



The Hon. Scott Morrison, MP
Prime Minister

The Hon. Michael Sukkar, MP
Assistant Treasurer
Minister for Housing
Minister for Homelessness, Social and Community Housing

11 March 2022

Dear Prime Minister and Minister for Housing,

Urgent call for a housing recovery fund and housing resilience plan

Southeast Queensland and NSW Northern Rivers are facing a prolonged housing emergency. Tens of thousands of families have seen their homes badly damaged or destroyed. These are people with lives in the local community, who work in local jobs, and whose children attend local schools.

With private rentals in short supply before the floods (vacancy rates 0.4-0.7% in the regional areas and 1.1% in Brisbane), soaring rental costs (between 12-24% in the past year), and a shortfall of 74,000 social housing dwellings in these regions, it is clear the rental market cannot accommodate families who cannot return to their homes, particularly those on low-middle incomes. These households need urgent housing help to avoid homelessness.

The Federal Government needs to step up and take action to provide the resources needed to house affected communities, to support local responses, and to plan for a more resilient housing future.

We are calling on the Federal Government to invest in:

- **Emergency housing:** Contribute to the cost of temporary housing in affected communities in partnership with state and local governments
- **Emergency rental assistance and recovery grants:** Provide rental and relocation assistance to people in affected communities who have been displaced
- **Permanent housing infrastructure:** Invest in building 25,000 social and affordable housing properties per year, with investment in the first year prioritised towards replacing existing social housing affected by the floods, and addressing the critical shortage of social housing in the flood impacted areas

Action is also needed to avoid the housing disaster unfolding in flood-affected areas repeating each time there is a major emergency.

We are calling on the Federal Government to exercise leadership in emergency response planning and develop a housing resilience plan in partnership with State and Territory Governments.

The plan should include:

- **A national temporary housing program:** To develop adequate supplies of temporary housing available for transport to areas affected by natural disasters.
- **Housing and climate resiliency grants:** Funding for resiliency planning grants to local and state governments, and community and Aboriginal housing to fortify and protect existing homes, mitigate threats to new homes, and preserve and increase supplies of homes that are both climate-resilient and affordable to lower-income residents.

Disasters throw supply and demand completely out of kilter. When thousands of homes are removed from a local housing market because they are uninhabitable or destroyed, prices skyrocket; local workers can't afford to remain in the area; and local services and the local economy are devastated. Many long-term South Coast NSW residents are still living in caravans following the Black Summer fires.

This can breed deep social dislocation. Without a stable, affordable home, a child can't attend school. A health worker struggles to serve their community. Entire swathes of critically important, though modestly paid, workers are priced out of their community. With increases in rent over the past year, aged care, childcare and supermarket workers must already spend 70-77 per cent of their weekly wage to afford an average rental on the Sunshine Coast or North Coast NSW. These critical workers cannot afford to pay more.

The scale of this housing emergency demands action and leadership from the Federal Government.

Yours sincerely



Kate Colvin
National Spokesperson, Everybody's Home