



Infrastructure Australia Audit 2019

Joint Submission from the Community Housing Industry Association (CHIA),
National Shelter, Homelessness Australia (HA) and Power Housing Australia

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A joint submission from National Housing and Homeless Peak Organisations with support from state and territory representatives.

Introduction

The peak organisations concerned with housing and homeless issues across Australia have come together to make a submission in response to the Infrastructure Australia Audit 2019. We welcome the inclusion of social housing in the audit as an important step to subsidised housing being understood as essential infrastructure on which both Australia's social and economic wellbeing depends.

The analysis presented by Infrastructure Australia in the audit captures many of the challenges facing the present system. In the social housing workshop held by Infrastructure Australia in September additional issues were raised and the most important of these are summarised below.

The Audit should clearly state the current shortfalls of housing, affordable to households in the bottom two income quintiles and the projected additional homes that need to be affordable to these income groups by 2036. This information is available in [Filling the Gap](#) an analysis of Census and other reputable data by City Futures, UNSW. The total dwellings to meet this need by 2036 is over 1M, clearly a project of national significance and one that requires inclusion in the next National Infrastructure Plan if it is to be planned, co-ordinated and delivered.

The forthcoming Plan should highlight the role and thus the reforms necessary so that Governments address these shortfalls. The audit suggests that social and affordable housing is underfunded and as part of producing the Plan analysis of housing expenditure (current and projected) by state, territory and Federal governments will inform recommendations.

Housing has both social and economic impacts. These are outlined in our main submission document. While we welcome the inclusion of social housing in the audit, its status as social infrastructure may lead to the implication that it has no economic or productive impacts. While some of the benefits we highlight in the main submission might be attributable to housing per se, a large slice of the population (and the country at large) will only receive these benefits if government invests in social and affordable housing. Housing should therefore be recognised in the 2021 Plan as productive infrastructure in the way transport and other recognised infrastructure components are.

There are gaps in the evidence base to support social and affordable housing's inclusion as a priority project. Our main submission has extensively mined the available evidence and made a compelling case that housing has both social and financial benefits that exceed the production costs. Recognising there is an incomplete data set we strongly encourage Infrastructure Australia to join with the sector (and its other partners) to help fill these knowledge gaps. The sector with its partners hopes to establish a Housing and Productivity Consortium for this purpose.

The current assessment framework used for priority projects favours more traditional infrastructure. We recommend that this framework is reviewed and updated within the next cycle to ensure that all infrastructure is treated equally

The Infrastructure Plan should also consider the balance of funding between different infrastructure types. We welcome that the audit is prefaced by a consideration of regional planning issues. While the City Deal process and metropolitan 'planning' bodies such as the Greater Sydney Commission for example have encouraged more integration, housing is generally not accepted as requiring the attention nor support of more traditional infrastructure. The 2021 plan should make the case for its inclusion in strategic planning and for non-market housing to receive its proper priority.

About the Organisations Making the Submission

This submission is made jointly by four national representative organisations, all of which share a commitment to the provision of housing that is affordable to households on very low to moderate incomes. We have also been supported by state and territory based organisations, CHIA NSW, CHIA VIC, Shelter NSW, WA Shelter, Homelessness NSW and Q Shelter.

The Community Housing Industry Association (CHIA) is the industry peak for community housing providers across Australia. The industry provides one in five of Australia's social housing properties, complementing public housing. Community housing providers manage a \$30 billion-plus portfolio of more than 80,000 rental properties, which, are home to people who are on low and moderate incomes and who find it hard to access affordable or appropriate housing in the private market. Our 155 members include the largest to those with less than 100 homes. Our members provide a diverse range of housing for Aboriginal people, people with disabilities and the formerly homeless.

National Shelter is a non-government peak organisation that aims to improve housing access, affordability, appropriateness, safety and security for people on low incomes. Since 1976 it aims to work towards every Australian having access to housing that is affordable, adequate, secure and meets their needs.

Homelessness Australia (HA) is the national peak body for homelessness in Australia. We provide systemic advocacy for the homelessness sector. HA does not provide or manage accommodation or deliver direct client services. Instead we work with a large network of organisations to provide a unified voice when it comes to preventing and responding to homelessness

PowerHousing Australia is a national peak network of 34 leading growth community housing providers who develop and manage social and affordable housing. PowerHousing Australia is the Australian member of the International Housing Partnership which brings together housing organisations across the UK, USA, Canada and Australia.

About the Submission and its Preparation

Our submission was deliberately targeted at identifying further information to support social and affordable housing taking a more prominent role in the 2021 Plan and also to help prepare a case for its favourable assessment as a priority project.

We acknowledge the work carried out by Dr Andi Nygaard from Swinburne University and also the Australian Social Value Bank who allowed us to access information that has enabled us to monetise many of the benefits of social and affordable housing.