

**Submission
No 76**

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

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

Endorsing NSW Ageing of the Edge Forum submission

I am an Associate Professor at the Faculty of Law, University of Technology Sydney. I have been researching legal and human rights issues impacting people with disability for over a decade. Much of my research is done in collaboration with people with disability and disability advocacy organisations. During the past 5 years I have been researching legal and human rights issues specifically impacting people living with dementia. I am currently funded by Dementia Australia Research Foundation to lead a research project on redressing abuse and neglect of people living with dementia in residential aged care, in collaboration with dementia rights activist Kate Swaffer, Dementia Alliance International, and People with Disability Australia. I am also currently part of a research team funded by the Australian Association of Gerontology to explore enforceable human rights in aged care.

On the basis of my research expertise in legal and human rights of people living with dementia, I support the submission by NSW Ageing on the Edge Forum which is collectively working towards ending homelessness of older people in NSW. In particular, homelessness can be a driver of premature institutionalisation of older people in residential aged care. Once institutionalised in residential aged care, older people are exposed to violence, abuse, and neglect, which can lead to lasting trauma, physical and psychological injury, and even premature death.

Specifically, I support NSW Ageing on the Edge Forum 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, I support NSW Ageing on the Edge Forum 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.

I urge the committee to adopt these recommendations highlighted above and welcome the opportunity to engage with the inquiry process where possible.

Sincerely,

Dr Linda Steele

Associate Professor

Faculty of Law, University of Technology Sydney