

Housing and Homelessness Agreement Review

Brief comments Received

No	Comment
1	<p>I have raised my concerns a number of times with my local member of Parliament, Gladys Liu, and the previous disability minister Stuart Roberts and the shadow disability minister Bill Shorten, that there are inherent and significant problems with the NDIS Specialist Disability Accommodation funding. My son was deemed eligible for this funding in 2018 for the category "robust". Initially we thought this was a wonderful initiative as our son has complex disabilities and cannot live in most existing disability accommodation due to the severity of his disability. He would also not be able to live in a private rental or in government housing due to the damage that he would inflict. He is at risk of homelessness as we are unable to provide housing for him as he can be aggressive and at times violent. We discovered that the funding provided for SDA robust was not enough for the market to take up. The only robust being built was in the fringes of Melbourne, or as group homes, both of which are unsuitable for our son. Our son would like to live in the area that he is familiar with, east suburbs of Melbourne, but there is little chance of this happening. He has all of his programs and activities here, he is familiar enough with the streets to go for a walk and people here are familiar, and less scared, of him. If he has to move an hours drive away, he has to replace all of his Support Workers, all of the activities he attends have to be found or developed again and there will be a significant period of him being unsettled and probably violent until he gets used to a totally new area. Because we were desperate for a place for him we have had to accept an SDA place that is over an hours drive from our house, with poor public transport options. We know of other families who have given up looking for robust SDA, they believe it is a totally useless lot of funding as there is no SDA in the areas where their adult children want to live. The NDIS should be held accountable for this travesty if human rights- people with this level of disability are extremely vulnerable. 'Robust' clients can't even be out in a nursing home or aged care as their behaviours are dangerous to others. They are at greater risk if homelessness than other people with disabilities, they need special care and specially built homes in the metro area. You cannot compare the location factor if 4 in Perth with Location factor 4 in Melbourne. Land is more expensive in certain cities and this needs to be reflected in the NDIS SDA funding model, which it currently isn't. The SDA quarterly reports somehow show that there is not such a Demand for SDA robust- the truth is families know no one is building this where they want to live, so they are nor requesting it and if they get the funding, they are not using it.</p>
2	<p>To be be brief, housing affords people a sense of dignity. As a past resident of a small regional town (Ingham) and current property owner in that town, I am confident that if changes were made to the housing agreements where assistance can be given to first time buyers to purchase existing homes for sale that this will be a small part in the government's goal of people achieving home ownership. Government can also look into existing sites available that can be updated to create further housing for people in need. However ,further support is needed by the government so that industry, and consequently job creation, can progress. The Bioenergy renewable plant proposal placed before government has merit. There is opportunity in regional towns for growth. It is a much more affordable lifestyle. Ingham has great access to health services. It has a wonderful sense of community and is supportive of it's families. An ideal town for families to grow and have a sense of safety .</p>
3	<p>I live in Townsville and have become increasingly alarmed by the rise in homelessness in this community. The St Vincent De Paul society does a great job, but their facilities are no longer coping with the rising numbers of people who are unable to find adequate housing in the region. Townsville's population has risen rapidly over the last twenty years, but funding for the most vulnerable section in our community has not kept up with the reality of the rise in homelessness in our city. We are an extremely rich country and can afford to help these people, but it is arguable whether government agencies and leaders of our community have the will to do so.</p>

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4	I think you need to look more in-depth to the economic climate in the state or territories to determine whether or not that person needs housing. Also how long some tenants have been housed when told they earn too much because the rental system will be a shock, maybe exploring some assistance for those people? Another would be downsizing and upgrading on pre-established lots so the government is losing less money. Also I think we need to start setting up single mothers complexes or building with gardening space.
5	Our housing system is broken. Housing is a basic human need. But in Australia, the policies of successive Australian Governments have turned residential property into a speculative investment and a tax haven. This has significantly distorted the housing market and younger generations - and the poor - are paying the price. This has to stop. Everyone knows that injecting money into social and affordable housing will save heaps on the other side of the ledger.
6	Confidential
7	In addition to the Victorian Homelessness Networks response to the Strategic priority, Sunbury and Cobaw Community Health would like to add the following comments for consideration: • We ask that DFFH consider more carefully where public housing/ community housing/ affordable housing stock is placed. In the Macedon Ranges, approximately 90% of housing stock are in 'pockets'. This creates stigma amongst the community and exacerbates mental health issues of residents living in these properties. Thinking about how individuals and families are intersectionalised due to generational poverty, poor health and educational outcomes and employment are grouping together creating enclaves of disadvantage and generational poor outcomes. Spot purchases must become the norm, where the resident has the opportunity to integrate fully into their community without stigma attached. This will encourage active participation and contribution into the community, pride in the way their homes are presented and a greater more positive level of community and neighbour engagement and support. • DFFH and Macedon Ranges Shire Council need to focus on ensuring, where possible developments and future planning by the developers takes into consideration the wellbeing of the surrounding communities by allocating a percentage of the development to affordable/ social housing at a reduced cost in partnership with council or other non for profit sectors. There are a number of large developments currently either underway or in the planning in Kyneton, Woodend, Gisborne, Lancefield, Romsey and Riddles Creek. A commitment from developers to provide a small percentage of this to affordable housing is vital to addressing the homelessness crisis and affordable housing issues within the Macedon Ranges.
8	NHHHA Scope, Objectives and Governance • Australia is one of the most unaffordable housing markets in the world (e.g. http://www.demographia.com/dhi.pdf) and has a deep structural not cyclical failure in delivering housing that people on low incomes can afford. It is not just a supply issue. (The last cycle of high rental vacancy rates in WA clearly showed this. Despite excess stock, only 6% of available rentals in Perth were affordable to households on 50% of median incomes; falling to 2% for households on the minimum wage and less for people on statutory incomes.) • Secure affordable housing is a national issue with severe social and economic impacts. It needs a multilateral agreement like the NHHHA to provide a framework for joint effort as well as visible accountability back to the electorate. If not the NHHHA, then what? • The scope and objectives of the agreement need to retain some long-term aspiration. And a balance on addressing the causes of market failure for (e.g. over concentration of population in capital cities/ few regional cities; taxation settings; a failing welfare safety net), as well as the consequences (e.g. the need for more social housing and homelessness services). • The current Agreement largely excludes most areas of policy and programs that impact on its outcomes and has primarily sat in the hands of Social Services Ministers. Unsurprisingly, funding and reform priorities have focussed heavily on the existing social housing system, while areas that could be potential game-changers have been largely unexplored, or progressed in fragmented ways. • A revised NHHHA needs to come out of the policy 'no man's land' and positioning as a 'welfare' issue or primarily a State one. Any new Agreement needs politicians and officials who can craft and drive a coherent national policy and reform agreement horizontally across levels of govt and vertically within jurisdictions. Responsibility would best sit under the Heads of Treasury Ministerial Group , with the Social Services Ministers overseeing the specific Social Housing and Homelessness elements. • The

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Agreement could be enhanced to be a systemic multilateral policy and reform framework (more clearly focussed on the low income part of the continuum) but with a more bilateral approach to the funding arrangement part of the agreement to take account of the different social and economic circumstances of jurisdictions. • There needs to be a complementary analysis/review of the adequacy of the funding in the system to achieve the Agreement objectives and greater distributional equity in the housing system. Sacred political cows need to be called out. E.g. the 'great Aust dream' of owning is not realistic for a large section of the community now (i.e. people on low incomes and/or insecure employment) and there is a need to get real about an institutionally funded affordable rental sector that provides secure tenure like most other western democracies.