

**Submission  
No 72**

**INQUIRY INTO HOMELESSNESS AMONGST OLDER  
PEOPLE AGED OVER 55 IN NEW SOUTH WALES**

**Organisation:** Women's Electoral Lobby (NSW)

**Date Received:** 25 May 2022

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**25/05/2022**

Chair,  
Standing Committee on Social Issues,  
NSW Parliamentary House,  
6 Macquarie Street,  
Sydney NSW 2000  
Via email: [socialissues@parliament.nsw.gov.au](mailto:socialissues@parliament.nsw.gov.au)

### **Endorsing NSW Ageing of the Edge Forum submission**

WEL, established in 1972, is an independent, non-party political lobby group dedicated to creating a society where women's participation and their ability to fulfil their potential are unrestricted, acknowledged and respected and where women and men share equally in society's responsibilities and rewards.

WEL is a member of NSW Ageing on the Edge Forum, and collectively we are working towards ending homelessness of older people in NSW. As a coalition we are calling on the NSW Government to:

- Fund a specialist older person's housing information and support service that comprises both an early intervention and crisis response, similar to the HAAG 'Home at Last' model in Victoria.
- Lower the priority age for social housing eligibility from 80 years as a matter of urgency.
- Build 5,000 social and affordable homes per year for 10 years, at least 20% of which should be dedicated to older people.

In addition, we are recommending that the NSW government:

- Adopt concrete measures to address ageism, sexism, gender and disability discrimination in government services, finance institutions, including banks, and private rental markets.
- Remove unnecessarily burdensome requirements, such as, completion of 'seeker diaries' to maintain temporary accommodation imposed on older people who are already in challenging housing situations.
- Increase transparency and accountability by increasing availability of data including:
  - Social and priority housing waiting list data broken down by age, gender, disability status and geographic area,
  - The number of social and affordable housing dwellings available in NSW, including age and gender breakdown of allocations,
  - The number of dwellings assigned under State Environmental Planning Policy (Housing for Seniors and People with a Disability) (Seniors SEPP) and Public Housing Seniors Communities (PPOPH), and

- The number of dwellings built under the commitments in different housing commitments including the *NSW Homelessness Strategy 2018-2023*, Social and Affordable Housing Fund (SAHF) and Community Housing Innovation Fund (CHIF).
- Provide exemptions to strict documentary evidence for housing applications, including identity documents, especially for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, older people from migrant and refugee backgrounds and older women escaping domestic and family violence to ensure equitable access for all older people.
- Adopt the new mandatory minimum accessibility standards contained in the revised National Construction Code for all future constructions in NSW.

WEL has long drawn attention to the fact that older women are particularly at risk of housing insecurity and homelessness and indeed have highlighted this in our submissions to earlier Inquiries and in consultations.

This is a result of women's relative economic disadvantage and poverty, caused by multiple lifetime factors, including discrimination, gaps in pay, wealth and superannuation and women's greater responsibility for caring for children and other family members.

In addition, women's experiences of domestic and other gendered violence including the impacts of trauma, injury, dislocation, financial abuse and disproportionate loss of wealth upon separation cause immediate and long-term economic and other disadvantage.

We note that the 2016 Census found that older women are the fastest growing cohort of homeless people in Australia. In NSW the rate of increase is particularly shocking with the number of women aged over 55 increasing by 48% between 2011 and 2016, and the numbers aged between 65 and 74 increasing by 78% in that time.

We urge the committee to adopt these recommendations highlighted above and welcome the opportunity to engage with the inquiry process where possible. Should you wish to further discuss issues raised in this statement of support please contact our Housing Policy leader Dr Jane Bullen who can be contacted on .

Yours Sincerely  
Mary O'Sullivan  
Convenor  
WEL NSW