

# National Housing and Homelessness Agreement Review

Comments on the Review

## Public Housing Availability and Concerns

Regarding the availability of public housing with waiting times up to 10 years even though half of public housing applicants have been settled within 6 months it is clear that there is a chronic shortage. Even 6 months of waiting is a long time if one has nowhere else to go and 10 years is unacceptable.

It is obvious that housing stock needs to be built up after years of public housing being sold off. Also Public Housing departments if they are anything like in SA are under-resourced, housing stock is not maintained properly and repairs are carried out by contractors. Allocate enough money to keep housing in good condition and avoid the use of contractors. Employ permanent tradespeople on a reasonable wage with an emphasis on quality work rather than the shoddy work often done by contractors whose primary motivation is getting the job done as quickly as possible with quality a distant second and also the govt being charged again by contractors having to come back and redo shoddy work.

The amount of money for this should not be much more than using contractors as the profit motive is eliminated and the tradespeople operated on a cost neutral basis. Also quality repairs and upgrades will last longer and even though the cost may initially be higher.

## Homeless People and Those Assisting Them

There seems to be a lack of facilities available for those homeless people who have severe mental and social issues and need more than just a bed and are unsuitable for standard short or long term accommodation.

More assistance should be given to those not-for-profits who assist homeless people and those in need.

Streamline the interaction between the govt (state and federal) and not-for-profits to minimise bureaucracy which takes up a significant amount of time and therefore expense for these organisations which operate on a shoestring budget and depend on the assistance of volunteers.

## Affordability – Private Housing and Rental

In view of the large increase in the cost of housing in the last year even more people are having to resign themselves to a life of renting and to compound their problems rental vacancies have decreased while rent has gone up resulting sometimes in bidding wars between people desperate to secure somewhere to live. People who have otherwise been able to live a reasonable working class life until recently are now having to live in their vans and cars. Landlords are able to profit from this shortage by increasing rents substantially further putting even rentals out of reach of an increasing number of people. Eventually this vicious spiral will lead to social unrest.

House prices have been allowed to increase substantially, approximately 20% in the last year with no controls being exerted by the govt resulting in large profits for a few lucky speculators and house flippers but large amounts of extra debt taking years longer to pay off. An increasing number of mortgagees are one financial problem away from disaster.

There needs to be govt controls on private rentals in terms of the amount being charged, the frequency and amount of rent increases and the terms and conditions. Rental subsidies to tenants by the govt can be viewed as an indirect handout to landlords and encourage landlords to increase rents. It is stated in the review that public housing results in a net loss to the govt but so do rental subsidies, tax breaks to corporations to encourage them to build some low cost community houses amongst their developments etc.

By building and buying enough housing stock so that anybody who wants or needs public housing has access to it would ensure that rents are kept in check in the private rental sector and also house prices so that wild swings in house prices are avoided. Also there would be no need for the myriad schemes like rental subsidies to exist and to manage.

## **Housing Developments**

In the suburb of Kilburn in metropolitan Adelaide in South Australia (and other areas) there has been widespread destruction of public housing which are being replaced with larger brick veneer houses jammed together with almost no yard space, no room for trees, no room for kids to play and because of the lack of tree cover the suburb is hotter in summer which means more air con use which means more global warming which means even more air con use which means even more global warming and so on ad nauseum. The housing trust houses that have been destroyed are double brick and from personal experience still in good structural condition and with some upgrades and maintenance had decades of life left in them. I would not be surprised if the remaining ones outlast the new ones being built. All this in the name of "Urban Renewal" There seems to have been no regard paid to making the new developments environmentally friendly. The same applies to the large number of private houses being destroyed along main roads to be replaced by high density blocks of flats. This will result in increased traffic density, heat in summer and a more sterile environment. Developers are doing well however.

## **Public Housing Construction**

Instead of the standard brick veneer construction advances in technology have made possible a number of alternatives that are much cheaper and environmentally responsible.

One such development is Christie Walk, a development in Sturt St in the Adelaide CBD that has been going for 20 years.

There are other such developments globally that have either been repurposed for public housing or built using environmentally friendly practices such as recycling building materials and introducing water recycling systems to reuse laundry and shower water for garden use and toilet flushing etc.

The govt should investigate the options of purchasing empty or little used warehouses and factories, office buildings and repurposing these for accommodation using innovative and environmentally friendly methods.

Another option is 3D printing of houses. This is now well established overseas and one company in Australia, Luyten, is looking to start doing this here. The benefits are many, vastly reduced construction time, waste and cost being the three big ones. This would be an opportunity for Australia to become a global leader in this technology as well as rapidly and cheaply solving the shortage of public housing. This method of construction has such great potential that it should be investigated and utilised without delay.