

16 August 2022

Our ref: ADC22/46

NSW Legislative Council
Standing Committee on Social Issues

By email only to: socialissues@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Dear Chair

Supplementary submission to the Inquiry into homelessness amongst older people aged over 55 in NSW

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the supplementary questions from the Committee, in addition to our [submission](#) of 14 June 2022, and evidence before the Committee on 18 July 2022.

Supplementary questions from the Committee

1. **50% of older people have a disability.**
 - a. **Is there existing social housing out there that addresses this need?**
 - b. **If not, what programs can be put in place to address this demand?**

Not all older people with disability, or people with disability more broadly, need social housing. It is important that a range of options are available to deliver sufficient safe, secure and affordable housing to older people, including those with disability.

There is a particular need to ensure that housing options are accessible. In our submission to the Committee, we highlighted the substantial deficit that exists in relation to accessible emergency or crisis accommodation in NSW, which presents significant challenges for older people and adults with disability who are leaving abuse. However, we recognise that accessible housing is a broader problem in NSW. In relation to future builds, we note that NSW has not yet committed to adopting the new mandatory minimum accessibility standards in the updated National Construction Code. It is not clear why this is the case – ensuring that residential accommodation meets minimum accessibility standards benefits all citizens, including as they age, and may help to reduce demand for the limited pool of accessible social housing.

As noted by many parties throughout this Inquiry, there is insufficient social housing in NSW to meet demand, even with the priority group of older people being set at 80 years and older. While some of the older people in contact with the ADC tend to also meet other social housing priority criteria, such as having a disability, it is evident that supply is still inadequate to meet their needs. We recognise that there is social housing that can accommodate older people, including those with disability, but the supply does not meet

current needs, let alone the projected growth in the number of older people – noting that by 2031 one in three citizens is projected to be over 65 years of age.

Having reviewed other submissions and evidence provided to the Inquiry, we support recommendations in the submission by NSW Ageing on the Edge Forum, including the calls for the NSW Government to build 5,000 social and affordable homes per year for 10 years, with at least 20% for older people; and establishment of a specialist older person's housing information and support service to find and retain social housing. The latter recommendation taps into key aspects of our evidence to the Committee about the importance of enabling older people to have voice and presence, including by facilitating a proactive and person centred approach to make it easier for older people to get the housing and support they need.

In terms of meeting current and future needs, we support the calls by NSW Ageing on the Edge Forum for greater transparency and timely public reporting on housing data, including:

- social and priority housing waiting list data, by age, gender, disability status and geographic area
- the number of social and affordable housing dwellings available in NSW, including age and gender breakdown of allocations
- the number of dwellings assigned under the State Environmental Planning Policy (Housing for Seniors and People with a Disability) 2004 (Seniors SEPP)
- the number of dwellings built under housing commitments in the NSW Homelessness Strategy 2018 2023; Social and Affordable Housing Fund; and Community Housing Innovation Fund.

We also urge transparency and regular public reporting on the number and proportion of social, affordable and emergency housing in NSW that is accessible.

Please do not hesitate to contact my office if we can be of further assistance.

Yours sincerely

Robert Fitzgerald AM
Ageing and Disability Commissioner