

**Submission
No 20**

OPTIONS FOR ESSENTIAL WORKER HOUSING IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Organisation: Housing Now! Alliance

Date Received: 10 September 2024



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Select Committee on Essential Worker Housing
NSW Legislative Assembly
Parliament of New South Wales
6 Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Committee,

Re: Submission to the Essential Worker Housing Inquiry

On behalf of the Housing Now! Alliance, a coalition of business leaders, unions, universities, peak bodies, and community representatives that are deeply committed to addressing the housing crisis, I write to commend the establishment of the Select Committee on Essential Worker Housing and welcome its focus on one of the most critical issues facing NSW today.

Essential workers—our healthcare professionals, teachers, police officers, retail workers, and childcare staff—are the backbone of our communities, yet they are increasingly being priced out of the very regions they serve. This housing crisis threatens not only the well-being of these key workers but also the economic and social fabric of our cities.

Housing Now! was formed to address these challenges and advocate for fairer access to housing for all. We believe that bold leadership and decisive action are needed to tackle the affordability crisis, and our 2024 Policy Platform outlines a clear plan to deliver tangible results.

We have enclosed the Housing Now! 2024 Policy Platform for your consideration. Our platform highlights five key areas where immediate action is essential:

1. Continuing planning policy reforms and coordinating infrastructure delivery to accelerate the construction of new homes.
2. Setting clear targets for affordable housing, particularly for key workers, and ensuring enforcement.
3. Establishing a Coordinator General for Housing to address blockages in the planning system and fast-track essential projects.
4. Supporting the delivery of affordable rental housing by making key reforms to existing policies and reducing red tape.
5. Strengthening the government's role in enabling universities and other institutions to contribute to affordable housing solutions.

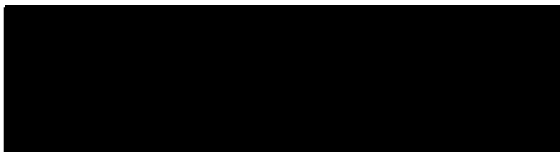


We are particularly encouraged by the Committee's focus on essential worker housing and call for a concerted effort to ensure at least 10% of housing stock is dedicated to affordable homes for essential workers, as detailed in our platform. Additionally, we support innovative approaches to streamline the development of social and key worker housing across all areas of NSW.

Housing Now! stands ready to work with the Committee, government agencies, and industry partners to ensure the housing crisis is addressed and that all essential workers have access to safe, affordable homes.

Thank you for your time and consideration of our submission. We look forward to engaging with the Committee throughout the inquiry process.

Yours sincerely,



David Borger
Chair, Housing Now! Alliance



**HOUSING
NOW!**



A plan to make housing fairer for everyone in NSW

2024 Policy Platform





A message from Housing Now!



*4 September, launch of **Housing Now! Alliance***

Australia is the country of the fair go. Everyone is equal, whether you are young or old, rich or poor. We pride ourselves as being a nation that provides the safety and security of a home for all.

Housing Now!'s purpose is to help people locked out of the property market get a fair go, regardless of background or income.

The alliance was formed to magnify the voice of the community and help the NSW Government to tackle this massive challenge. Sydney's housing affordability crisis is one of the largest intergenerational challenges we may face in our lifetime.

Young people are the worst affected. Imagine how cold and lonely Sydney would be without young people driven away to find somewhere to live? It would tear our social fabric apart and have a serious impact on our economy if young people move to other states or we could not attract international talent.

Sydney needs strong leadership and bold new ideas to tackle this challenge. Housing Now! has revised its plans to help bring fairness back to having a home.

We believe Sydney needs more planning reforms and better coordination between government agencies if we are going to tackle the housing crisis.





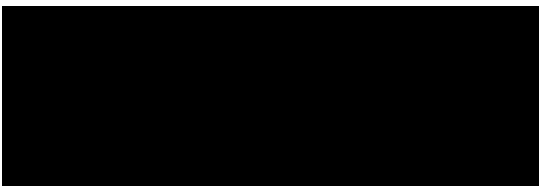
The NSW Government has already taken some important first steps, so we commend them on the changes to the planning system, but they need to continue with a laser focus on affordability and there is still much more to be done.

We have identified five key areas to move the dial on delivering new homes quickly:

- Continuing planning policy reforms, including 10 priorities in our plan.
- Coordinating the delivery of supporting infrastructure for housing.
- Coordinating the delivery of the \$5.1 billion social housing package.
- Resolving unreasonable agency blockages to speed up approvals in the planning system.
- Using call-in powers so major housing projects can be assessed and determined taking into account the urgent housing crisis.

Delivering the housing accord in NSW is a huge challenge, but we cannot afford to give up. The stakes are too high to maintain the status quo and we need to be working collectively to provide a fairer future for the next generations because everyone deserves a place to call home.

Housing Now!'s new plan sets clear tangible actions that can be taken to provide a fairer system and deliver the housing our State desperately needs.



David Borger
Chair, Housing Now!

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10 new policies to make housing fairer for everyone



A Coordinator General for Housing

As with the Coordinator General role for Bradfield, similar powers should be expanded to address the housing crisis. The current housing crisis requires appropriate interventions to ensure new housing is delivered as quickly as possible to meet housing targets and set a sustainable pipeline for long-term housing growth.

A dedicated person is required to drive outcomes in the delivery of new homes to meet the national housing accord. The new role could:

1. Direct government agencies and utilities to resolve unreasonable planning challenges that are holding up housing projects.
2. Reassessing major housing projects that have not been approved so outstanding issues can be resolved. The coordinator could then provide recommendations to the government on approvals with conditions. The Minister for Planning would then be the consent authority.
3. Provide advice to government on policy changes that will help deliver housing faster.
4. Provide guidance to government on enabling infrastructure priorities to unlock more homes.



Set a clear roadmap for TOD affordable housing targets

The government has stated that affordable housing requirements in TODs will increase over time. To give industry certainty, and for the reforms to deliver as much affordable housing as possible, the government should provide guidance on the roadmap for affordable housing requirements, with the aim of increasing rates to at least 10% over time. Additionally, higher inclusionary zoning targets should be tied to more uplift to ensure projects are feasible.



Enforcing housing targets

The main way to make housing more affordable is to increase supply and get more homes built. The NSW Government's targets are a step in the right direction. However, progress towards meeting targets must be monitored and enforced, from LEPs through DAs, commencements, and completions. Councils that are not certified as making satisfactory progress should be subject to automatic upzoning. This would include, but not limited to, allowing mid-rise housing within walking distance of all centres within the LGA.





Affordable housing policy in NSW needs clarity

Affordable housing policy in NSW is currently confusing and opaque, it can vary greatly from one LGA to the next. Affordable housing is critical for society's most vulnerable, including those on low incomes, people with disability, migrants and refugees. The NSW Government should convene an expert group to publish a discussion paper that aims to streamline and simplify affordable housing policy in NSW. This would include considerations for a standardised definition of affordable housing, a centralised framework to monitor what is approved, built and delivered and the funding required to make it possible. A standard method for affordable housing planning and delivery is needed so industry and community housing providers have clarity and certainty on what is expected of them – and can deliver as much affordable housing as is feasible.



Set social and key worker housing targets to go alongside broader housing targets

Just as the State has shown leadership on setting housing targets, we also need strong leadership around social and key worker housing targets. While only 4% of housing in Sydney is social and affordable housing, London has 18%, Paris has 25%, Hong Kong has 30% and Singapore has 80%. Setting a goal to deliver at least 10% of total housing stock as social and key worker housing, as well as affordable rental targets, is required to see real change in our city.

Housing Now! reiterates its call for 1 in 5 homes to be built as part of the government's 'priorities precincts' as affordable for our healthcare workers, teachers, police officers, child-care workers, retail workers and other essential workers. Meaning, these significantly up-zoned areas will contribute 20% affordable housing, operated by community housing providers, in perpetuity.



Reduce red tape for affordable housing delivery

Working alongside the Department of Communities and Justice and Homes NSW, community housing providers should be provided access to the newly dedicated team within the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure who manage the applications for social and affordable homes from concept review to lodgement, exhibition and final assessment.



Rezone places of worship to allow housing

The NSW Government can make simple amendments to the Housing SEPP to include SP2 as one of the relevant zones to which social and affordable policies apply. In the long term, make it permissible for housing to be developed freely in places of worship and or education.





Creating a prioritised pathway for university student accommodation

Universities already provide subsidised housing for students often priced at least 25% below market rates, which should be recognised as a form of affordable housing (including eligibility of planning control bonuses for affordable housing). A prioritised or alternative planning approval pathway for university housing will help meet affordable housing targets and take pressure off the housing market. In addition, universities should not be subject to payment of development contributions as they are not for profit organisations, they provide and fund their own on-site infrastructure, and they provide significant on-campus community benefits to the general public.

Housing Now! calls for the establishment of a streamlined approval process, enabling the Minister for Tertiary Education to swiftly grant consent for university housing developments on land allocated by the NSW Government. This measure will facilitate the timely creation of student accommodation, addressing urgent housing needs and supporting educational institutions in their growth and development.



Providing security for renters

All of the above solutions will go a long way in solving the housing crisis over time but will take years to see results. The government can materially improve renters' lives for the better immediately by ending no-grounds evictions for both periodic and fixed-term leases and implementing a range of specified reasonable grounds. This will impact one third of people in NSW who rent by providing greater security and certainty over whether they'll have a roof over their head.



Priority infrastructure list to support housing

Infrastructure NSW should be directed to provide advice in the State Infrastructure Plans on the infrastructure required to maximise the enabling of new homes to help meet housing targets.

Help us tackle Housing Now!

Sign up for updates to our campaign.

housingnow.com.au

