

Inquiry into Options to improve access to existing and alternate accommodation to address the social housing shortage

The NSW Government thanks the Committee on Community Services for its thorough and considered examination of options to improve access to existing and alternate accommodation to address the social housing shortage. The Government also acknowledges the contributions of the many individuals and organisations that gave evidence or made written submissions.

The Government agrees with the Committee that a range of solutions are required to address the current social housing shortage. The Government will continue to strive to get housing right so that all people, at all stages of their lives, can access housing that meets their needs.

Work is already underway to address some of the Committee's recommendations. This includes the delivery of new social housing and upgrading of existing homes by Aboriginal Housing Office (AHO), Land and Housing Corporation (LAHC), and the community housing sector, supported by the substantial commitment to housing included in the 2022-23 budget.

Responses to the Committee's recommendations in the next section highlight a number of programs that are being delivered by AHO and LAHC to ensure appropriate accommodation options are available for people in need.

The Committee's findings and recommendations have helped to shape proposed amendments to the planning system that were recently exhibited for public comment. If adopted, those amendments would clarify planning approval pathways for use of vacant land and buildings to accommodate people experiencing or at risk of homelessness. The feedback received in response to the exhibition is now being reviewed before final policy recommendations on this issue are prepared for Government. As noted by the Committee, it will be critical to ensure that issues such as building safety and the provision of adequate wraparound services are addressed in any planning framework for temporary supportive accommodation.

Detailed responses to each of the Committee's 12 recommendations are provided below.

Recommendation	Government Response
Recommendation 1 The NSW Government should continue to increase investment in the provision and maintenance of public and social housing to address the critical shortage of housing options for those who are eligible for it.	Supported Through Future Directions for Social Housing in NSW, the NSW Government has implemented a range of measures to grow, maintain and adapt the social housing portfolio to meet the needs of vulnerable people.

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	<p>Since March 2020, the Government has allocated over \$1.3 billion to the Land and Housing Corporation (LAHC) to deliver new social homes, upgrade kitchens, bathrooms and roofs, and provide enhanced cleaning across NSW.</p> <p>The Government is supporting the delivery of new social houses, as well as the ongoing maintenance of existing stock. Most recently the NSW Budget 2022/23 allocated \$300 million for the maintenance and upgrade of more than 15,800 social housing properties and allocated \$37 million towards supporting the Community Housing Sector to deliver 120 new social housing dwellings under the Together Home program.</p> <p>Funding has been allocated to the Aboriginal Housing Office (AHO) for the following major programs to deliver new social housing, as well as repairs and upgrades to existing housing:</p> <p>Stimulus program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$212 million allocated from 2020/21 to 2023/24 for delivery of residential construction and maintenance upgrade projects. The Stimulus Program has so far delivered 136 new homes and upgraded 5,853 homes. <p>Closing the gap – housing solutions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$149.8 million allocated from 2023/24 to 2025/26 (\$24.1m recurrent and \$125.7m capital) to construct 200 new and 260 upgraded homes for Aboriginal families, and for 4,440 climate resilience and energy saving upgrades. <p>Capital works program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$110 million allocated from 2022/23 to 2025/26 to deliver new supply and capital upgrades.

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	<p>Flood relief package</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$70 million allocated from 2022/23 to 2024/25 to deliver repairs and rebuild community-owned homes and Aboriginal Housing Office (AHO) new builds in flood impacted local government areas. <p>Economic recovery funding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$35 million allocated for 2022/23 to deliver new AHO homes, jobs, and more Aboriginal Community Housing Investment Fund (ACHIF) – community sector delivered projects. This includes new supply and upgrades to community owned homes, to deliver improved living conditions and help reduce homelessness and overcrowding issues. This includes 51 new Aboriginal Community Housing homes and a further 45 AHO homes. <p>To maximise social and affordable housing investment and growth across the State, the NSW Government will continue to collaborate with the Australian Government in the implementation of the Housing Australia Future Fund the National Housing Accord and the work of Housing Australia and the National Housing Supply and Affordability Council. NSW is also committed to working productively with other jurisdictions to increase social and affordable housing supply through the newly formed Housing and Homelessness Ministerial Council.</p> <p>There is also the opportunity to leverage Land iQ capability for provision of new sites to build more social housing where needed the most. Land iQ is a whole of government spatial tool that offers advanced analytics and scenario planning capabilities applied to all land in NSW.</p>

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<p>Recommendation 2</p> <p>That the Department of Planning and Environment co-designs with housing and homelessness experts, a framework for meanwhile use that covers suitability of the property, support services for tenants, minimum timeframes, types of buildings, conversion costs and factors, and local community consultation.</p>	<p>Supported in principle</p> <p>An explanation of intended effect (EIE) setting out proposed amendments to <i>State Environmental Planning Policy (Housing) 2021</i> was exhibited from 22 November 2022 to 13 January 2023. The EIE included proposed options to allow for the use of vacant land and buildings for temporary supportive accommodation (TSA). The exhibition of the EIE allows for testing of the proposed options with key stakeholders before the policy approach is finalised. The Department of Planning and Environment (DPE) is now reviewing submissions received in response to the exhibition.</p>
<p>Recommendation 3</p> <p>That the Department of Planning and Environment provides grants to local councils and housing providers for innovative housing programs, such as home sharing and tiny homes while longer term solutions are developed.</p>	<p>Supported</p> <p><i>Housing 2041</i> is a whole-of-government housing strategy with a 20-year vision. The NSW housing system requires collaboration across sectors to harness opportunities. The 2021-22 Action Plan commits to continued investment in social housing and enabling the community housing sector. It also commits to identify opportunities and partnerships to fund, finance and deliver more new social homes and to deconcentrate social housing. The 2023-27 Action Plan is currently being developed and will build on the 5 Priority Areas and identify new funding and partnership opportunities to deliver the Government's 20-year housing vision.</p> <p>The AHO is funded, up to June 2026, to deliver one additional Client Experience Initiatives (CEI) grant and one new Leading Community Demonstration Site (LCDS) grant.</p> <p>The CEIs aim to achieve positive outcome/s for Aboriginal people, families and communities through the implementation of an Aboriginal led co-design approach targeting an identified social need. This approach empowers Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCO) to take</p>

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	<p>the lead in co-designing culturally responsive supports and services for their community.</p> <p>The LCDSs aim to deliver a place based, culturally responsive service model for Aboriginal cohorts who require support to resolve their housing needs whilst addressing at least one social issue. The LCDS sees co-design of a community-identified service need in which an ACCO works in partnership with AHO and other nominated government stakeholders. One of the reasons for delivering the LCDS is to build a strong evidence base around the benefits of an Aboriginal led co-design approach. Funding has been provided for an expression of interest for an additional LCDS site for 3 years and for the extension of the current LCDSs for a further year.</p> <p>Capacity building around program design and evaluation are also an important element of the project. Funding has been extended for the current LCD project, run by the ACPH Gunida Gunyah. This funding has seen Gunida Gunyah build a Homelessness Hub in Gunnedah and run support programs to meet the needs of complex clients and assist them to find housing.</p>
<p>Recommendation 4</p> <p>That the Department of Planning and Environment works with local councils and community housing providers to reduce barriers to the provision of meanwhile use, social and affordable housing.</p>	<p>Supported in principle</p> <p>See comments in response to recommendation 2 above regarding the recent exhibition of an EIE which included proposed options to allow for the use of vacant land and buildings for temporary supportive accommodation (TSA).</p> <p>The AHO Finding Your Way Transitional Housing Options program will see 20 properties repurposed over 4 years supporting 40 families in transitional housing each year. AHO is working with Aboriginal Housing Providers and Support Service organisations to identify and repurpose Employee Related</p>

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	<p>Accommodation to provide transitional housing and wrap around support services to vulnerable Aboriginal people, for example, people exiting corrective services or families experiencing domestic and family violence. The Department of Regional NSW is in the process of delivering Regional Housing Delivery Plans in targeted Functional Economic Regions. These plans will place based short-medium term solutions to improve the supply of housing. These plans are informed by targeted consultation with local government, developers and other key industry stakeholders. The first tranche of 10 plans are expected to be delivered by early 2023, with a further 19 plans to be completed by mid-2023.</p>
<p>Recommendation 5</p> <p>That the Department of Planning and Environment consults with local councils on ways to speed up the planning approval process for meanwhile use.</p>	<p>Supported in principle</p> <p>See comments in response to recommendation 2 above regarding the recent exhibition of an EIE which included proposed options to allow for the use of vacant land and buildings for temporary supportive accommodation (TSA).</p>
<p>Recommendation 6</p> <p>That the Department of Planning and Environment works with community housing providers and local councils to address policy barriers that hinder the use of government land for social and affordable housing.</p>	<p>Supported in principle</p> <p>The NSW Government continues to consider sites for social and affordable housing. There are numerous projects LAHC and Landcom have underway using Government owned sites and working with the community housing sector. In addition, the NSW Government also considers opportunities for sites across other Government agencies. A recent example is the Transport Asset Holding Entity's (TAHE) Affordable Housing Pilot Project.</p> <p>The Greater Cities Commission's <i>Six Cities Region: Discussion Paper</i> proposes that the new City Plans will set a target of up to 30% for the proportion of social and affordable housing in residential developments on government land. The Department of Planning and Environment will continue to work with local councils to update local housing strategies once</p>

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	<p>the Greater Sydney Region Plan targets are endorsed by the NSW Government.</p> <p>NSW Government agencies will continue to work with community housing providers (CHPs), Aboriginal CHPs, Local Aboriginal Land Councils and councils to enable innovative solutions to grow social and affordable housing across NSW.</p> <p>Policy settings are continually reviewed to facilitate new social and affordable housing partnerships. The LAHC Community Housing Direct Dealing policy has been reviewed and updated to facilitate greater partnering to enable a broader range of proposals to be considered for direct dealing.</p> <p>LAHC will continue to build collaborative partnerships with councils focused on working together to deliver new housing within their local government area. Agreements have already been signed between LAHC with Newcastle, Wollongong, Albury and Wagga Wagga councils, with others under negotiation.</p> <p>AHO, in addition to working with councils and housing providers, continues to work with Aboriginal stakeholders including Local Aboriginal Lands Councils, NSWALC and the Aboriginal Community Housing Industry Association (ACHIA), Indigenous Business Australia (IBA) and Local Decision-Making groups such as RAHLA, Riverina Murray Regional Alliance (RMRA) and the Three Rivers Regional Assembly to understand and address policy barriers and understand community needs and aspirations for participating in the development of new social and affordable housing.</p>

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	<p>DPE is currently using Land iQ to identify suitable government-owned land that can be used to deliver more social and affordable housing. The tool will assist the Department to develop a short-list of sites and support the strategic site assessment process to ensure land use decisions consider and balance social, economic, environmental, and financial impacts across a wide range of matters, including informing housing policy matters.</p>
<p>Recommendation 7</p> <p>That the Department of Planning and Environment reviews data on vacant private dwellings and considers reforms to maximise the use of unoccupied dwellings.</p>	<p>Supported in principle</p> <p>DPE will continue to review data on vacant private dwellings and continue to brief Government on any significant changes in the level of vacancies across the state or in any particular region.</p> <p>Data from the last two ABS censuses indicates a steady rate of unoccupied dwellings across the state.</p> <p>The data show that the 10 local government areas with the highest rates of unoccupied dwellings as a percentage of total private dwellings are predominantly located in rural and regional NSW.</p> <p>There are limited options for addressing this issue through the planning system.</p> <p>At this stage, a ‘vacancy tax’ is not currently being considered for NSW. The AHO regularly monitors the use of its assets and repurposes properties through innovative housing solutions. For example, the Finding Your Way Transitional Housing program sees Employee Related Accommodation repurposed to provide transitional housing for vulnerable Aboriginal people (see details at recommendation 4 above).</p>

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	LandiQ offers a platform to spatially map and analyse vacant dwelling data from the census.
<p>Recommendation 8</p> <p>That the Department of Planning and Environment and the Department of Communities and Justice consult with community housing providers on ways to reduce duplication and overlaps in compliance reporting for community housing providers.</p>	<p>Supported</p> <p>DPE and the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) are committed to working with community housing providers (CHPs) and Aboriginal CHPs to streamline compliance reporting and minimise duplication.</p> <p>Opportunities for sharing compliance and performance data will continue to be explored by LAHC and DCJ to reduce overlaps, including with the Registrar of Community Housing.</p> <p>LAHC has been working collaboratively with the Community Housing Industry Association (CHIA) and CHPs on a new LAHC CHP Performance Framework for 20-year leases. This work aims to streamline and simplify some asset-focused reporting requirements.</p> <p>The AHO has funded the DCJ Office of the Registrar of Community Housing to provide dedicated staff to support Aboriginal housing organisations to become nationally registered CHPs. This has resulted in NSW having 38 registered Aboriginal CHPs, close to double the combined figure of registered Aboriginal CHPs in all other jurisdictions in Australia.</p> <p>The AHO is also working closely with compliance staff at the Registrar's office to align reporting requirements in the AHO Provider Performance Framework and is currently investigating options to streamline provider reporting through the AHO Ngamaru Provider Portal (Salesforce database).</p>

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<p>Recommendation 9</p> <p>That the Department of Planning and Environment works with First Nations representative organisations and local First Nations communities in the design of Aboriginal community housing to ensure it is culturally appropriate.</p>	<p>Supported</p> <p>The AHO Design Guidelines have been developed to benchmark design excellence, sustainability and whole of life requirements for new low and medium density housing projects delivered by AHO across remote, regional and inner-city locations.</p> <p>The AHO Design Guidelines support the delivery of good quality housing and incorporate cultural sustainability principles to ensure new AHO homes suit the broader needs of Aboriginal people across different communities. The AHO Design Guidelines NSW were prepared in collaboration with Aboriginal stakeholders, and included a thorough analysis of AHO and relevant government guidelines, as well as consultative input from expert cultural advisors.</p>
<p>Recommendation 10</p> <p>That the Department of Planning and Environment works with Aboriginal Land Councils and Aboriginal housing providers to identify Aboriginal-held land that would be suitable for social and affordable housing.</p>	<p>Supported</p> <p>Close partnership with Local Aboriginal Land Councils (LALCs) has been at the forefront of AHO while delivering housing for the Aboriginal community in NSW. Previous programs such as Housing on Aboriginal Land (HOAL) and Housing Aboriginal Communities Program (HACP), and current programs such as the Aboriginal Community Housing Investment Fund (ACHIF) enable the AHO to deliver social housing in partnership with LALCs where Aboriginal owned land can be used to construct housing for Aboriginal people.</p> <p>The AHO partners with LALCs, many of whom are AHO registered housing providers, and are part of the AHO Growth Provider network and through the NSW peak body, NSWALC, so more social and affordable housing can be delivered to the Aboriginal community.</p>

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	<p>Land iQ brings more than 40 land use data types into one single platform, making it easy to search more than 8 million lots and properties and test different land use scenarios. In partnership with AHO, Aboriginal Land Councils and Aboriginal housing providers, DPE will leverage Land iQ to identify and assess the suitability of Aboriginal-held land for social and affordable housing.</p>
<p>Recommendation 11</p> <p>That the Department of Planning and Environment considers ways to increase the supply of affordable and social housing in regional areas, including through inclusionary zoning targets and mixed tenure development.</p>	<p>Supported in principle</p> <p>The NSW Government is committed to improving housing supply and affordability in regional NSW. As part of the 2022-23 budget, the NSW Government has committed \$174 million to deliver approximately 271 new additional homes to ensure that key workers moving to the regions have a place to call home.</p> <p>LAHC and AHO are continually reviewing the State’s portfolio of social housing assets to identify opportunities to deliver more and better social and affordable housing.</p> <p>LAHC is developing new social housing across a range of regional areas, including through renewal of regional social housing estates that will deliver a mix of social, affordable and private homes.</p> <p>LAHC and Crown Lands have put in place a Memorandum of Understanding to deliver mixed-tenure housing on repurposed and suitable Crown Land sites in regional NSW.</p> <p>The EIE referred to at recommendation 2 above also sets out proposed amendments to support increased supply of affordable and social housing across the state by further incentivising the delivery of affordable housing as part of mixed tenure projects, providing greater efficiencies in the planning pathways used to deliver social and affordable housing, and</p>

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	<p>increasing the amount of land in regional NSW where boarding houses can be delivered. Submissions in response to the exhibition are now being considered by the DPE.</p>
<p>Recommendation 12</p> <p>That the Department of Planning and Environment and Department of Communities and Justice continue to work with housing providers and community service organisations and experts to develop and expand programs that provide short and long-term housing for specific cohorts who are often vulnerable, including young people, women experiencing domestic and family abuse, the elderly and people with disability.</p>	<p>Supported</p> <p>DPE and the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) are committed to continuing to work with housing providers, community service organisations and experts to develop and expand programs that provide short and long-term housing for vulnerable cohorts.</p> <p>DPE and DCJ are working with our partners to deliver new supply including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LAHC’s seniors living building program which delivers fit for purpose social homes for older people across Greater Sydney and regional NSW • 12 new social housing developments across Greater Sydney, designed specifically for women who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness • A \$484.3 million Domestic and Family Violence funding package, which included \$426.6 million over 4 years to deliver and operate extra refuges to support women and children escaping domestic and family violence. <p>DCJ also works with its partners to deliver support programs including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • working with 3 Local Health Districts and Specialist Homelessness Services under the \$1.3 million Mental Health In-Reach program to support people leaving mental health facilities to find accommodation

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • case management for people leaving correctional facilities to find accommodation under the \$4.95 million Reintegration Housing Support Program • the \$177.5 million Together Home program to support over 1,000 people with a history of rough sleeping into long-term housing with intensive case management and wrap around supports over two years. In addition, this investment has been used to build and acquire around 250 dwellings under the Together Home Transition program. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The 2022-23 budget includes \$72.5 million for the Together Home transition program. Of the total allocation, \$62.3 million will be spent this financial year. Around 100 of the 250 dwellings are expected to be delivered by December 2023. ○ The NSW Government will consider the Together Home model in future homelessness strategies based on an independent evaluation of the program, due to be finalised in June 2024. <p>In the first 4 years of delivering the AHO Strong Family Strong Communities (SFSC) Strategy the AHO achieved the following to support Aboriginal community members and tenants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provided grants to 100 families creating homeownership opportunities for Aboriginal people in NSW • supported 1,217 clients with complex needs through the Services Our Way program to connect them to support services, and prevent evictions and homelessness • built 280 new AHO homes for Aboriginal people • refurbished 2,279 homes for Aboriginal tenants • completed 5,257 solar panel upgrades for AHO homes, saving tenants significant electricity costs

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • supported 101 Aboriginal students to undertake tertiary studies and improve their employment opportunities • supported 7 families/individuals as part of a transitional housing pilot program. <p>Over the next 4 years under SFSC and CTG, AHO is delivering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AHO Economic Recovery 23 which comprises 2 projects for new supply of homes by June 2023. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) ACHIF new supply will deliver 51 new homes by the end of June 2023. b) AHO new supply will deliver 45 new homes by the end of June 2023. • Closing the Gap — Housing Solutions Program which will provide 200 new Aboriginal homes, 256 significant upgrades and over 4,440 solar and air-conditioning upgrades. • Aboriginal Housing Office (AHO) Flood Recovery Program which will provide \$70 million of grants to Aboriginal Housing Providers to repair and upgrade flood damaged properties in flood affected regions in NSW • 320 home ownership opportunities over 4 years • Tertiary Accommodation Grants 300 students enrolled in tertiary studies supported with the cost of housing over 4 years • Finding Your Way Transitional Housing Options 20 properties repurposed over 4 years supporting 40 families in transitional housing each year • Sustaining Aboriginal Tenancies SATP supports 260 families over 4 years • 1 Leading Community Demonstration Site for FY23 and 3 years funding for a new site to FY26 • 2 Client Experience Initiatives supported each over 4 years.

Recommendation	Government Response
	<p>AHO's work in Accessible housing AHO delivers a range of housing options to meet the needs of Aboriginal tenants across NSW, which includes a significant focus on delivering accessible/adaptable housing. AHO targets 30% of new supply being delivered through its capital program as disabled accessible or adaptable housing. More generally, AHO aims for the equivalent of the Silver Level Standard for all new properties, where possible.</p> <p>Work has commenced on the detailed planning and roll-out of new housing through funding recently awarded to AHO under the NSW Government's Housing Package. The program will focus on diversifying the AHO portfolio to support housing targets associated with Closing the Gap. As such there will be a significant focus on the delivery of 2 bedroom homes built to accessible/adaptable standards and suitable for seniors, as well as large 5 bedroom family homes with accessible design elements embedded as standard through the AHO Design Guidelines. These homes will be delivered over a 3-year period to 2024/25.</p>