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My Background

I live in regional public housing. I was homeless, due to domestic violence, with a 2 ½ year old and a cat. I lived in someone's spare room with my few my possessions in storage. We had a house and appeared to be normal aspiring "middle class". My daughter's father had a mental health issue and managed it with alcohol. The house was reposed by the bank and he took a job on Melville Island in the Northern Territory. This was my opportunity to escape. I raised my daughter in this house. She is the joy of my life. I have lived here for 40 plus years. It's my place of belonging. I have, amongst other qualifications, an Honours Degree in Social Sciences. Between covid and the federal and Victorian state government's move to privatise public housing my pre existing anxiety is off the 'rector scale'. I am a single 70 plus female with health issues and fit into the largest growing group for potential homelessness. Thank-you for this opportunity to make a submission. I still believe that everyone has a voice and needs to be heard.

The focus on my submission is that the HHA is driven by economic factors. A key policy failure. It fails to consider that members of the Australian society are not products. Housing needs are immediate and urgent and should not be some statistic where limited numbers of public or social housing are provided to the lucky few. Yes; market forces are a factor. However, this should relate to the impact it has on individuals and groups in society rather than making these people responsible for the crisis situations their economic circumstances find them in. If the pandemic has done nothing else it clearly demonstrates this with lost jobs & wages, increases in domestic violence and the impact on housing. And while the following Guardian article refers specifically to covid it is not hard to extend its implication to other government sectors: as in housing. The Guardian, 20August2020 <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/aug/20/the-spread-of-coronavirus-is-not-the-fault-of-individuals-but-a-result-of-neoliberalism>

Housing keeping: Quotes from the issues paper are highlighted in black except for box 4 from page8. Page numbers from where the quotes are taken in the issues paper are included.

Taken from the introduction

Background

"The NHA's objectives are to contribute to improving access to affordable, safe and sustainable housing across the housing spectrum,

including to prevent and address homelessness, and to support social and economic participation.”

How can the public, who do not have access to economic prosperity, participate in the housing sector without a policy change from an economic focus to a social one?

And from:

Scope of the review

The intent of this review is to consider:

- **the extent to which the NHHA is meeting its objectives [clause 14] to improve access to affordable, safe and sustainable housing, prevent and address homelessness and support social and economic participation**

How can this happen without a shift in policy away from a market/ economic driven processes.

- **the adequacy and quality of the data and information reported under the NHHA to provide transparency and accountability in respect of housing and homelessness spending [clause 15(f)] and identify options to improve the adequacy and quality and timeliness of data reported under the NHHA**

Professor Guy Johnson in his essay: Australia – Getting out of the Policy Quagmire 2019 (See attachment 2) says there is adequate research into the issue however it is poorly coordinated and requires a process where this could happen. This suggests that HHA isn't coordinating the research at a national level. Maybe a national body?

The issues paper on page 16 states this: **“There have been many reviews and studies on homelessness in Australia.”** Then goes into some detail about the research. So why hasn't the NHHA acted on this research and shifted away from a market/ economic based focus. A policy shift is urgently needed.

In undertaking this review, the Commission should have regard to:

- **the respective roles of the Commonwealth and states with respect to housing and homelessness policy**
- **the impact of social and economic factors, including the coronavirus pandemic on housing and homelessness in Australia**
- **the individual housing and homelessness strategies and priorities of each of the states, and**

- **the individual bilateral schedules between each of the states and the Commonwealth.**

Sounds very aspirational. And indicates that the “status quo”, which has a market/economic focus, will be maintained.

And while the Finnish Housing First Model (attachment 1) may appear dated it has influenced policy making internationally and is a country where homelessness has decreased. [Housing First Guide - Housing First Europe Hub](#)

The issues paper mentions it in passing under:

There have been many reviews and studies on homelessness in Australia. These reviews have found that:

- **there are many examples of innovative initiatives in Australia that have improved outcomes, including initiatives aimed at young people and initiatives incorporating Housing First principles. However, these initiatives have not been brought to scale pp16**

The key being... not brought to scale... which reflects a policy failure in that it has not created a policy shift that would bring it to scale. And while the focus is on market forces this will not happen.

For example, **has the NHA contributed to a better functioning housing market?** Pp7

Why is housing considered a market when members of the public can't function properly without housing? And don't have the economic means to participate in a market/economic driven housing process. Professor Guy Johnson: Australia – Getting out of the Policy Quagmire 2019

Box 1 – National housing priority policy areas

The national housing priority policy areas identified in the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement include:

- **social housing** that is:
 - utilised efficiently and effectively (which may include redevelopment and stock transfers)
 - responsive to the needs of tenants (which may include redevelopment and stock transfers)
 - appropriately renewed and maintained (which may include redevelopment and new construction)
 - responsive to demand (which may include new construction and redevelopment).

Box 1 – National housing priority policy areas

- **community housing support** that improves the viability and encourages growth of the sector (which may include redevelopment and stock transfers).
- **affordable housing** (which may include stock transfers and incentives to increase supply).
- **tenancy reform** that encourages security of tenure in the private rental market.
- **home ownership** including support for first home buyers.
- **planning and zoning reform and initiatives**, including consideration of inclusionary zoning and land release strategies.

Source: NHHA, p. 16. Taken from pp8 of issues paper

This is privatisation of public assets on a nationwide bases and should not happen. And there is no mention of regulating this newly privatised housing sector. Surely there are alternatives...leasing arrangements as an example.

And can someone explain to me how stock transfers make good economic sense. Why not keep housing in government hands. Look what happened to aged care, the energy sector

www.etuvic.com.au/.../Electricity_Privatisation_Report.pdf

www.abc.net.au/news/2015-03-25/fact-check-does-privatisation...,

communication. All essential services that should not be driven by the market or economic factors. Have government at a federal and state level learnt nothing from this. The public pays massive subsidies for what? Increased costs?

I leave the final comments to Professor Guy Johnson from his paper: Getting out of the Policy Quagmire 2019 (I recommend the enquire read the whole essay attachment 2 Its short)

“Australia will have found the courage to recognise that good-evidence-based social policy works and that we could be (and needed to be) dragged out of the policy quagmire we were in. The big question though is what is going to be the catalyst that will drive the change we need? What event will disrupt our existing fetish with pathological policies and our refusal to reform our housing system? Will it be technology or perhaps a savvy advocacy campaign? Will it be because housing related disadvantage has spread into the middle class or will it simply be a shift back to the idea of doing things for the social good? I don't know what the catalyst will be or when and if it will occur. I doubt anyone does. I just hope change happens. Soon.”