

MEDIA RELEASE

Build back better with community housing organisations

‘COVID-19: Rental housing and homelessness policy impacts’, the new [report](#) published by the UNSW-ACOSS Poverty and Inequality Partnership, demonstrates how much can be achieved with a ‘can do’ attitude. To protect from the pandemic during 2020, over 12,000 people sleeping rough were helped with emergency assistance. This has been followed by a significant step up in state-funded social housing construction, with 7,500 plus new homes planned over each of the next four years – well over double the 2-3,000 per annum that had become the disappointing norm over the past decade.

The Community Housing Industry Association (CHIA) congratulates Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia and Tasmania on their pandemic response and its members welcome the opportunity to play a prominent role in delivering the high quality, energy-efficient homes so badly needed by lower income Australians.

Sadly, the report is not all good news. For a start, not all those new properties will be net additions to social housing. Of the 23,000 in the development pipeline, almost a third ‘replaces’ homes to be sold or demolished. Second, the heavy lifting isn’t shared by everyone. Just three states – Queensland, Tasmania and Victoria are responsible for over 90% of the expected ‘net’ increase in new homes. And frankly, far more is needed, even in these states – let alone the others.

Commenting on the report, Wendy Hayhurst, CHIA’s CEO pointed to the recently published National Housing Finance Investment Corporation (NHFIC) independent review [report](#). ‘The Review estimated the number of additional social housing dwellings Australia needs over the next 20 years as around 600,000 - around 30,000 a year.’ ‘That sounds a lot, and it will call for substantial government dollars but the [2021 Australian Infrastructure Plan](#) recognised the return on this investment’. The Plan acknowledged 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 recommended the design and implementation of programs to increase supply.

Ms Hayhurst also noted that the UNSW-ACOSS report highlights the absence of any Commonwealth Government contribution to planned additional social housing development. ‘If the Commonwealth came on board, it would be a game changer. As the NHFIC independent review said, *The scale of investment required inevitably means that all levels of government, the private sector and not-for-profit organisations will all need to be part of the solution*’

Andrew Hannan, CHIA’s Chair, noted that CHIA’s [2021 Pre-Budget 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. ‘Community housing organisations have demonstrated the capability, capacity and financial sophistication to deliver thousands of additional dwellings in recent years. What we need now is an ongoing national funding program that brings certainty and attracts the big institutional investors’.

Mr Hannan added “The current Federal Government Inquiry on Housing Affordability and Supply must put the undersupply of social and affordable rental housing front and centre of their



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deliberations. Social and affordable rental housing can be a haven for women escaping violence, can get homeless veterans back on their feet, 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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