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**Q1**

Name of organisation

Affordable Housing Australia Pty Ltd

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**Q2**

Your name

Michael Kerans

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**Q3**

Position

Managing Director

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## Q10

Describe the experiences of people struggling to access affordable and suitable housing in the context of your organisation's work.

There is not sufficient avenues nor resources to assist those in navigating and supporting the complex and exhausting process of accessing affordable and suitable housing.

In all areas where government social support is offered there needs to be more services to assist those in need of the services. The majority of those in need of social services, including affordable and appropriate housing, live with circumstances which hinder their journey to finally obtain the required support service, e.g. housing. Most are hindered by a lack of time, access to the required resources and or documentation, and many do not have the mental health to respond to the demands of the documentation. There needs be a greater understanding of the people needing access to these social services, followed by an appropriate amendment to the application process.

There is also a high degree of hopelessness and frustration by so many people/ households who are desperate to find a suitable home. These households struggle under the burden of high accommodation costs and insecure housing. Both of these factors lead to a feeling of low stability and a lack of certainty. These impacts have far reaching implications, such as reduced spending on health care and personal development. As this is the situation of many households in Australia, a large proportion of the population are suffering and prohibited from even coming close to living their best lives. Yet, Australia is content to let these people suffer, having the belief that in some way their privilege, as employed or financially secure Australians, would be reduced if spending was increased on the underprivileged. This small attitude is of course not limited to the affordable housing or even broader social support operations, but is a systemic ill across our nation.

Those living with housing stress are also angry at the organisations involved in the sector as they do not provide the housing required to meet household's housing demands. If there is any housing offered by housing providers, in a timely manner suitable to the time requirements of the tenant, there are often restrictions in terms of who can occupy it, as it's too small, too large, in the wrong location, or is of poor quality. The hurdles required to successfully negotiate extensive wait times, and the effort required to negotiate the housing allocation system, continue to frustrate further those in housing need. On the face of it, the system appears designed to thwart and reduce the demand for supported housing, by the imposition of such hurdles.

During the course of AHA's existence, anecdotal evidence points to a general opinion by the Australian public, across all levels of society and socio-economic strata, that households who need more housing assistance, either do not deserve it, or already receive sufficient assistance. Such attitudes were displayed by ex-Prime Minister Morrison, who stated, the best form of welfare is a job, and similarly, instead of further rent assistance, people should buy a house, and whose government then implemented Robodebt, a policy based on a bias that those in need will act unlawfully and therefore there needs to be "welfare cop." Mr Morrison would not have said such ridiculous statements if he believed Australians didn't think the same way. These kinds of attitudes completely ignore the diverse range of circumstances which prevent households from accessing suitable housing. Yet despite such obvious messages from successive governments that they are not willing to provide significant additional assistance to increase the supply of affordable and appropriate housing, the Not for Profit housing sector keeps on looking to government for further assistance. Housing providers would be better to look at how they can build more housing without additional assistance. CHP's need to break the addiction to government subsidies as this is the only way significant amounts of new affordable housing supply will be achieved in the foreseeable future.

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### Q11

Describe the flow-on impacts of the housing crisis in the context of your organisation's work.

Despite the housing crisis, which in my mind has not been a recent problem, there has been no flow-on impacts, that is, there has been no increase in real demand for finances to fund the development of affordable rental housing. Over the 14 years since its inception, Affordable Housing Australia sought every conceivable avenue, to provide superannuation funding exclusively to Not for Profit community housing providers to develop more housing. That new housing was proposed to be owned and managed by CHP's. However, not one project was funded, even when there was no equity required from the CHP. The problem appeared to be a pervasive attitude of CHP's that unless the government was going to provide a subsidy to assist with the supply of new housing, they were not interested.

Interestingly, there has been some CHP's which have courted institutional funding, however this activity is severely limited. The housing crisis has not moved the majority of CHP's to be open to all means to meet the demand for affordable rental housing. This is despite their various constitutions stating that is their main purpose for being.

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### Q12

Describe how current policy settings impact housing affordability and access to housing from your organisation's perspective.

There is currently sufficient research that states how inadequate current housing policy is and how it only fuels the increase in housing prices and the reduction in affordable housing, both rental and for purchase. The continued promotion of housing as an investment and not a right, by successive governments of all brands, continues to fuel the ever increasing cost of housing. There is no need for me to restate the findings of that research now.

Note however, the current policy settings do allow for a significant increase in the supply of affordable rental and social housing. Nothing needs to change on a policy note in order for this new supply to occur. That does not however discount that there could be positive changes to policy which would assist to further increase the diversity of housing offered.

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### Q13

Describe what actions your organisation believes should be taken by governments to most improve affordability and access to housing.

My organisation does not consider what the government can, or should do, to address the housing crisis, as we have long held the view that a neoliberal government will not improve housing affordability. It is best to forget such hopes and do something which will actually produce more affordable housing. The CHP sector, including its peak bodies, hold to the belief that they cannot supply new affordable housing without government assistance. The CHP sector needs to end immediately that thinking and do all it can to develop affordable and suitable rental housing. To do otherwise is a waste of time and only props up the current system. Over my 14 years of trying to bring a new source of funding into the sector, there has been other companies who have also tried to bring significant amounts of institutional funding into the sector and have since left, frustrated.

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### Q14

Is there anything else your organisation would like to share with the Commission?

With respect, I would not waste your time with the Commission. I recommend you dedicate your time to consider all means which will result in the significant provision of new affordable rental housing excluding the participation of governments are all levels. A large increase in new affordable rental housing will ultimately mitigate rising housing prices. I can hear you thinking it can't be done. Well, I know it can. Good luck.

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