

**Submission  
No 96**

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

**Organisation:** St George Sutherland Housing Interagency

**Date received:** 28/02/2014

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# St George Sutherland Housing Interagency

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To: *Legislative Council*  
*Select Committee on Social, Public and Affordable Housing*

Re: Inquiry into social, public and affordable housing.

Thank you for the opportunity to have input into the Inquiry into Social, Public and Affordable Housing in NSW. Our Interagency is a group of over 18 local services in the St George and Sutherland region of Sydney, which has formed to address housing and homelessness issues in the region. Many of our member services provide specialist homelessness services (SHS) to homeless people and those at risk of homelessness, and others provide welfare and social services to people in social, public and affordable housing and people who are low income earners and experiencing housing stress. Agencies across the St George Sutherland regions have noted that housing stress and lack social, public and affordable housing is a common feature for clients for many years in the region, and has a detrimental impact on family health, wellbeing, employment, education and other social disadvantages. Our region is characterised by a high proportion of culturally and linguistically diverse people and families. Our member services have discussed and identified some needs around social, public and affordable housing and would like to respond to your terms of reference as below:

Firstly and overall, we would like to state that we support NCOSS (NSW Council of Social Services) pre-budget submission 2014/15 (PBS) regarding housing [ncoss.org.au/content/view/8427/100/](http://ncoss.org.au/content/view/8427/100/). We would like to suggest that your committee work closely with NCOSS in this inquiry.

1) ***a) Projections of future social, public and affordable housing supply and demand to 2020***  
Supply of affordable housing needs to increase to meet the increasing and current un-met demand over the next four years. We support NCOSS's pre-budget submission (PBS) 2014/15 regarding obtaining NSW government commitment on their recommendations re housing needs. Please refer to this submission and Section 6 re 'More affordable housing and less homeless' which we fully support at [ncoss.org.au/content/view/8427/100/](http://ncoss.org.au/content/view/8427/100/)

In addition, definition of 'affordable housing' and percentage values in relation to market rent need to be reviewed and reduced

***a) Data regarding the link between the lack of appropriate social public and affordable housing in NSW and indicators of social disadvantage.***

- Data should be obtained through NSW Housing's online database, which can obtain data on number of people in 'housing crisis' and 'housing stress'
- Use COAG's Reform Council data eg. this shows that almost half the state's low income rental households are in housing stress. Data to identify priority areas can

be obtained through this. Sydney, for example, has a higher rate of rental stress compared to other capital cities in Australia

- Use recommendations made by NCOSS ([ncoss.org.au](http://ncoss.org.au)) regarding data and indicators of social disadvantage. NCOSS has links to reports and research around indicators of social disadvantage linked to lack of housing, including issues such as employment, education/training, mental health.
- Use other relevant data obtained through (SHS) specialist homelessness services, and levels of unmet demand and waiting times for social and public housing (including crisis and transitional housing services).

An example of data:

Specialist Housing Services in the St. George and Sutherland area will have the number of properties available to house young homeless people, reduced by 50% under the Going Home Staying Home Reform's, Resources Allocation Model (RAM). Current services have data regarding levels of unmet need and demand and indicators of social disadvantage. For example, in 2013, St. George Accommodation for Youth Limited was unable to accommodate 113 disadvantaged young homeless people, who contacted the service for assistance. These young people had a multiple needs such as family problems, unemployment, lack of education, mental health issues etc.

***(c) Housing design approaches and social service integration necessary to support tenant livelihoods and wellbeing.***

Planning and allocations of housing design needs to be for a mixture of household compositions and needs to meet the needs of a local area: in particular, more family sized housing is needed and for areas such as St George (3+ bedrooms), families who are culturally linguistically diverse need to be considered eg. Larger families, more than one generation within the family home

A combination of larger properties for growing families, smaller properties as children leave home, single person properties all need to be ensured, located near transport and community services.

There is often a need for people to be able to stay in affordable housing in the area in which they are connected to due to cultural connections, connections to religious places, medical services, social services, cultural community groups and other links to ensure tenant livelihood and wellbeing. For example, too often in St George area, people from culturally diverse communities are offered public, social housing far from here and from their established connections, then losing their wellbeing and livelihood connectors which were their cultural connections as above.

Specialist organisations and committees should be consulted around the issues and social integration/designs needed for culturally diverse communities, such as Migrant Resource Centres, cultural specific organisations, Multicultural Youth Affairs Network NSW, Ethnic Communities Council etc.

***e) Criteria for selecting and prioritising residential areas for affordable and social housing development***

Criteria needs to be those areas which are in most housing stress and which have indicators which show highest need.

To identify this, work in Partnership with local councils, established local community forums and working groups such as the St. George and Sutherland Housing Working Group and Interagency, and State organisations such as NCOSS, Shelter NSW and Homelessness NSW.

Use Housing NSW's website databases re percentage of housing which is affordable for low income earners in each area, and percentage of people in a particular area who are in 'housing crisis' (excel databases are available)

Using waiting times of Housing NSW for each area for public housing. Use Housing Pathways data [housingpathways.nsw.gov.au](http://housingpathways.nsw.gov.au) which outlines waiting lists and expected waiting times for public housing. For example, Reports from our member agencies indicate that in St George area, large families continue to live in overcrowded rental accommodation, and none have been offered affordable accommodation through public or social housing for many years. This correlates with the Housing NSW website on public housing waiting times which are extremely lengthy for this area (over 10years).

**g) Recommendations on State reform options that may increase social, public and affordable housing supply, improve social integration and encourage more effective management of existing stock**

- We support fully the recommendations made by NCOSS to respond to this in their pre-budget submission (PBS) referred to above, Section 6 'More affordable housing and less homeless' at [ncoss.org.au/content/view/8427/100/](http://ncoss.org.au/content/view/8427/100/)
- Also, UK has less housing affordability problems than Australia, so recommend that some research of options may be drawn from there.
- Work with the private sector to assist in some way, there are some innovative options to increase housing supply with private sector and developers assistance. For example, there could be incentives and/or laws that specify private sector contributions. Consult with peak organisations such as NCOSS and specialist consultants (some of which we are aware of) to design these. Example, in the UK 50% of all new developments must be 'affordable' and this definition is clearly defined.
- All local Councils should have a Housing/Affordable housing position role and an Affordable Housing Social Plan. For example, in the St George and Sutherland area, local Councils do not have such a dedicated role. However, in the nearby Marrickville Council, there is such a beneficial role which has greatly assisted that area. In this way also, there can be some collaborative work between Councils and developers to ensure more affordable housing.
- The National Affordable Housing Agreement funding should be ongoing

2) In reviewing the 2013 Report of the Audit office of NSW 'Making the best use of Public Housing', we recommend and support NCOSS's analysis of this report, which can be found at [ncoss.org.au/content/view/8373/100/](http://ncoss.org.au/content/view/8373/100/)

Thank you for this opportunity. We hope that this inquiry can have some real outcomes in the very near future for people in housing stress and who have a need for social, public, affordable housing. For further information about this submission, please contact either  
Valentina Angelovska on \_\_\_\_\_ or Lynn Birnie on \_\_\_\_\_

(On behalf of the St George Sutherland Housing

Interagency)