

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL ISSUES
INQUIRY INTO HOMELESSNESS AMONGST OLDER PEOPLE AGED OVER 55 IN NEW SOUTH
WALES**

Supplementary questions: Ms Zoë Dendle, A/Executive Director, Housing, Homelessness and Disability, Strategy, Policy and Commissioning, NSW Department of Communities and Justice and Ms Nefley Hetherington, A/Director, Strategy and Design, Housing, Homelessness and Disability, NSW Department of Communities and Justice

1. In Submission [71](#) there is a call NSW to create Fifteen Thousand homes per year for 14 years to accommodate for those expected to become homeless.

a. Do you have any recommendations on how this could be achieved?

b. Have you come across any programs in other states that have achieved similar goals?

RESPONSE:

a. Do you have any recommendations on how this could be achieved?

The NSW Government is committed to delivering more and better social and affordable housing across NSW. This commitment has been called out in the NSW Government's housing strategy Housing 2041, social housing strategy Future Directions for Social Housing in NSW, and Aboriginal housing strategy Strong Family, Strong Communities.

Future Directions for Social Housing in NSW is the Government's ten year strategy to increase social housing supply and drive better outcomes for social housing tenants through programs such as Communities Plus and the Social and Affordable Housing Fund (SAHF). SAHF expects to deliver a total of 3,486 additional social and affordable dwellings across NSW by the end of 2024.

Following earlier success, the Community Housing Innovation Fund (CHIF) is now a \$152.5 million program. Over 570 dwellings are already in the pipeline to be delivered under the CHIF with an estimated total 700.

NSW Government is also actively exploring alternative opportunities to increase social housing supply and meet sustained demand through the work of the NSW Land and Housing Corporation (LAHC), which owns the largest social housing portfolio in Australia of approximately 125,000 social homes. LAHC has a 20-year Portfolio Strategy to grow and change the portfolio to meet current and future needs, and continually reviews its portfolio for opportunities to deliver more and better housing, provide a better experience for tenants, and renew communities.

Since 2020, around \$1.3 billion in new funding has been allocated to LAHC to bring forward planned property renewals, deliver new social homes, and bring forward maintenance and upgrades to existing social homes, including in flood affected locations:

- The 2020-21 NSW Budget included \$812 million for housing and homelessness services, including funding to LAHC to deliver more than 1,200 new social homes, upgrade over 12,000 social properties, and create 1,000 affordable vacant land lots for sale to build private homes.
- On 16 October 2021, the NSW Government announced a further \$183 million package, which included \$80 million for LAHC to fast-track more than 1,400 new social homes across NSW.

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- More recently, the 2022-23 NSW Budget Housing Package included a \$300 million capital maintenance program to rejuvenate 15,800 social homes and keep 455 from becoming un-tenantable, and deliver 120 new homes through the Together Home Transition Program and extending the life of properties.

In 2021-22, LAHC delivered over 500 new homes, a 26% increase on the previous financial year. A further 562 more new homes were committed in 2021-22. This is in addition to delivery of business as usual funded and stimulus repair and maintenance programs to existing dwellings.

Additional delivery social housing dwellings is dependent on collaboration and shared investment by the Commonwealth, Community Housing Providers, and other relevant stakeholders.

b. Have you come across any programs in other states that have achieved similar goals?

No state or territory has announced a social housing dwelling delivery program of 15,000 dwellings per year. Some examples of recent investment by other jurisdictions include:

- Commonwealth Government commitment to build 10,000 affordable housing dwellings and 20,000 social housing dwellings in the first five years of the Housing Australia Future Fund.
- The Victorian Government announcement of its \$5.3 billion Big Housing Build in November 2020, to deliver more than 12,000 new homes for people in need.
- \$1.8 billion over 10 years through the Queensland Housing Strategy, 2017-2027 to deliver 4,522 new social homes and 1,034 new affordable homes.
- WA Government in October 2020 launched a \$319 million Social Housing Economic Recovery package which will refurbish 1,500 homes, build and purchase about 250 new dwellings and deliver a regional maintenance program to 3,800 homes.

2. Submission [45](#) notes that NSW has a shortage of affordable rental housing particularly in rural, regional areas, a trend exacerbated by the onset of COVID-19. Regional and rural areas would have the advantage of greater availability of land. If the government released more land for development and combined it with the proposed housing models outlined in Alternative housing models for precariously housed older Australians report (this report is referenced in submission [41](#)), would that not go far in solving a great deal of the social housing shortage?

RESPONSE:

The NSW Government is considering how the Crown estate can assist in addressing housing supply and affordability, while also balancing the important public value of Crown land to NSW communities and interests of Native Title holders and Aboriginal Land Councils.

Crown Lands is partnering with the NSW Land and Housing Corporation (LAHC) and Local Aboriginal Land Councils on projects to deliver new homes, such as the Cooma project which will enable as many as 250 homes to be built on what is currently Crown land, with a mix of social, affordable and private houses proposed. While Cooma is the first community to

benefit from this pilot, work is underway to consider opportunities in other areas across regional NSW, including different housing types and targeted cohorts.

3. Are there affordable housing programs out there that offer a mix of government and private funding? What do such projects need with regards to funding and legislation to be successful?

RESPONSE:

The NSW Government is delivering new and replacement social housing in mixed tenure communities, alongside affordable housing and private housing, in partnership with the private sector and community housing providers. Funding requirements vary according to the particular project.

The Government has recently simplified the planning regulations in recognition of the need for a wider range of housing types. A key commitment under Housing 2041, the *State Environmental Planning Policy (Housing) 2021* (Housing SEPP) began in November 2021. The Housing SEPP gives incentives to supply affordable and diverse housing in the right places and for every stage of life. The SEPP:

- brings together five existing SEPPs which share the theme of housing into a single SEPP
- streamlines some of the provisions from those existing SEPPs
- updates a number of provisions, particularly those relating to boarding houses and seniors housing
- introduces two new housing types, co-living housing and independent living units and
- reduces inconsistencies between similar provisions for different housing types.

The Community Housing Innovation Fund (CHIF) is a key example of Government and community housing providers working together to deliver social and affordable housing. CHIF is a \$150 million program under which the NSW Government provides an upfront grant and Community Housing providers contribute financial resources (equity, debt, land) and may also commit non-financial resources (the value of concessions and donations available to charities) to the development. Partnerships are encouraged between CHPs and others (i.e. developers, councils, support services, etc.) especially where they improve tenancy management, boost property viability and amenity, and strengthen tenants' social outcomes.

Similarly, the NSW Government leverages its own social housing portfolio to provide new and replacement social housing. This approach enables new supply by:

- unlocking high value, well-located land
- accessing the private and community housing sectors' unique capacity and financing arrangements, and
- enabling sales and affordable rental proceeds to be reinvested.

Examples of housing produced by such partnerships include:

- The Cowper Street Glebe project, which is a mix of 247 privately owned units (50%), 153 social housing units (30%) and 90 affordable housing units (20%).
- Hume Community Housing has produced 14 units social and affordable housing with Government land, \$2.66 million grant and \$3.925 million debt equity.
- Wentworth Housing delivered 24 affordable housing units which will be held in perpetuity, in the Penrith LGA with \$1.13million allocated from Penrith City Council, \$3.975million land grant, \$8.199million Debt Equity and \$1.13million from DCJ.
- The St Mary's Affordable Housing Project, which is based at the former Australian Defence Industries site in St Mary's.

- DCJ is working with BlueCHP, community housing provider, to produce 120 affordable lots.
- Land at nil consideration has been provided by the developer Lendlease, with grant funds through State Government and CHP debt is resulting in over 135 dwellings being delivered.
- Similar arrangements in Rouse Hill resulted in 50 dwellings produced by Link Wentworth.

LAHC is also progressing a number of larger scale mixed tenure estate renewal projects, including:

- Seven major sites in the delivery phase: Midtown Macquarie Park, Telopea, Arncliffe, Villawood, Airds, Claymore and Bonnyrigg.
- Five major sites which are currently under investigation, in the planning or procurement phase at Riverwood, Waterloo, Franklyn Street, Glebe, South Eveleigh and Redfern.
- A medium sized project in Glebe, delivering 100 per cent new social apartments has moved into the construction phase, with 75 new social homes to be built.
- 14 small to medium scale mixed tenure renewal projects, which will also deliver around 1,000 new homes. Three projects have already been completed at Glendale, Lane Cove North and Corrimal.

4. 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?

RESPONSE:

The NSW Government is addressing this need both through new social housing development programs, and modification of existing social housing stock.

Initiatives such as the \$1.1 billion Social and Affordable Housing Fund (SAHF) provide access to social and affordable homes together with coordinated access to tailored support services. Ninety six percent of 3,020 homes completed by 30 June 2022 by registered Community Housing Providers awarded contracts met at least the Silver Standard Liveable Housing Australia (LHA) guidelines. By the end of the SAHF dwelling delivery phase in 2024, 3,402 of the 3,486 dwellings are expected to meet the LHA Silver Standard.

Land and Housing Corporation in DPE funds both minor and major modifications to existing Government-owned social housing stock. If a property is no longer suitable for a person, there may be opportunities to modify the home they are in through the DCJ Disability Modifications Policy.

LAHC provides minor modifications on the basis of Occupational Therapist reports, and in some cases, letters or reports from a treating doctor or other health professional. For requests for major modifications, the requests will be assessed by LAHC to determine if the property is able to be modified to the tenant's needs. If the property is not suitable to be modified, the Department will work with the tenant to transfer to a more suitable property.

5. What's the average time for an application for social housing to be assessed and approved?

RESPONSE:

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This information is not publicly reported.

6. How many people are over 80 years in the current general housing waiting list in the last 5 financial years and how many people over 80 years in the general waiting list were added to the priority list in the same period?

RESPONSE:

Information on households by the age of the household head aged 55 and over is publicly available on the DCJ website.

Between financial years 2017-2021 there were 78,547 households on the NSW Housing Register where the head applicant was aged 55 and over. These households were listed as:

- Priority applicant households, totalling 8,001 households,
- General households totalling 70,546 households (includes HEP households).

Data on the number of households on the NSW Housing Register including people of a given age are not publicly available.

7. How many older people in social housing transitioned to aged care in the last 5 years?

RESPONSE:

This data is not public available.

8. What is the rationale for NSW Homelessness Strategy 2018-2023 to identify older women as those over 55 years?

RESPONSE:

The age of over 55 years is a threshold that is conventionally used in the area of homelessness assistance to denote 'older persons'. For example, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census *Estimating Homelessness* report delineates those over 55 as being 'older'¹.

9. Why is there no consistency in relation to age of older people across different NSW government policy documents?

RESPONSE:

Different age brackets across policy documents can be a result of many factors, including operational considerations relevant to policy settings, or equity in the delivery of services to different client cohorts. For example, the older and elderly age groups used in the social housing system.

- the Housing Pathways eligibility age threshold for Housing Elderly Persons (HEP code) is age 80 for non-Aboriginal people and age 55 for Aboriginal people, and
- the eligibility age threshold for Seniors Communities housing is age 55 for non-Aboriginal people and 45 for Aboriginal people.

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics *Census of Population and Housing: Estimating Homelessness*, <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/housing/census-population-and-housing-estimating-homelessness/2016>

Both these distinctions are policy settings that recognise the greater levels of ill health and shorter life expectancy experienced by the Aboriginal community.

10. How many units are dedicated/available under Senior SEPPs, Pensioner (PPPH) housing and Public housing senior communities (PPOPH) The properties in these public housing complexes are specifically for older people? More information: <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/housing/policies/social-housing-eligibility-allocations-policy-supplement/chapters/matching-and-offering-a-property-to-a-client>

RESPONSE:

As at 30 June 2022, there were a total of 23,470 properties that were dedicated under the Senior SEPPs, pensioner housing and public housing senior communities programs owned and managed by LAHC, the NSW Government social housing provider. This is in addition to a small number of LAHC-owned community housing provider-managed properties which were delivered under the Nation Building Economic Stimulus program.

Program Name	Public Housing	Community Housing	Grand Total
COMM HOUSING ACQUISITION PGM - PENSIONER		1,044	1,044
HOUSING FOR THE AGED (PENSIONERS)	18,154		18,154
NBESP CH PENSIONER NO.2		21	21
NBESP HNSW PENSIONER NO.2	126		126
OLDER PERSONS HOUSING STRATEGY	3,903		3,903
OTHER	222		222
Grand Total	22,405	1,065	23,470