

To the Hon, Scott Morrison, MP
Prime Minister of Australia
CC: The Hon Josh Frydenberg MP
The Hon. Michael Sukkar MP
The Hon. Luke Howarth MP

6 December 2019

Dear Prime Minister,

As Australian organisations spanning the community, housing and corporate sectors, we are writing to urge you to take the opportunity of the Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook (MYEFO) to announce a major investment in social housing, so as a nation we can reduce homelessness and boost Australian incomes and jobs.

At least 116,000 Australians are homeless on any given night and a staggering 190,000 households are on waiting lists for social housing.

Underinvestment in housing by successive state and federal governments over the past 20 years, means Australia is now facing a national shortage of over 400,000 social housing properties for people in the lowest 20 per cent of household incomes who are either homeless or in rental stress.

Every dollar invested in social housing is estimated to boost GDP by \$1.30.

Social housing investment is the most effective way to reduce homelessness because it delivers housing that is affordable to, and targeted to, the lowest income households.

Social housing construction will also create jobs and increase incomes, at a time when dwelling commencements for all properties have declined by 8-9% in each of the last two quarters to March 2019. The RBA Governor has called for more investment in public infrastructure to strengthen growth now, and to lay foundations for better economic and social outcomes in future years.

Social housing investment has far-reaching economic and social benefits, and presents a stronger opportunity for growth than other commonly utilised levers. Social housing investment would deliver a bigger boost to growth in GDP per dollar spent by government than would either tax cuts or other transfers to households. It can be implemented more quickly than major road or rail infrastructure projects; and it brings longer-term economic benefits through improvements in workforce participation and productivity, as more people with below-average wages can live closer to suitable jobs.

Most importantly, providing social housing will stem the alarming growth of homelessness occurring across the nation; providing the stability for children's health and wellbeing and improving people's capacity to find employment, to recover from family and domestic violence, and to improve their health in the face of chronic illness. This in turn reduces the cost to health and community services.

Your Government has announced a number of welcome initiatives since 2017 to strengthen investment in community and affordable housing as well as in homelessness services. This includes: the new National Housing and Homelessness Agreement (NHHA); establishment of the National Housing Finance and Investment Corporation (NHFIC); the Safe Places initiative; and the appointment

of a new Minister for Housing, and an Assistant Minister for Community Housing, Homelessness and Community Services.

This provides solid foundations for a timely investment in social housing as part of a wider strategy to make housing more affordable for people with low incomes, including improvements to Rent Assistance and encouragement of private investment in affordable rental properties.

In the lead up to MYEFO, we encourage you to consider investment in social housing as a cost-effective way to create jobs and grow the economy, while at the same time reducing the rate of homelessness.

Yours faithfully



Kate Colvin, National Spokesperson, Everybody's Home campaign

For more detail see: ACOSS Briefing Note (2019) How to reduce homelessness and boost income and jobs: Social housing as infrastructures, accessed at: <https://www.acoss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/ACOSS-Brief-Social-Housing-Investment-as-Infrastructure.pdf>



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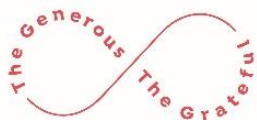
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