

**Submission
No 141**

**INQUIRY INTO SOCIAL, PUBLIC AND AFFORDABLE
HOUSING**

Name: Mr Peter Harris

Date received: 25/02/2014

The Director
Select Committee on Social, Public and Affordable Housing
NSW Parliament House
Macquarie St.
Sydney NSW 2000

We are a group of community housing tenants. We are also members of the NSW Community Housing Tenant Network Representative Committee, but because of deadline restrictions, we are writing to you as individual tenants. Our views are our own and not necessarily those of the Network.

Sir/Madam,

We are very concerned that Public Housing stock, far from growing to meet the needs of the NSW people, is actually diminishing. We feel that:-

- (1) This has placed added stress on homeless people, people that have applied for housing, but not yet received same and tenants who wish to move to other areas for whatever reason. Those stress levels have risen to the point that health problems, both physical and mental, have increased to alarming heights.
- (2) Has caused over-crowding in present housing, with all of it's attendant problems.
- (3) Might encourage providers, especially Housing NSW, to put in place "Emergency Conditions", to the detriment of their tenants
- (4) Might encourage the NSW Government to pass "Emergency" legislation, also to the detriment of tenants.
- (5) Security of Tenure Some Housing NSW tenants feel they will lose their "rights" to have permanent housing if they transfer to Community Housing. They know little about Community Housing, and think it is either a commune, or connected to a real estate group. There needs to be consultation with the Community Housing Provider they are going to, maybe two separate meetings, to assure them that they will be looked after at least as well as they were under Housing NSW

- (1) Stop selling public housing on the open market without replacing such stock at equal levels within geographical areas-preventing mass migration to large unmanageable estates in areas of less employment opportunities

Redevelop rather than sell

- (2) High priority housing for single parent families now attempting to survive on Newstart. Innovative support programs in place via social housing to assist equal opportunity. Their children are our next generation Increase community development programs to assist inclusion and to assist the learning of new skills and future employment opportunities
- (3) maintain housing stock to prevent ultimately high cost repairs etc due to long term neglect Create working/voluntary opportunities for tenants to be involved in maintenance such as painting, small repairs etc-creating a sense of pride by all Apprenticeship/new skill opportunities
- (4) Bring back the "work it" program for social housing tenants. Improve and adjust the program and adjust thinking in relation to disincentive of slightly higher incomes at the risk of the loss of a home

1. Restart the transferring of the Housing n.s.w stocks to Community Housing Associations. So they can leverage against those stocks,with good risk management,to create new Developments and Re developments.All to house more tenants.

2. With good Risk Management tap into the now \$32 Billion in Superannuation Funds to alleviate the housing crisis and the many social services connected to tenants,health,education and transport etc.

3. Investigate Potential of Crowd Funding eg Social Housing Bonds via the Internet.

4. It's likely with the Disability Insurance Scheme coming in there will be a increase in High Needs tenants in social housing. At the same time there will be social housing tenants now on a disability pension,be transferred to Newstart.

Being on a Newstart allowance means all social housing organisations will receive less income from rental payments.

What is potentially crippling and adding to poverty and further homelessness is people in private rental on a disability pension only just covering expenses, being forced onto Newstart

5. Further to increase New Start payment.

6. Our Population is rapidly increasing with a percentage aged over 65 increasing more rapidly. With property developments and re- developments,there must be universal design to cater for ageing and disabled tenants.

Also now with the collapse of the Australian Car Manufacturing Industry, there will be former employees going into financial crisis.Then later, will be on Social or Affordable Housing waiting lists.

Also with more and more refugees,we need to speed up the increase of Social and Affordable Housing now ! !

(1) the lack of proper upkeep of public housing leads to unsafe living conditions which puts tenants at risk.

(2) The lack of upkeep also leads to dilapidation creating a pretext for the sale of public housing to private institutions and individuals.

(3) A report tabled in NSW parliament in February 2014 by Peter Achterstraat stated that 120,000 people are on the waiting list for housing and this will lead to 83,000 being left in limbo by 2016.

(4) A bedroom tax is a heartless and inadequate solution put forward by the Minister for FACS, Pru Goward. Once rent and rent assistance are paid to landlords and power and food bills are taken care of, by low income tenants, there is a pittance remaining. It is very cruel to expect already impoverished tenants in social housing to pay even more in the form of bedroom tax. This tax has failed in the UK with many being made homeless or in huge debt by this scheme.

Why is it that social housing tenants are expected to pay extra if they have spare bedrooms? What about the 120,000 empty residential properties in the Sydney area? (NSW Census 2006) Why aren't the owners paying \$30 for every empty bedroom to the NSW government per week? This could raise money to build more housing.

(5) The problem is not that there are too many spare bedrooms but that there is not enough housing. The report states that there is a shortage of small dwellings. The obvious solution would be to build more of these.

(6) I agree with Dr Ben Spies-Butcher from the Centre for Policy Development, Macquarie University when he said in July 2013:

“Did you know that the government spends more money on tax breaks for the superannuation of high income earners than it does on government pensions for people with low incomes? Eradicating these tax breaks is just one of the ways that our government could raise revenue to fill budgetary holes, instead of merely cutting spending to much-needed government programs.”

Housing stock could increase if this idea was put in place and more small dwellings could be built.

Another alternative could be to cut back unnecessary spending such as fossil fuel subsidies, military spending, highway building etc....

We look forward to your response to our suggestions

Peter

Greta

Malcolm

Josie at the given email addresses