern regarding crisis and temporary housing for WSA and other service providers in Armidale are outlined according to the Terms of Reference for this Inquiry.

**a) options to better support 'meanwhile use' (temporary supportive accommodation), and the current major planning barriers to 'meanwhile use';**

- There are only 15 transitional housing properties within Armidale. Support for clients beyond this capacity is access to local hotels, motels and caravan parks (when available) and this is a costly option for limited budgets. In addition, these alternatives restrict WSA's ability to support clients with complex needs and ensure the safety of vulnerable clients.
- Thus Armidale **urgently** requires more emergency and temporary accommodation. This was a resounding plea from all those interviewed. There is a specific need for one or two nights' accommodation. Currently, some motels are not accepting referrals. Local hotel rooms are a default option but are not appropriate especially for young girls, mothers with infants, domestic and family violence clientele or those in drug or alcohol recovery. In many situations, people cannot be accommodated. Motel and caravan park owners/managers do require incentives to provide emergency and temporary accommodation to accommodate the risk sometimes associated with people in crisis.
- Temporary accommodation is a specific need for local Aboriginal people exiting prison as the inability to find them a stable place to stay, prevents their ability to provide an address for their court documents and ultimately their release. This is unacceptable and perpetuates the over-incarceration of Aboriginal people in Australia. Males presenting with drug and alcohol addiction have access to short term accommodation through Freeman House but otherwise, there are few alternatives.
- Another barrier to effective 'meanwhile use' is the location of housing of disadvantaged people in areas which present a risk for clients. For example, in Armidale, a woman in early drug and alcohol recovery who escaped domestic and family violence is currently housed in a street with two active dealers and a neighbour who is drunk and abusive daily. Her children are afraid to go outside, she is constantly verbally sexually harassed as she enters and leaves her home. Thus, the physical location of transitional housing and social housing is an important consideration for planners. There have been several cases at WSA throughout the years where a client had to refuse an offer of certain transitional and social housing because it was located in the same area where the domestic and family violence perpetrator or perpetrator's family lived. By refusing, this poses further issues for the client, who is placed at the bottom of the waiting list for housing.
- There is a four year wait for social housing in Armidale (see Appendix 1).
- Accordingly, there is a lack of exit options for Transitional Housing tenants. If they return to homelessness, many of the gains from the tenancy are lost. If they remain in the Transitional Housing property, then the Transitional Housing process ceases to function as there is no turnover in housing availability. Importantly, the lack of well supported Transitional Housing does not allow time for clients to learn tenancy skills and move into permanent accommodation.
- One important recommendation is for Transitional Housing to have a fixed term of between 9 to 12 months. Six months is too short a period for clients to stabilise while two years is too long. Meanwhile use should provide a landing board for people in crisis to recover and then move on. If people remain too long in Transitional Housing, they come to regard it as home and no longer think about what is their next step. A well managed Transitional Housing program with a fixed term of nine months is key to Transitional Housing working or not.
- The climate extremes in Armidale, particularly over winter, present a barrier for people on minimal incomes who struggle to pay high energy bills. Many older homes in Armidale rely on wood fires for heating, but the cost of wood is high. Some people purchase cheap fan heaters but the running costs are extreme and support services are increasingly providing emergency relief for excessive energy bills and advocating with energy companies to avoid power

disconnections. To reduce energy costs for residents, social housing should have solar power, insulation in walls and ceilings and ideally reverse cycle air-conditioning for effective, economical and necessary climate control.

- There is an urgent need for funding to provide through-care case work to support people with high needs into housing and maintain that tenancy. While WSA does provide such support for clients within the shelter and while in transitional housing, other local service providers may provide access to housing, but their level of funding and workload precludes the necessary case management to support people to maintain that tenancy. The provision of housing alone is not sufficient for people with complex needs who may require life skills and wrap around supports to address the other issues they may experience to manage their tenancy. Housing First principles advocate for providing homeless people with immediate access to long-term, sustainable accommodation whilst providing holistic, wrap around supports through a range of complementary support services. However, this does require adequate human and financial resources to achieve the best outcomes for homeless people. This submission recommends that funding for such case management is a priority to address the cycle of homelessness and improve the efficacy and capacity of 'meanwhile use'.
- However, while the Housing First principles are ideal, in reality is unlikely to succeed in a private low-cost housing market in Armidale without the availability of this ongoing support. Real estate agents disagree with the Housing First concept; rather they maintain that people with high support needs require support and education *before* they access the private market. Thus, the Housing First concept needs to be sold to the private property market. The ongoing case management support for clients, therefore needs to be provided and promoted as part of the Housing First approach.
- **Access to the private market in Armidale:** The availability of properties that are affordable, safe and in proximity of services (or schools) required by clients, are limited. Most of the private market properties in affordable range (for our clients) are located outside of the city centre, which tend to be geographically inconvenient for clientele needing to access specific services (or schools) regularly.
- Local real estate agents claimed that support services often cease once a person is housed in private rentals and that there is a need to educate people on their need to pay their rent and maintain a property. One agent will not rent to people referred through some service providers because of the problems that ensue when tenants fail to pay rent or care for a property. However, this is a complex issue. Clients' needs are often too complex for the level of support funded, and some support providers may lack the necessary skills to meet the demand. Thus contracting specialised support services to address this gap in support would be ideal - although this would need to be linked to adequate funding to support very complex clients.
- **Mental Health:** In recent years, service providers have observed an increase in the number of people with mental health issues, alcohol and/or other drug addictions and complex needs in the community. This is of particular concern as many are unable to maintain a tenancy which leads to homelessness. Many live on the road but transience does not allow their mental health to be addressed.

There is a need for more GPs with an interest in and expertise in treating mental health issues. Armidale does have the Clark Centre, a mental health facility for those voluntarily seeking help, but for patients who have been sectioned, the nearest facility is in Tamworth, an hour and a half journey from Armidale. While a similar high-end facility would be ideal in Armidale, what is basically needed is ongoing wrap around support through case management for those with mental health issues.

Service providers report that people in social housing are experiencing psychotic episodes alone, without support, and this can also result in property damage. For example, two social housing



properties have been recently burnt down. This concern could be addressed by the availability of residential care facilities that provide 24-hour care for people with mental health and/or complex needs with a history of homelessness or are at risk of homelessness and are unable to live independently. There are no services for youth with complex mental health issues in Armidale. Local service providers are keen to establish a trauma rehabilitation centre in Armidale. As some reported, drug and alcohol issues are often a result of long term complex mental health. People need support with managing medications and any associated side effects. There is also a danger of individuals self-medicating, which tends to lead to further issues, including contact with the criminal justice system. Families of individuals with mental health also need respite. The financial cost of providing such a rehabilitation centre would be far less than the greater call on health and welfare services for people in crisis as well as the cost of maintaining social housing properties.

## **b) options to improve access to existing accommodation to provide community housing**

- **Local Government initiatives:** A positive action in Armidale has been the establishment of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Armidale Regional Council and Homes North which is committed to applying resources and collaborating to “identify and promote affordable housing opportunities; develop an Affordable Housing Strategy and Policy, including consideration of potential planning incentives, and inclusionary zoning opportunities and issues, and seek to develop affordable housing projects including identifying, and considering the feasibility of utilising potential Council land holdings for the purpose”. This is a sound platform to expand social and transitional housing stocks in Armidale with NSW State Government support.
- The MOU has also resulted in the development of a community hub in Armidale to be opened in 2022 which will greatly improve access to services for local people seeking support. This clustering of service providers in a central place will greatly assist in targeted wrap around support for clients and avoid the over or under servicing of clients. In addition, it will contribute to the improvement of communication between services and failing clients by ‘losing track’ of them.
- **Access to existing accommodation to provide community housing:** There are a number of vacant buildings in Armidale that could be repurposed to provide more temporary, short-term, and even long-term social housing. Notably, economic downturn has left several vacant buildings in the central business district. If the government purchased an existing vacant building that could be refurbished for temporary or long-term social housing, ongoing management could be provided by local service providers and the wider community. For example, currently there are eight motels for sale or lease in Armidale. One motel was recently sourced for the youth refuge following a fire in the current refuge. The motel provides one or two bedrooms with an ensuite and there is a communal meeting area. Purchase and repurposing of motels would address the dearth of temporary accommodation and provide the supports people need to transit to longer term accommodation. The motel structure would provide not only accommodation, but communal areas and conference rooms for meetings, education and training programs. Kitchens and dining rooms could allow for traineeships in hospitality to provide for future employment.
- **Private investment in social housing:** The concept of developer responsibilities to provide a small proportion of a new development for affordable housing is an excellent initiative and is a part of Armidale Regional Council policy. However, this policy is not mandatory in NSW. If this initiative was made mandatory, it would improve social housing stocks in all communities.
- To address the increasing numbers of older women in housing stress, it is recommended that a variety of options of affordable and safely located housing for older women be made available. For example, if government purchased large homes to provide shared accommodation for single



older women, it would provide safety and companionship for some; although not all. This initiative has recently been discussed by a number of homelessness services nation-wide.

- Partnerships with private enterprise, such as providers of modular housing for the provision of low cost 'tiny' houses as produced by Armidale based business UniPlan could address housing shortages. Council could provide land to establish these low cost, tiny houses (approximately \$18,500 at Uniplan) with a central space for congregation, barbeque, playground etc. Local service clubs could be invited to contribute to the establishment. The location would need to be separate for men and women and should not be concentrated in one area as this can lead to a negative perception by the wider community. Long term sustainability of these buildings cannot be assured and such a plan will need to be linked in with ongoing funding for maintenance.
- It would also be useful to examine models of cooperative housing implemented by social housing providers and charities in other States that have proven to be effective.
- Headleasing in the private rental market by the state for sub-lease to clients approved for social housing could be expanded.
- Maintenance on social housing could be improved through pro bono work that certain services offer with encouragement through government's incentives or subsidies.

#### c) options for crisis, key-worker and other short term accommodation models;

- As above, the common theme in all reports from this community is the need for funding to be targeted towards providing ongoing case management for people with high support needs to support them into short term and stable long term social housing and maintain that tenancy. WSA does provide advice and training for clients within the shelter designed to develop the skills required to maintain a tenancy. Programs, such as *Rent It Keep It*, are provided often in partnership with other service providers. Clients are also referred to other services as necessary. For example, clients seeking financial advice are referred to the Salvation Army financial adviser. This inter-agency model of support could be extended with financial support to expand the skills and capacity of local service providers.
- New models, internationally called 'Safe Homes', are community-based networks of private homes that shelter women and their children. They typically offer short stay placements, but placements can be longer if required, and they provide outreach services in small rural communities that are often geographically far apart. Unlike Transitional Housing, women live independently without staff onsite. Such programs would be beneficial to be adapted to Australian rural communities. Of course individuals offering their homes would receive subsidies by the government.

#### d) barriers to additional supply across NSW, including for smaller non-CHP housing providers

***What changes need to occur to leverage sufficient investment in affordable housing from the private, philanthropic and public sectors?***

Cultural attitudes towards housing in Australia which view home ownership as a life goal as well as a means of creating wealth, is counterproductive to opportunities for social housing. This social norm is evident within the Armidale community. One real estate agent observed a strong trend in the past five years towards housing as a financial investment rather than a basic need.

Changing such entrenched values is difficult but there may be opportunity to provide incentives to encourage the private sector to commit to supporting social housing options in their local community. However, there was consensus among those interviewed that unless property owners take a philanthropic approach to provide social housing, this is unlikely to occur. Fundamentally, there is a need to reduce the risk for property owners. There is no incentive for property owners; no reason to invest in social housing apart from an individual's commitment to philanthropy. The fact is

that some of those requiring social housing are not a good risk. Agents must represent landlords and they prefer not to rent to those who present without a reference. However, agents interviewed were empathetic to those facing housing stress and will reconsider an application from those who have reportedly turned their lives around. They also maintained that property owners would be open to providing more low-cost housing **IF** the risk was reduced.

We are aware that the majority of Armidale wider community does not see homelessness as a major issue, especially for women escaping violence. This is often because homelessness is hidden. Interviews with WSA staff confirmed that they are of opinion that there is not enough awareness in the community of these important and detrimental social problems. Lack of awareness influences how the community approaches and/or supports individuals who are struggling with or are at risk of homelessness.

Changing attitudes towards “*those people*” among the local community of possible private investors could be addressed by a marketing campaign that focuses on the needs of children in families in housing stress as life should not be based on a lottery of the family in which you are born.

#### **e) support for and accountability of registered community housing providers.**

- Armidale urgently needs more transitional and social housing properties to meet demand. Services across Armidale community are at full capacity.
- Much of the current housing stock in Armidale is in a poor condition and property management is wanting in many cases. The void properties (properties uninhabitable to pending repairs and /or cleaning) are not processed in a timely fashion. Repairs can take months and properties remain vacant in the meantime. One interviewee reported that several of the social housing properties in Armidale are currently boarded up. However, as of the 31<sup>st</sup> July, Homes North have assumed full management of their properties and are keen to address this gap in service provision. Their policy is not to board up properties as it creates a negative image of housing providers in the community. They have reduced the maintenance wait time from 120 to 28 days and have spent considerable funds in repairs. Their aim is to have a quick turn around on maintenance work on Homes North properties in the future. Management and maintenance of other social housing in Armidale needs to be improved.
- Community Housing providers could be more diligent in monitoring delays in rent payments to avoid large debts accruing.
- Ideally, tenancy should be stable to avoid disruption for families through constant moving in and out of accommodation. This is particularly important for children to avoid interruption to their education. In the past, WSA were required to house women from other nearby towns due to the lack of availability which caused disruption to children’s schooling. It is counterproductive for people who are already in crisis to be placed in short-term transitional accommodation, when they require housing stability in order to address the challenges they face.
- Housing needs to be located in safe areas with easy access for vulnerable women and children to schools, shopping areas and other important services.
- In short, there is to increase the supply of safe, affordable, accessible, appropriate, durable and secure homes for people on very low to moderate incomes. Social Housing should not be clustered in one area as this leads to such spaces attracting a negative stigma and does not provide a safe and supportive environment for clients moving into the area.
- Importantly, there is a need to provide a comprehensive maintenance program fit-for-purpose homes. This could also provide jobs and an economic boost to local businesses.
- To reduce the maintenance costs, many clients need practical advice on how to manage and maintain a home, how to maintain a lawn, rubbish removal etc. As one service provider noted, clients do not lack of desire to care for a home, it is more a lack of understanding. The Lions Club

in the NSW town of Wellington offered a program visiting homes and providing advice and practical help. The club was also successful in accessing a grant to support the work. Such a concept would be useful to roll out to other communities.

- A maintenance program can be linked to increasing employment skills, and employment strategies, in particular, employment for young Aboriginal people and CALD people in our community.
- **Increase the reliability of homelessness data collections for better allocation of resources.** We believe that the extent and nature of homeless people particularly in rural and regional areas is not fully recorded in census data nor in regular data collections drawn from service providers. Although several studies have been conducted on homelessness in Australia, less attention has been afforded to homelessness in rural and remote areas. Where studies do consider rural Australia, data for areas outside major city centres are often combined as 'regional'. This ignores the great diversity across rural Australia and limits understanding of the lived experience of homeless people according to degrees of remoteness.

Current Homelessness data may underestimate the extent and needs of rural homelessness, particularly for Indigenous Australians and the difficulty in gathering data on transient populations who often move between coastal and inland communities depending upon the weather or for the need to travel home to country or family reasons. The NSW Government's annual street count again provides current data but lacks qualitative understanding of why people are sleeping rough and what are their needs. Conducting the annual street count requires different strategies in regional areas. The process works in metropolitan areas, however different processes need to be used in rural areas, otherwise the results continue to be inaccurate, with ongoing impact on perception of need and allocation of funding.

For many complex reasons, some people do not access support from Specialist Homelessness Services in rural communities. It would be useful to gather more detailed information on people in housing stress who seek emergency support through Neighbourhood or community centres or similar agencies in rural and regional communities that provide a soft entry point for people in crisis seeking support. For example, in recent years, Neighbourhood Centres in the New England region have experienced a noticeable rise in the numbers of people in housing stress. Increasingly Neighbourhood Centre staff are advocating with local housing providers and other support agencies to prevent evictions.


Gathering more detailed quantitative and qualitative data on homelessness issues provided by these agencies will improve an understanding of nature of the social housing requirements in rural communities. It is recommended that data be gathered on the ways in which homelessness varies across rural areas by degrees of remoteness, what are the pathways to homelessness, and the barriers to accessing Specialist Housing Services (SHS) in rural areas, what support exists where no SHS are in place, and identify 'What works' in regards to effective homelessness services or supports in rural communities. Importantly, neighbourhood centres will necessarily require more financial support to increase their capacity to provide such data.

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## Appendix 1:

### The allocation zone NN43 Armidale



#### Guide to waiting times for social housing at 30 June 2020

The NSW Department of Communities and Justice has released updated information on the expected social housing waiting times for general applicants. This information gives general housing applicants an idea of how long they may need to wait for a social housing property in specific areas across NSW.

简体中文

繁體中文

#### Do you know your allocation zone?

(An allocation zone is a group of areas or towns where social housing is available.)

☒ Yes  
☐ No

**Choose an allocation zone**

NN43 Armidale

The allocation zone is NN43 Armidale.

Expected waiting times for general applicants	NN43 Armidale
Expected waiting time for a studio/1-bedroom property	2 to 5 years
Expected waiting time for a 2-bedroom property	5 to 10 years
Expected waiting time for a 3-bedroom property	2 to 5 years
Expected waiting time for a 4+ bedroom property	Up to 2 years

#### Applicants at 30 June 2020 for NN43 Armidale

General 233

Priority 13

If you wish to apply for housing assistance except transfers, you can call our Housing Contact Centre on **1800 422 322** for help or apply online from our [website](#).

#### Applicants on the NSW Housing Register at 30 June 2020

General 46,087

Priority 5,308

If you wish to know more about our social housing properties, our [Social Housing Residential Dwellings Dashboard](#) provides the information by location, housing provider, property type and bedroom category across NSW.