

The Hon Rose Jackson MLC

Minister for Water, Minister for Housing,
Minister for Homelessness
Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Youth,
Minister for the North Coast



Ref: EAP24/5218

Ms Maiy Azize
National Spokesperson
Everybody's Home

By email: info@everybodyshome.com.au

Dear Ms Azize

Invitation to contribute to the People's Commission into the Housing Crisis

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the People's Commission into the Housing Crisis.

I recognise that NSW is in a housing and rental crisis and understand the distress it is causing people.

I appreciate the work of Everybody's Home in leading the People's Commission and providing an opportunity for individuals and organisations across Australia to contribute to a national conversation about the crisis, its impacts and what can be done to fix it.

Working to resolve this crisis could not be more of a priority for me or the Government.

The NSW Government has inherited a housing system that is broken after over a decade of neglect. This will take time to fix. We know we need to do more and invest more into social and affordable housing.

As a start, we have introduced a suite of reforms to address housing insecurity, strengthen the housing sector, and start the process of ensuring we deliver more housing.

I am pleased to provide the attached information for the Commission's consideration which outlines the actions the NSW Government and Homes NSW is taking to deliver more housing.

Thank you again to Everyone's Home and the People's Commission for continuing to highlight and discuss this critically important matter.

Yours sincerely

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Rose Jackson MLC

Minister for Water, Minister for Housing, Minister for Homelessness

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*Thanks so much to
Everybody's Home for this
process. I look forward to
hearing the stories from
across Australia and
stand ready to
engage with
Commissioners to
discuss solutions!
R.*

Date: 21.4.24

Encl:

Actions the NSW Government is taking to address the housing crisis

On 1 February 2024, the NSW Government created Homes NSW to tackle the state's housing crisis, create a more efficient and streamlined housing system, and drive the delivery of more housing options.

Homes NSW brings together the housing services of the NSW Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) with NSW Land and Housing Corporation (LAHC), the NSW Aboriginal Housing Office (AHO) and key worker housing all under one roof. Later this year, it will expand its homelessness responsibilities.

Homes NSW aims to:

- Streamline the building and maintenance of all publicly owned and operated social homes across NSW.
- Simplify and fix tenancy services, including maintenance, support, allocation of properties and transfers to improve outcomes for tenants and the tenant experience.
- Focus on providing important homelessness services, with the goal of creating a state where experiences of homelessness are rare, brief, and not repeated.
- Drive collaboration between the NSW Government, the Commonwealth Government, sector experts and peak bodies, local councils, and Aboriginal and mainstream community housing providers to work closer together to address the state's housing and homelessness crisis.

In these first few months of establishing Homes NSW, some of the aims of bringing the housing agencies together under one roof are already coming together. There is more collaboration, staff are finding it easier to connect to each other to respond to customer questions and requests, and stakeholders have a single place to direct their concerns.

Growing social and affordable housing

The NSW Government is committed to working with Aboriginal and mainstream community housing providers, communities and councils, the private sector and the Commonwealth Government so there are more social and affordable homes across the state.

The Premier has ordered an audit of public land that could be used for housing and a pause has been placed on the sale of social homes after the government became aware of the scale of sales in the last decade.

In the 2023/24 Budget, \$224 million is being invested as part of the Essential Housing Package. This includes \$11.3 million to extend the Together Home program which assists rough sleepers to sustain stable housing with wrap-around supports. It includes \$10 million to demonstrate how manufacturing can speed up housing delivery, and \$70 million in debt financing for more social and affordable homes to be generated in regional NSW by funding initial land and site works. In addition, a NSW Housing Fund is being set up with \$15 million for priority housing and homelessness measures to confront the housing crisis.

NSW also welcomes the Commonwealth's \$13 billion investment in social and affordable housing under the Housing Australia Future Fund, the Social Housing Accelerator Payment, and the National Housing Infrastructure Fund - Social and Affordable Housing.

We have been working collaboratively with the Commonwealth Government to maximise the benefit of these reforms to NSW and ensure more people have a safe, secure and affordable home.

We are already using some of this funding to make 1,500 social homes rapidly available.

Homelessness Strategy

It is time to make a change. Business as usual is not working. The issues are complex, and we need to be bold to deliver positive outcomes for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

The NSW Government is developing a new 10-year homelessness strategy. The strategy outlines a whole of system transformation that will make NSW a place where homelessness is rare, brief and not repeated because people have a safe home and the support to keep it.

The strategy is designed to shift the service system from:

- a focus on crisis responses to a focus on prevention
- a service-centred system to a person-centred system
- district-focused to local service planning design and delivery.

The new Strategy will commence later in 2024 and will supported by action plans to transform the system over time to better prevent and respond to homelessness in NSW.

A range of initiatives are already in place to prevent and reduce homelessness, focusing on Housing First approaches, crisis and transitional accommodation, assertive outreach, sustaining at risk tenancies, risk screening and supports in schools, and building new social housing.

The new strategy will build on these proven approaches and look at new and innovative ways to make homelessness rare, brief and not repeated.

Rental reform

The NSW Government has appointed the state's first-ever rental commissioner, Trina Jones.

Ms Jones is the voice for renters, working with government to design and implement changes that rebalance the rental market, making it fairer.

Work is underway on reforms to end 'no grounds' evictions, make it easier for tenants to have pets, implement a portable bond scheme, and better protect renters' personal information.

Beyond these proposed changes, the rental commissioner will be responsible for identifying and investigating other issues that are impacting the NSW rental market such as rental affordability and supply, longer term rental agreements, ways to improve energy efficiency, and the development of educational resources for renters and owners.

The role of Commonwealth and local governments in addressing the housing crisis

The NSW Government is working hard to address the housing crisis but cannot do this alone.

The Commonwealth and Local Governments have a shared role to play in addressing profound housing supply and unaffordability challenges.

We welcome the Commonwealth's investment in housing finance to generate new social and affordable homes.

We ask that even more investment is made so existing social homes can be better maintained, and homelessness prevention and response services be better supported to meet growing need in the face of increasing wage and operating costs.

Unfortunately, Commonwealth funding under the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement (NHHA) has not kept up with demand for services, decreasing every year in real terms for a decade.

As a proportion funding, it has fallen from 0.52% of the Commonwealth Budget in 2013-14 to 0.28% in 2023-24. This has meant States and Territories are funding an increasingly greater portion of housing and homelessness services.

Under current arrangements, homelessness services in NSW have only been able to respond to about 80% of the people who need their services. That means more people will have to be turned away from the crucial support they need.

We all need the Commonwealth to increase its investment in social housing and homelessness services, so services do not reduce as costs go up, and so collectively we can Close the Gap on Aboriginal housing outcomes.

Like the Commonwealth, local government has a significant part to play in reducing the housing crisis. It can be an effective enabler and generator of new homes.

The local government sector has made a clear commitment to supporting the development of new housing supply, including social and affordable homes, and is a strong advocate for regional housing in particular.

The NSW Government looks forward to working closely and in partnership with local councils to achieve that shared objective. Already a number of local councils have been highly proactive in identifying land that could be used for social and affordable housing, or other ways they can help.

Through planning reform, the NSW Government is working to ensure social and affordable housing can be delivered where it is needed in all communities across the state.

We are incentivising residential housing developers to help get more social and affordable housing on the ground and providing NSW housing agencies with greater powers to fast-track approvals.

Tackling the housing crisis requires collective effort across all levels of government, community, and the private sector – we all need to strive to do more.

The NSW Government is committed to working with the Commonwealth and local government to tackle the housing crisis.