

## MEDIA RELEASE

# Social and affordable rental housing: time for all levels of government to invest in this transformational social infrastructure

The Community Housing Industry Association (CHIA) applauds the 2021 Australian Infrastructure Plan's break through call for all levels of government to invest in social and affordable rental housing. The Plan recognises that 'well-maintained and designed social housing provides many community benefits, supporting individual and societal wellbeing and productivity, and reducing costs in health and justice services' and recommends the design and implementation of programs to increase supply'.

"Infrastructure Australia is to be commended for the focus on social infrastructure in this plan. Too often Australian governments have viewed social and affordable rental housing investment solely as an impost and overlooked its positive impacts, not just for the individual who gets a home but for other service budgets." said Wendy Hayhurst, CHIA's CEO. "Only last week, for example the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI) published [research](#) showing that helping ex-prisoners through social housing typically cuts re-offending and saves the tax payer thousands of dollars."

She pointed out that, "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%." While some recent state initiatives will slow the decline in certain parts of the country, to address the current national shortfall and meet future demand she said, "Australia needs to be adding at least 20,000 social and affordable rental homes every year. That is do-able but it needs the Federal Government as an active participant too; they're the ones with the fiscal fire power."

"Coming hard on the heels of the recent OECD [endorsement](#) for social housing investment<sup>i</sup>, these new recommendations are especially powerful" said Ms Hayhurst. "Here we have two highly respected economic planning bodies both supporting the case that adequate social rental provision is a vital part of a balanced housing system. By all means let's look at how to make the market work more smoothly, but that will never provide an affordable solution for the lowest income Australians".

Andrew Hannan, CHIA's chair also welcomed the Plan and praised Infrastructure Australia's engagement with stakeholders during its production. "We're delighted to see the community housing sector recognised in the Plan as being key to delivering new social and affordable rental homes for Australians locked out of the private rental market, or home ownership. Our members have demonstrated the capability, capacity and financial sophistication to deliver thousands of additional dwellings in recent years. But an ongoing national funding program that brings certainty and attracts the big institutional investors is needed". He noted that CHIA's Pre-Budget



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Submission had proposed a cost-effective funding model that leveraged the existing NHFIC arrangements, and could make a major dent in Australia's social and affordable housing shortage.

He went on to say "the Federal Government has recently launched an Inquiry on Housing Affordability and Supply. The committee must put the undersupply of social and affordable rental housing front and centre of their deliberations. Social and affordable rental housing can be a haven for women escaping violence, provide stability to help people recover from illness and act as a springboard into homeownership. The community housing industry is ready to lead in delivering the national program Australia badly needs"

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