



SOCIAL HOUSING IN NSW – Discussion Paper – Submissions due 20 Feb 2015

The NSW Government has released a discussion paper calling for community input by 20 February 2015.

The document does not provide clear direction about how the Government will action the identified needs and problems that currently exist and neglected to address key recommendations from reports previously undertaken

In 2014 a **Select Committee inquiry into Social, Public and Affordable Housing** that was initiated by Greens MLC Jan Barham undertook an extensive inquiry and delivered 41 recommendations to address the current 'crisis' in housing in NSW.

The Government is due to respond to the recommendations of the Select Committee by 9 March 2015.

Having your say

In response to the questions asked in the discussion paper there is clear direction in the recommendations of the inquiry and the Government is serious about resolving the issues then support for the recommendations is required.

Please see below the relevant recommendations that relate to the questions asked in the discussion paper and your support for these will indicate to the Government that there is a way forward to ensure a more just and equitable housing situation in NSW, providing additional supply of housing and services to meet the needs of disadvantaged and vulnerable residents in NSW.

Please send your submission to

Email : socialhousingreform@fac.s.nsw.gov.au

Mail: Social Housing Policy Team, Department of Family & Community Services,
Locked Bag 3002, Australia Square 1215

Government Question 1 – page 20

Given tenants living in social housing often experience disadvantage which is disproportionate to other areas of the community, what measures are required to provide tenants of social housing with pathways to opportunity and independence?

Select Committee recommendations that should be supported by Government

Recommendation 20 That Housing NSW develop a strategy to enhance support for public housing tenants, focusing on the provision of holistic and localised services.

Recommendation 21 That the NSW Government expedite the transfer of public housing properties to community housing providers via long term leases to: ensure future growth in the supply of social and affordable housing , promote the expansion of 'wrap around' services.

That the NSW Government also review the target that the community housing sector comprise at least 35 per cent of all social housing and assess the performance of property title transfers and leveraging.

Government Question 2 – page 32

The social housing system is often difficult to access for those most in need. What measures are required to create a system which is fair for those already in social, those on the waiting list and others who may need assistance?

Select Committee recommendations that should be supported by Government

Recommendation 7 That the Department of Family and Community Services develop, as a priority, a strategy for improving access to social, public and affordable housing for vulnerable groups, including: women, including women with children, young people, people with a disability or mental illness, veterans, Aboriginal people, victims of domestic or family violence, asylum seekers, refugees and migrants, older people, key/essential workers.

Recommendation 8 That the NSW Government give priority to ensuring information is reviewed in relation to funding from the National Disability Insurance Agency to provide for housing for people with a disability.

Recommendation 9 That the needs of people with a disability are prioritised in the social housing reform goals of the Department of Family and Community Services.

Government Question 3 – page 43

Creating a sustainable social housing system is an essential step in providing fairness, opportunity and pathways to client independence. What measures are required to create a sustainable social housing system?

Select Committee recommendations that should be supported by Government

Recommendation 11 That the Department of Family and Community Services ensure there is no **loss of specialist homelessness services** under the *Going Home, Staying Home* reforms.

Recommendation 12 That the Department of Family and Community Services expand its support for innovative housing models that **integrate services with housing**, such as Common Ground and Youth Foyer models.

Recommendation 10 That the Department of Family and Community Services immediately review its approach to placing priority social housing applicants in motels, hotels, residential parks and other forms of **crisis accommodation**, to ensure the accommodation is appropriate and safe.

Recommendation 13 That the Department of Family and Community Services investigate strategies to prevent applicants being removed from the social housing **wait list** if they do not update their details.

Recommendation 21 That the NSW Government expedite the transfer of public housing properties to **community housing** providers via long term leases to: ensure future growth in the supply of social and affordable housing, promote the expansion of 'wrap around' services.

That the NSW Government also review the target that the community housing sector comprise at least 35 per cent of all social housing and assess the performance of property title transfers and leveraging.

Recommendation 24 That the Department of Family and Community Services immediately develop guidelines for the **design of social housing**, addressing:

Recommendation 26 That the Department of Family and Community Services develop a strategy that identifies priority **locations for new social housing** development which are located close to employment opportunities, education, transport and 'wrap around' services.

GENERAL ISSUES

Recommendation 2 That the NSW Government invest all proceeds from the sale of public housing properties in a dedicated fund for the purpose of creating new supply of social, public and affordable housing.

Recommendation 3 That the NSW Government, when selling multi-unit properties in the Sydney area, include in the contract for sale a requirement that at least 10 per cent of all dwellings on that site be allocated as social, public and affordable housing.

Recommendation 4 That Housing NSW ensure, where public housing properties are sold, priority is given to relocating tenants in their existing community, subject to consultation with the tenant.

Recommendation 5 That the Department of Family and Community Services review its policies and processes for **managing vacancies** to minimise the amount of time public housing properties are left vacant.

Recommendation 6 That the Department of Family and Community Services finalise the strategy for managing **public housing estates**, as recommended by the Auditor-General.

Recommendation 14 That Housing NSW **suspend the vacant bedroom charge** and examine more effective ways to ensure a greater match between households and dwelling size.

Recommendation 15 That Housing NSW review the **eligibility criteria for recognition as a tenant**, to prevent cases where applicants have been unsuccessful due to being granted a six month provisional lease.

Recommendation 16 That Housing NSW review their approach to **managing tenants** who cause damage to public housing properties, considering policies in other jurisdictions, including the Queensland Government's three strikes policy.

Recommendation 18 That the Land and Housing Corporation finalise the **asset portfolio strategy**, as recommended by the Auditor-General, by 1 September 2015.

Recommendation 36 That the NSW Government immediately write to the Australian Government to urge them to continue the **National Rental Affordability Scheme** beyond 2015.

Recommendation 35 That the NSW Government consider establishing an **advisory council** to report to the responsible Minister for social, public and affordable housing, involving representatives from key government agencies, not-for-profit organisations, industry bodies and associations, academics and other housing experts.

Recommendation 37 That the NSW Government commission a report on the potential for income from the monies held by the Rental Bond Board to be **reinvested in the social housing** system in order to increase social, public and affordable housing.

Recommendation 33 That the Department of Family and Community Services finalise the **social housing policy**, as recommended by the Auditor-General, by 1 March 2015, considering: the need for clearer definitions of key terms lessons learnt from other jurisdictions to address the shortage of social housing consultation with stakeholders pressures in the broader housing system and the impact on social housing.

Recommendation 38 That the NSW Government trial the use of mechanisms to promote **growth in the supply of social** and affordable housing and improved housing affordability, including social benefit bonds, and report on trial outcomes by 1 September 2016.

Recommendation 39 That the NSW Government consider recognising social housing as a form of **infrastructure**, to enable proceeds from **Waratah Bonds** to fund new supply of social, public and affordable housing.

Recommendation 40 That the NSW Government investigate and report on a shared equity scheme, learning from interstate models, in consultation with the **Shared Equity Scheme Working Group**.

Maintenance

Recommendation 17 That the Department of Family and Community Services immediately commission an independent review of **policies and systems** related to **maintenance** of public housing properties, with a focus on: responsiveness to tenants' needs, value for money , use of local contractors , timely service delivery , quality assurance , cyclical and preventative maintenance, ICAC risk assessment, complaints handling systems. We recommend that the findings of this review inform consideration of future maintenance contracts.

Recommendation 19 That NSW Treasury publicly identify what funding is required to address the **maintenance backlog** for public housing properties.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Auditor-General's report on *Making the best use of public housing*:

<http://www.audit.nsw.gov.au/publications/performance-audit-reports/2013-reports/making-the-best-use-of-public-housing/making-the-best-use-of-public-housing>

Public Accounts Committee inquiry into *Tenancy management in social housing* recommendations and report:

http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/prod/parlment/committee.nsf/0/2DFC4FB81A3B2377CA257D94007968B9?open&refnavid=CO5_1

Shelter NSW's 10 key issues for the 2015 NSW election: <http://shelternsw.org.au/news/housing-supply-news/291-shelter-releases-it-s-10-key-issues-for-nsw-elections-2015>

Speak, Plan Act!: The NCOSS 2015 NSW election platform: <http://speakplanact.net/>