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Budget delivers progress on housing, but more must be done

Australia's peak community housing industry body has endorsed the Federal budget's commitment to electrification and energy performance in social housing alongside new incentives for build-to-rent projects, but warned there is still a way to go to tackle the mammoth challenge.

Community Housing Industry Association chief executive officer Wendy Hayhurst said: "Rising rents are hitting household budgets hard. While the federal budget doesn't tackle the crisis completely, it does pave a path forward to fix it," Ms Hayhurst said.

"We commend the Budget initiative to make build-to-rent projects easier and more attractive through increased incentives for the industry. This also provides an opportunity to leverage this initiative to create more affordable housing. We also welcome the partnerships and programs to build and fix more remote Indigenous housing.

"Investments to promote electrification and energy performance in at least 60,000 social housing dwellings will not only save energy but also save tenants precious dollars. Rewiring social housing is a key way to provide energy bill relief in the long term.

"The government's decision to extend funding to cover the wages of homelessness services workers is also applauded. We look forward to the government continuing to invest in and work with the housing and homelessness sectors as it develops its new National Housing and Homelessness Agreement.

"Unfortunately, the budget did miss key opportunities, like setting up a rapid response housing fund, where community housing organisations could acquire suitable distressed new build properties or rental homes.

"There are still some unknowns about the budget, including the makeup of the government's landmark Housing Australia Future Fund legislation, which still has to pass the Senate. We hope this fund will pass as quickly and as strongly as it can. Australians can't afford the housing crisis deteriorating further. We must build more social and affordable housing immediately."

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