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Q1

Name of organisation

Asthma Australia

Q2

Your name

Amanda Bresnan

Q3

Position

Manager Advocacy and Government Relations

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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.

Consumer research by Asthma Australia has revealed that certain asthma triggers are common in many Australian homes. Our nationally representative survey of over 5,000 people focused on indoor air pollution from cooking, gas or wood heating, mould and dampness and pests. We found that many people are exposed to these triggers in their homes and that some population groups are more likely to be exposed to certain triggers. Those most at risk include people with asthma, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people living in social housing and people with children in their homes.

Q11

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

Our survey found only six out of 10 people are confident to make changes to improve the air quality inside their home. Common barriers are cost, not owning the home, not being concerned or not knowing what to do. The survey suggests triggers in Australian homes are likely to be worsening asthma and allergy symptoms. Almost one third of people with asthma or allergies have worse symptoms when they are at home, regardless of whether they own their home, rent or live in social housing. This is the opposite of what we want, which is safe, healthy and secure homes. People were concerned they would be evicted from their home if renting if they asked for problems to be addressed.

Q12

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

Asthma Australia has identified areas for policy reforms that would make our homes healthier. We will be working with stakeholders to advocate for improvements such as financial supports for low-income households to improve home health, incentives for landlords to improve rental home health, improving social housing, increasing standards for new homes and education programs to raise awareness around home health.

Q13

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

For systemic, widespread change to happen, we need decision-makers and governments to act and lead. This is for factors such as moving away from gas connections in homes, investing in electrification of homes, developing building codes and standards, developing social and public housing that is built appropriately, and strategies to engage all levels of government.

An inquiry on Homes, Health and the Environment would inquire into the elements of a healthy home and the benefits of a healthy home as a social and cultural determinant of health in Australia. The inquiry would consider the health and population groups that are most impacted by living in poor quality or sub-standard housing, actions and mechanisms to improve the health of homes, and the factors outside the home, such as air pollution and impacts from climate change, that impact households.

Q14

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

Asthma Australia is calling for a Australian Parlaiment to ensure that key stakeholders have the opportunity to talk about why having a healthy home is vital. It is about everyone having the right to be safe and healthy in their home, and for the Australian Parlaiment to lead and act on this issue. There are a range of initiatives occurring across government in the housing, energy efficiency and health areas but no links are being made to connect this work. This is an opportunity to ensure all these factors are considered and that people live in homes that are safe and improve not worsen their health.
