

34 Brunswick Street,  
Fitzroy, Vic, 3065  
Tel: (03) 9419 8699  
Fax: (03) 9419 7455  
ACN: 005 475 007  
ABN: 20 005 475 007

## Council to Homeless Persons

13 October 2003

Dear Affordable Housing Inquiry team,

We write regarding the Productivity Commission Inquiry into Affordable Housing. Council to Homeless Persons is extremely concerned to note that the terms of Reference for the Inquiry do not appear to include the crucial issues of social housing, homelessness or renting.

Australia currently has an estimated homeless population of close to 105 000 people (1996 Census). The impacts of homelessness on the individual can be devastating: isolation resulting from a breakdown of social and family networks, an inability to find and sustain employment or participate in education or training, increased susceptibility to mental illness in particular depression and anxiety, problems maintaining income support payments leading to increasingly entrenched poverty, poor physical health and possible exposure to street-based drug cultures.

The implications extend far beyond the individual. Homelessness has far-reaching negative impacts on wider society: family breakdown and generational homelessness, lost productivity, entrenched poverty and unemployment and increased pressure on the public health system.

The problem is compounded by the fact that there is a chronic lack not only of emergency beds and transitional accommodation to provide immediate relief, but also a chronic lack of sustainable long-term accommodation options that would help people move out of homelessness and into stable life situations. People experiencing homelessness find it almost impossible to access the private rental market; there are long waiting lists for public housing and young people's public housing tenancies in particular often break down; community-managed social housing is scarce.

Exploring the options for increasing Australia's supply of affordable housing - that is, our supply of public, private rental and community housing - is a vital step towards not only solving homelessness, but improving the social and economic health of this country as a whole.

It appears that this Inquiry into Affordable Housing is concerned only with home ownership - a dangerously short-sighted approach. Could you please respond to this letter indicating why the Inquiry team does not appear to consider the vital issues of social housing, homelessness or renting worthy of investigation? Council to Homeless Persons is also seeking clarification on whether the Terms of Reference will be amended so that this Inquiry considers the affordable housing needs of all Australians, not just those defined as prospective home owners.

Yours sincerely,

Deb Tsorbaris  
CEO  
Council to Homeless Persons  
Melbourne, Victoria

Meg Mundell  
Youth Policy Officer  
Council to Homeless Persons  
Melbourne, Victoria