

**Submission
No 115**

INQUIRY INTO SOCIAL, PUBLIC AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Organisation: Southern Suburbs Taskforce

Date received: 28/02/2014



Southern Suburbs **TASKFORCE**

" Empowering Communities "

PORT KEMBLA • KEMBLAWARRA • WARRAWONG • LAKE HEIGHTS • CRINGILA • BERKELEY •
COOMADITCHIE

28 February 2014

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

To The Director,

RE: The select committee inquiry into social, public and affordable housing

The Southern Suburbs Taskforce is made up of representatives from various government and non-government organisations in the Southern Suburbs of Wollongong. We thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission into the inquiry into social, public and affordable housing.

Broadly, we concur with the submission of the Illawarra & South Coast Tenants Service and the recommendations they have put forward. We also make the following comments.

No Interest Loans Scheme (Port Kembla Community Project)

At The No Interest Loans Scheme we are turning away an increasing amount of people as we cannot provide NILS assistance if they do not have a permanent address. The issue for us is affordable and secure housing options, as so many people through the experience of being homeless, lose all their "household furnishings and appliances".

When people are eventually rehoused, the residents have to re-purchase everything which places a huge financial strain – leading to an increased risk of homelessness. We are also often contacted by people who are behind in their rent and wish to gain assistance to get back on top of this issue. We continue to have Centrelink refer people to NILS for bond. However we do not loan for rent, bond, or bills.

Many loan applicants inform us that when they eventually gain access to Dept of Housing, they feel they have to accept sub-standard houses that have not been maintained to a reasonable standard. Several loan applicants informed us they were told they should "be grateful" for what they get.

The increase in energy costs have a huge impact on low income families, causing more distress and huge bills they often cannot afford, again increasing their risk of homelessness.

Port Kembla Community Project

At Port Kembla Community Project Inc. we are approached regularly by people who cannot find accommodation – as there is not enough available. Often they cannot access Bond assistance as through DoH this is only available if your name is on the lease. This could be easily resolved and would lead to increased numbers of people being able to find housing. The Illawarra housing prices are being pushed up by the housing prices in Sydney, so people are therefore unable to afford the limited amount of housing that becomes available.

Green Connect (Port Kembla Community Project)

The lack of housing stock which can house large families and sometimes extended families can create family stress and isolation because the lack of ability to share resources when housed far away from each other, such as cars, baby-sitters. English speaking support is imperative to empower newly arrived Refugee's to be able to communicate their particular housing issues.

We thank you for the opportunity to provide comment to the inquiry into the social, public and affordable housing inquiry.

Contact: Alex O'Donnell

Illawarra & South Coast Tenants service