

MEDIA RELEASE

Federal Budget – A Missed Opportunity to Invest in Social Infrastructure

The Community Housing Industry Association (CHIA) welcomes the considerable investment in the social economy. The increase in Home Care Packages for Older Australians, the expansion in mental health services and suite of measures to help those experiencing domestic and family violence will make a considerable difference to people’s lives. However, overall it is a budget for the well housed.

“While the budget has measures to support home purchase, it does nothing to address the growing numbers of households who are homeless or living in rental stress” said Wendy Hayhurst, CHIA’s CEO. “Social housing as a proportion of Australia’s total dwellings has steadily declined to 4.2%, way below the OECD country average of 7.1%.”

She pointed out that the problem will get worse, “With the Commonwealth’s National Rental Affordability Scheme winding down, many of the 36,000 plus affordable rental homes it supported will be lost”.

Andrew Hannan, CHIA’s chair pointed out that many older Australians, people with mental health conditions and women escaping DFV also need safe, long term affordable rental housing. “The research is clear on this point. For example, homelessness can lead to mental health problems with [research](#) indicating that ‘31 per cent of homeless Australians experience a mental health issue, but that only 15 per cent had a mental health issue prior to becoming homeless’.

What Australia needs is a Commonwealth-led national housing strategy that recognises social and affordable rental housing as essential infrastructure and harnesses the financial and policy levers at all levels of government to deliver on a long term housing development program. We know the benefits aren’t just on the social side. Government investment in housing feeds through into increased economic output. [Modelling](#) for CHIA demonstrates that a program of 30,000 social and affordable rental homes can raise output by well over \$15B.

Mr Hannan said that the community housing sector was well-placed to work with, and co-invest alongside, governments to tackle this big, but solvable national challenge. “In our Federal Pre Budget [submission](#) CHIA proposed a range of cost-effective funding models that could make a major dent in Australia’s affordable rental housing shortage” said Mr Hannan said. “We won’t give up hoping the government takes notice and pushes the start button; we’re ready - our members have already identified projects that would deliver over 10,000 homes - and are eager to lead in delivering the national program Australia badly needs”.

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