

Submission
No 176

INQUIRY INTO SOCIAL, PUBLIC AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

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Partially Confidential

**A submission to: The Inquiry into Social, Public
and Affordable Housing.**

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

Submitted 28/2/2014 by:

**Phone:
Mobile:**

1.

My name is _____ and I own a property in _____. I am the mother of two young children and an active member of the local community. I also broadcast a community radio program on Northside radio.

Last year before the federal election, I went to cover a talk by Bob Hawke at a public housing estate in Ryde. It was there that I learned about the issues confronting the people living on the Ivanhoe estate.

In case you are not familiar with this community: Ivanhoe is a public housing estate, which is home to close to 700 people. There are elderly people; single parents; non English speakers; refugees; long term mentally ill; unemployed people and low income families with children, living and helping each other.

2.

In reference to inquiry :

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

1(d) maintenance and capital improvement costs and delivery requirements

1(g) (vi) Recommendations on state reform options that may increase social, public and affordable housing supply, improve social service integration and encourage more effective management of existing stock including, but not limited to:
(vi) ageing in place

The Ivanhoe estate should be used as a template for future public housing design. The estate is only 25 years old and won design awards when it was first opened. It won awards because it was designed in a way that breeds community involvement. The elderly live in the flats at ground level and the more capable live a few steps up above them. Many of the units open onto a communal courtyard, which now has a vegetable garden. This design feature works well at Ivanhoe. The tenants meet there for activities and gardening sessions and they share the produce. They also have a tearoom with a computer/printer and library, where they meet to help each other fill out forms and applications (particularly important to non English speakers; the illiterate and the refugees that live there). The tenants help each other in so many ways. They vote for a president and secretary of the tenants association. The elected tenants liaise with tenants and outside social services, which leads to more informed outcomes and cuts down on the time social services are required for community consultation. They also distribute a newsletter and admin a social media platform for those in the estate to stay connected and swap ideas etc.

Those few tenants who own motor vehicles, drive the infirmed to Doctors appointments and help collect groceries.

3.

I had a particularly moving conversation with one of the tenants last week who told me he had come from a bad life in the city. He said he had been homeless and alcoholic. He has been at the estate now for over 20 years and said he counts those he lives with, as his only friends and family. The thing that moved me most was his description of his role there. He proudly confirmed himself as the handy man - the 'go to guy'. He does much of the gardening and helps the older people and single women with odd jobs and heavy lifting. He said that being able to help others has made him a different person. His being able to help others has given him a sense of self worth.

Perhaps if Housing were to encourage those within other estates to take on more roles like this man has, it would cut down on the need for certain maintenance contractors (or at least reduce the hours they are required) and it would help give the tenants a sense of worth, community involvement and pride in their home, as it has done at Ivanhoe estate. Perhaps some financial Remuneration or rental assistance could be offered as well to those involved. It could also be an opportunity to assist the youth on the estate gain trade skills as gardeners or maintenance workers. It should be seen as a great opportunity to introduce a skills program - perhaps to unemployed youths.

There are several people in the Ryde area who have suggested that Ivanhoe should become an example of sustainable public housing. I am sure if developers of new sustainable housing products and services (ie solar panels; water filtration etc), were given the opportunity to show how this microcosm of a suburb could be improved, they would subsidize many improvements to the estate. Making investment in sustainable infrastructure by the department of finance fairly minimal.

Communities like Ivanhoe don't develop overnight. This one has taken many years. Its important to note to the inquiry that they are very close and each of them looks out for the other. If they were in private housing, they would not only be isolated but many would be relying on already overworked, homecare services.

4.

The NSW government has a duty, to show compassion and support for the poor, as well as the wealthy. These people have just as much right to live here in Ryde, as the wealthy international investors, who will buy up most of the new apartments that are built here (many, if not all, of the newly built apartments in this area are being bought by offshore investors - As recent sales records will show).

**In reference to the parliamentary inquiry
1(b) data regarding the link between the lack of
appropriate social, public and affordable housing in
New South Wales and indicators of social disadvantage.**

The tenants of Ivanhoe have been told that if the Herring Rd. UAP development goes ahead, there will be room for only 270 of the 700 people who already live there. They were told that the tenants who move back into the new development, will be housed in high rise units.

Firstly you would think that would automatically eliminate the elderly from applying for those units, due to the obvious fire and safety risks associated with housing elderly people in high rise.

Secondly, where do they house these people in the meantime?

Thirdly, the bulk of those people who won't be offered units will be families. Unless these families are offered similar priced housing in the area these families will be required to take children out of schools and move to outer Sydney.

The people living at this estate take great pride in their homes and a quick drive around the streets and cul-de-sac's of the estate show the tenants of the town houses (mostly families with children) also take good care of their dwellings. At Ivanhoe I have met many women who have raised their families on the estate. Single mothers and low income families. The children attend the local public schools. I have seen a boy wearing the high school uniform walking home. Another high school student I have met at Ivanhoe is a school prefect. These kids are just two examples of why low income families should also have access to public schools in high socio economic areas.

5.

What would have happened to these kids had they not had a home at Ivanhoe?

Due to circumstances outside their control - illness, death, divorce, the department might have sent the family off to an estate in the outer west or regional area. As much as we want schools to be of a similar standard everywhere, the reality is they are not and these children may never have reached their potential due to relocation. Low income families should also be given the opportunity to access schools in HSE areas.

The NSW housing department should be holding this estate up as an example of how public housing can work but instead, these people have been left in limbo.

Many months ago they turned on the television to hear that there estate was earmarked for demolition and development - it would be part of the Herring road UAP. They had to go to housing to find out what the television report was all about. Now 3 years later they still don't know what is to become of their community. Many are suffering depression and the elderly are suffering anxiety as a result of flawed communication and lack of information.

http://www.ryde.nsw.gov.au/Documents/Dev/UAP_CommunityInfoSession15Apr.pdf

There is a human cost involved in the proposed Herring Road Urban Activation precinct development that needs to be brought to the attention of the NSW state government and developers.