



7 April 2020

The Hon Scott Morrison MP
Prime Minister of Australia
Parliament House
Canberra

The Hon Gladys Berejiklian MP
Premier
GPO Box 5341
Sydney NSW 2001

Dear Prime Minister and Premier,

Optimising the impacts of stimulus funding and fast-tracking approvals now to boost social and affordable housing in the post-COVID-19 recovery

On behalf of the Australian Institute of Architects, the Centre for Social Impact, the Community Housing Industry Association, the Community Housing Industry Association NSW, the Constellation Project, Homelessness NSW, National Shelter, the Planning Institute of Australia, Shelter NSW, the UNSW City Futures Research Centre and the Women's Community Shelters, we congratulate both governments on moving rapidly, working together with the National Cabinet, and helping the most vulnerable in society manage through the unprecedented challenges of COVID-19.

At the Australian Government level we applaud measures to increase the JobSeeker Payment, introduce the JobKeeper Payment, and implement a moratorium on evictions for renters in financial hardship. We also welcome the additional funding for services to assist women and children fleeing domestic violence. At the state level we welcome the recent announcement by Minister Stokes to fast-track planning approvals to ensure the construction industry is enabled to continue its vital role in supporting the NSW economy, now and into the future.

Fast-tracking housing development now not only ensures the construction industry keeps moving, but can expedite the delivery of much needed social housing stock. As isolation measures drive us into our homes for extended periods, more than ever do we understand the critical need for accessible quality housing for all – especially modestly paid essential workers whose contribution is crucial at this time (supermarket staff, aged care workers, health workers, cleaners etc).

We therefore draw to the attention of both your governments the importance of ensuring initiatives taken in response to the current crisis also help expand the supply of social and affordable housing. Post COVID-19 we must ensure we are in the best place possible to support our communities in rebuilding the economy. Measures need to be progressed under an overarching national housing strategy led by the Australian Government and jointly developed with state and local governments, as well as with other key industry and community stakeholders, including all of the signatories to this letter.

Both the Australian and NSW governments need to plan for an investment stimulus initiative, getting people back into employment and giving the building industry confidence to retain more of its workers. To have optimal impact on business and jobs now and to bring about strong social and economic outcomes into the future, stimulus funding should immediately support planning and design professionals undertaking this urgent work, which they can safely do from home.

We can capitalise on historically low bond rates for a rapid program of such investment that must include social and affordable housing as a form of development that can be quickly and straightforwardly activated. Doubling its dividend, critically this investment also delivers the housing that is needed for people to obtain and maintain employment.

To capitalise on its enhanced capacity, financial advantages and proven housing development record, the community housing industry should be designated to lead on housing stimulus delivery. Maximum use of NSW-owned surplus land (eg that already under the control of the NSW Land and Housing Corporation) would further enhance roll-out speed.

We therefore call on the NSW government to pledge:

1. Additional support for local councils to complete Affordable Housing Contribution schemes.
2. Acceleration of work on the GSC policy framework on developer obligations for affordable housing contributions, for completion by mid-2020 at the latest.

We call on the Australian and NSW governments to pledge:

3. A standard expectation that housing development on ex-public land should include a sizeable component of (additional) social/affordable housing – as factored into land sale price and contract conditions.
4. To provide appropriate and specific access and equity to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to ensure that the high levels of social and economic disadvantage experienced by these communities continue to be addressed as a priority of government and non-government programs and initiatives.

We call on the Australian Government to pledge:

5. Active leadership in the development of a national housing strategy incorporating social and affordable housing development targets and practicable measures for their achievement.
6. Development of a post-COVID crisis stimulus investment program incorporating social and affordable housing to be delivered via the community housing industry.

Collectively we stand ready to support you in delivering these essential initiatives and we wish to assure you that we will continue to contribute positively to the ongoing COVID-19 response.

Yours sincerely,

Kathlyn Loseby <i>NSW President</i> Australian Institute of Architects	Prof Kristy Muir <i>CEO</i> Centre for Social Impact	Mark Degotardi <i>CEO NSW</i> Community Housing Industry Association	Shamal Dass <i>Chair</i> Constellation Project	Katherine McKernan <i>CEO</i> Homelessness NSW
Prof Helen Lochhead <i>National President</i> Australian Institute of Architects	Juliet Grant <i>NSW President</i> Planning Institute of Australia	Wendy Hayhurst <i>National CEO</i> Community Housing Industry Association	John Engeler <i>CEO</i> Shelter NSW	Prof Bill Randolph <i>Director</i> UNSW City Futures
Adrian Pisarki <i>Executive Officer</i> National Shelter	Annabelle Daniel <i>CEO</i> Women's Community Shelter			

cc: The Hon Dominic Perrottet MP – Treasurer
The Hon Rob Stokes MP – Minister for Planning and Public Spaces
Mr Marcus Ray – Group Deputy Secretary, Planning and Assessment, DPIE
Ms Alex O'Mara – Deputy Secretary, Planning and Assessment, DPIE
The Hon Michael Sukkar MP, Asst Treasury and Minister for Housing
The Hon Luke Howarth MP, Minister for Community Housing and Homelessness
The Hon Alan Tudge MP, Minister for Population, Cities and Urban Infrastructure