



Standing Committee on Social Issues - Homelessness amongst older people aged over 55 in New South Wales,

NSW Government response to recommendations:

Inquiry Report, 20 October 2022¹

Recommendations	Preliminary response
<p>1 That the NSW Government investigate ways to collect, analyse and release more comprehensive and timely data on the real rates of homelessness in New South Wales, including amongst vulnerable groups.</p>	<p>Supported</p> <p>NSW Government is committed to understanding the causes and structural drivers of homelessness, and is investigating new ways to collect, analyse and release more comprehensive and timely data on the real rates of homelessness in NSW.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The annual NSW street counts are a point in time indicator to track progress against the Premier’s Priority target to halve street sleeping, support local assertive outreach planning and foster sector collaboration. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The street counts include counting people sleeping in vehicles. ○ The street count methodology was developed based on international examples for assessing the number of people street sleeping and are used along with other tools sets to understand and plan responses to street homelessness. • The NSW Government has been working with partners including the End Street Sleeping Collaboration to establish a real-time, by-name database to actively track the number of people experiencing street homelessness in NSW, and coordinate and prioritise housing and service support. • NSW is also working with the Commonwealth and other states and territories to improve homelessness data reporting under the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement Data Improvement Plan, which has been agreed by all

¹ Report available at <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/committees/inquiries/Pages/inquiry-details.aspx?pk=2865#tab-reportsandgovernmentresponses>



		<p>jurisdictions and aims to improve the completeness, quality and comparability of homelessness data across states and territories.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A key action under the NSW Homelessness Strategy 2018-2023 is to improve the evidence base for homelessness prevention and early intervention programs. The linked dataset created as part of the <i>Pathways to Homelessness</i> report is one of the most comprehensive datasets related to homelessness in Australia. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This linked dataset is being updated to include the most recently available data on the government services that people are accessing before, during and after they present as homelessness. The dataset update is due for completion in August 2023. • The NSW Government has also commissioned the creation of the <i>Housing and Homelessness linked dataset</i>, which will help build a reliable evidence base for policy and programs through analysis and rigorous evaluation of government investment in housing and homelessness programs. It will include data from a variety of NSW and Commonwealth administrative datasets, and housing and homelessness programs. • The NSW Government already publishes an extensive range of data relating to housing and homelessness in the Annual Statistical Report - https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/dcj.statistics/viz/Annual_Statistical_Report_2020-21_measure_list/table • The NSW Government will review its existing public dashboards that report on Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) service delivery to examine what additional measures relating to homelessness could be reported.
2	<p>That the NSW Government consider additional support to the NSW Ageing and Disability Commission and other services to educate and provide advocacy services for people subject to elder abuse, particularly financial elder abuse and abuse via misuse of</p>	<p>Supported in principle</p> <p>The NSW Government currently funds the NSW Ageing and Disability Commission (ADC) \$13.9 million over four years as announced in the NSW Budget 2019-20.</p> <p>In addition, the NSW Government is working with the ADC to fund specific projects on neglect and advocacy in retirement villages.</p>



	Enduring Power of Attorney and Power of Attorney.	
3	That the NSW Government incorporate 'Housing First' principles into its approach to addressing homelessness in the state.	<p>Supported</p> <p>NSW Government is committed to supporting clients who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness and enabling them to achieve positive outcomes through programs and initiatives with 'Housing First' principles at the centre of service delivery.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As of December 2022, the NSW Government has invested \$177.5 million in the 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. <p>Housing First principles also underpin the NSW Government's Assertive Outreach approach:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Between 1 April 2020 and 30 June 2022, DCJ and partners performed 11,716 Assertive Outreach activities and housed over 1,400 people who were formerly street sleeping in long-term housing. • Assertive Outreach expansion sites in Newcastle and Tweed Heads have exceeded their annual 115 client targets each year. • An evaluation of these sites is underway and will inform the assertive outreach model used going forward.
4	That the NSW Government urge the Australian Government to incorporate 'Housing First' principles in its approach to addressing homelessness in Australia.	<p>Supported</p> <p>NSW Government will advocate for the inclusion of best practice approaches to homelessness in the Commonwealth's planned National Housing and Homelessness Plan.</p>



5	<p>That the NSW Government consider the establishment of a funded specialist housing information and support service for older people that comprises both an early intervention and crisis response, similar to the 'Home at Last' model in Victoria.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>NSW's Link2Home is a statewide homelessness information and referral telephone service available to anyone at risk of or experiencing homelessness, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, every day of the year.</p> <p>Link2Home provides callers with information, assessments and referrals to homelessness support and accommodation services across NSW.</p> <p>Link2Home is accessible to older people. In the 2021-2022 financial year data, Link2Home registered 7,144 instances of clients aged 55 years and over, who contacted the line for assessment, specialist homeless support and accommodation assistance.</p> <p>Public consultations and action planning will take place to develop the next NSW social housing and homelessness strategies in 2023-24, that will include consideration of possible new programs and initiatives.</p>
6	<p>That the NSW Government consider implementing an explicit policy within the <i>Ageing Well in NSW: Seniors Strategy 2021-2031</i> on 'ageing in place' and establishing benchmarks against which wider government policies can be measured.</p>	<p>Supported in principle</p> <p>The <i>Ageing Well in NSW: Seniors Strategy 2021-2031</i> includes a commitment to work towards increased housing options for older people that are age appropriate, affordable, accessible and close to transport, recreation and community services.</p>
7	<p>That the NSW Government advocate for the Australian Government to include a specific allocation for older people on low incomes in the Help to Buy program.</p>	<p>Supported in principle</p> <p>NSW Government will advocate for the inclusion of proposals that respond to the needs of all cohorts in the Commonwealth's planned National Housing and Homelessness Plan and other Commonwealth initiatives.</p> <p>NSW Government is launching Shared Equity Home Buyer Helper to make home ownership more achievable for people on low incomes. Single people 50 years of age or above are one of the key groups eligible for the initiative.</p>



		NSW Government has also introduced First Home Buyer Choice, providing first home buyers the option between paying a smaller annual property tax, instead of stamp duty. This results in lower upfront costs when purchasing a home. The scheme is open to any first home buyer who meets the eligibility criteria, irrespective of age.
8	That the NSW Government actively contributes to the development of the National Housing and Homelessness Plan, including by advocating for the needs of New South Wales residents.	<p>Supported</p> <p>NSW Government welcomes the Federal Government’s engagement in housing and homelessness matters including its commitments to invest in social and affordable housing and development of the National Housing and Homelessness Plan.</p> <p>NSW Government also welcomes the opportunity to participate in the development of the Plan, and will advocate for the needs of New South Wales residents through this process.</p>
9	<p>That the NSW Government:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • advocate for the extension of the National Rental Affordability Scheme • in the absence of an extension of the National Rental Affordability Scheme, consider establishing a plan to assist older people transitioning out of the National Rental Affordability Scheme. 	<p>Supported in principle</p> <p>In NSW, 58% of the 6,545 incentives were allocated to Community Housing Providers (CHPs) who will retain most of the dwellings they own as affordable. NSW Government is looking at options to support CHPs to keep properties they own or manage for private investors, as affordable for longer than the expiry of the National Rental Affordability Scheme period.</p>



<p>10</p>	<p>That the NSW Government advocate for an increase in funding to New South Wales under the new National Housing and Homelessness Agreement to improve and expand the stock of social and affordable housing, and extend housing and homelessness services in the state.</p>	<p>Supported</p> <p>The NSW Government’s submission to the Productivity Commission’s review of the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement recommended dedicated funding to increase the stock of social and affordable housing and quality of existing dwellings.</p> <p>The NSW Government welcomes the opportunity to participate in consultations on the new agreement, which the Commonwealth is proposing it will undertake with other states and territories.</p> <p>The NSW Government recognises the Commonwealth Government’s housing reform agenda, with its focus on increasing the supply of social and affordable housing. The NSW Government will work with the Commonwealth to increase the supply of social and affordable housing through the Housing Australia Future Fund, the National Housing Accord and the work of Housing Australia and the national Housing Supply and Affordability Council.</p> <p>In the Budget 2022 Housing Package, the NSW Government allocated \$300 million to upgrade around 15,800 social homes.</p> <p>The NSW Government has also invested \$177.5 million in the 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 and to build and acquire around 250 dwellings under the Together Home Transition program.</p>
<p>11</p>	<p>That the NSW Government ensure that, for older people at risk of homelessness who are not able to access the National Disability Insurance Scheme or aged care services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • service gaps are identified and investigated • solutions to address these service gaps are identified and implemented in partnership 	<p>Supported in principle</p> <p>The NSW Government is responsible for delivering mainstream services to all citizens, including people with disability. The NSW Government has committed to strengthening the State’s accessibility framework and improving outcomes for people with disability, as articulated in the <i>Disability Inclusion Plan 2021–2025</i>.</p> <p>People with disability who may face challenges in accessing the private rental housing market can access all social housing assistance programs, including public and community housing where they meet the eligibility criteria.</p> <p>Assistance can include one-off assistance programs such as the Rent Start supports, medium-term support available through Rent Choice, Tenancy Facilitation, and Private Rental Brokerage Service to assist people with complex needs, who have support arrangements in place.</p>



	with the Australian Government.	The NSW Government’s contribution to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is \$3.75 billion in 2022-23 (\$15.9 billion over four years to 2025-26) for individual NDIS funding packages and other supports for people with disability. NSW funding is fixed and indexed at four percent to 2027-28.
12	That the NSW Government investigate targeted rent assistance and brokerage funds for older people.	<p>Noted</p> <p>Rent Choice is a form of private rental assistance that supports several vulnerable cohorts experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness to access safe and affordable housing in the private rental market. It provides a time limited, tapered private rental subsidy for up to three years and facilitates access to support, training and employment opportunities needed to sustain independent housing without the need for ongoing government assistance.</p> <p>Although Rent Choice products are not targeted at older people specifically, they are accessible to this cohort if they meet the necessary criteria.</p>
13	That the NSW Government urge the Australian Government to examine opportunities to increase social security payments, including an increase to Commonwealth Rent Assistance.	<p>Supported in principle</p> <p>NSW Government supports opportunities to increase social security payments to support clients, and will continue to advocate to the Australian government on this matter.</p> <p>An increase to Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) would provide additional support to Rent Choice clients with maintaining a tenancy in the private rental market. Furthermore, an increase in CRA in the current market conditions would allow approved clients to increase their affordability limit and compete for higher cost rentals.</p>
14	<p>That the NSW Government:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> examine opportunities to increase the security of tenure for older people in the private rental market. encourage the adoption of longer-term leases of at least three years to become the 	<p>Supported in principle</p> <p>Reforms to residential tenancy legislation in 2020 included an amendment to the standard form tenancy agreement to include an option for a five-year fixed term to encourage landlords and tenants to consider longer fixed-term agreements.</p> <p>The NSW Government notes that some tenant advocates do not support longer lease terms due to the flexibility and protections offered to tenants under periodic tenancy agreement provisions.</p>



	standard in residential tenancy agreements to increase security of tenure in the private rental market.	
15	That the NSW Government examine opportunities to amend the <i>Residential Tenancies Act 2010</i> to allow for home modifications in instances where it would improve the accessibility and functionality for older people, when not negatively affecting the value of the property.	<p>Supported in principle</p> <p>Under the <i>Residential Tenancies Act 2010</i>, tenants can install fixtures or make alterations, additions or renovations if they have the landlord’s written consent, or if the tenancy agreement permits it. If the tenant’s request for modification is of a ‘minor’ nature, then the landlord must not unreasonably withhold consent or place conditions on the consent.</p> <p>Reforms to residential tenancies legislation made in 2020 include a list of the kinds of fixtures or alterations, additions or renovations to further clarify what is considered ‘minor’. The list includes installing hand-held shower heads or lever-style taps to assist elderly or disabled occupants.</p>
16	That the NSW Government examine measures to address ageism, sexism, gender and disability discrimination in the private rental market.	<p>Supported in principle</p> <p>Under the current regulatory framework, landlords and agents can decide what information they ask prospective tenants to support their application, but any information they request, and the way they assess a tenant’s application, must not contravene anti-discrimination laws. Agents also need to follow the rules of conduct in the Property and Stock Agents Regulation 2022, which includes behaving honestly, fairly and professionally.</p> <p>The NSW Government is currently examining how prospective tenant data is collected at the start of the tenancy process, and whether there are opportunities to improve tenant protections when information is collected as part of the rental application process.</p>
17	That the NSW Government: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> consider additional funding to the Social and Affordable Housing Fund and the 	<p>Supported in principle</p> <p>In 2022-23, the NSW Government will spend over \$1.2 billion across Social Housing and Homelessness Programs administered by the Stronger Communities cluster. The total allocation for 2022-23 includes:</p>



<p>Community Housing Innovation Fund to build more social and affordable housing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • examine opportunities to better expedite the development and construction of social and affordable housing, including accelerated planning approval processes and improved funding mechanisms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The NSW Government's \$1.1 billion investment in the Social and Affordable Housing Fund (SAHF) is a key initiative under Future Directions for Social Housing in NSW which generates revenue used to fund service contracts under the SAHF. The SAHF promotes the collaboration and partnership with Community Housing Providers (CHPs) partnering with developers, financiers and human services providers. As of 30 November 2022, 3,069 of 3,486 dwellings have been delivered across NSW and 341 dwellings are currently under construction. Across the program, 1,139 social and affordable homes have been delivered in regional areas and 1,930 in metropolitan locations. All dwellings are expected to be delivered by the end of 2024. • Monthly updates on the number of dwellings delivered by the Social and Affordable Housing Fund are provided at https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/reforms/future-directions/initiatives/SAHF/program-update. Quarterly updates on tenancy and resident demographic summaries are also provided on this webpage. • \$62.3 million of the \$72.5 million announced for the Together Home Transition program, which will be spent this financial year. Around 100 of the total 250 dwellings are expected to be delivered by December 2023. • \$36.2 million of the \$152.5 million announced for the Community Housing Innovation Fund (CHIF), which will be spent this financial year. More than 200 dwellings are expected to be delivered during 2022/23. <p>Evaluation of Future Directions for Social Housing in NSW including the Social and Affordable Housing Fund (SAHF) began in 2019 with final reports expected by mid-2023. The evaluation will assess whether the strategy is being implemented as intended, achieving its intended outcomes, and cost beneficial. The results of the Evaluation will assist in the development of the next strategy.</p> <p>The NSW Government welcomes the Commonwealth's proposed investment in social and affordable housing and its potential to co-contribute with CHPs to the increase of housing opportunities for older people.</p> <p>The NSW Government 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, including on the establishment of Housing Australia, the Housing Australia Future Fund and the National Supply and Affordability Council.</p>
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		<p>In relation to planning approval processes, the NSW Government is proposing to expand the self-assessment pathway available to the Land and Housing Corporation (LAHC) and the Aboriginal Housing Office (AHO) for the delivery of new social and affordable housing. This work is being led by the Department of Planning and Environment (DPE).</p> <p>Under the proposed changes LAHC and the AHO will be able to self-assess proposals of up to 75 dwellings on a site. Self-approval is currently limited to 60 dwellings.</p> <p>Other proposed changes to the planning system include further incentivising the delivery of affordable housing with more generous density bonuses, and introducing a State Significant Development pathway for large residential projects that include at least 20% of floor space as affordable housing.</p> <p>The NSW Government continues to support local councils with the voluntary investigation and adoption of affordable housing contribution schemes (AHCS) in their local government areas (LGAs). To create more flexibility and better support councils in this work, it is proposed to update DPE’s <i>Guideline for Developing an Affordable Housing Contribution Scheme</i>.</p> <p>Public exhibition of these proposed changes closed on 13 January 2023. The Government is now considering submissions received.</p> <p>The Greater Cities Commission (GCC) has released a Discussion Paper on the key ideas shaping for Greater Sydney, the Central Coast, Lower Hunter and Newcastle, and Illawarra Shoalhaven over the next 20 years. The commission proposes measures to improve housing supply, diversity and affordability. The NSW Government will work with the GCC to explore opportunities through their work to support the supply of affordable and social housing and partner with the Commission to recognise social housing as part of their proposed housing targets.</p>
18	<p>That the NSW Government urge the Australian Government to review national taxation and funding settings that constrain housing supply.</p>	<p>Supported in principle</p> <p>The National Housing Accord (the Accord), announced by the Federal Treasurer alongside the October 2022 Budget, sets out how governments and industry can work together to improve housing supply and affordability. The Accord sets housing supply goals, including an additional 20,000 affordable houses to be jointly delivered by the Commonwealth, states and territories.</p> <p>The Accord reaffirms the establishment of the Housing Supply and Affordability Council (the Council). The Federal Treasurer has affirmed the Council’s role to work with stakeholders to monitor and report on the housing supply pipeline, innovative financing models, advise on housing supply targets, and review barriers to investment, which may include taxation barriers.</p>



		NSW will work with the Commonwealth to achieve the best possible outcomes.
19	That the NSW Government consider increased investment in the maintenance and retrofitting of social housing stock to ensure dwellings meet the needs of tenants, including older people.	<p>Supported</p> <p>The NSW Government is committed to ensuring investment is made towards ensuring social housing dwellings are meeting the needs of all tenants, including older people. This is ensured through the AHO and LAHC.</p> <p>AHO is delivering new homes for Aboriginal peoples across NSW. Under the Strong Family, Strong Communities - Closing The Gap Program, new housing will be delivered through the following streams:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AHO Economic Recovery 23 which comprises two projects for the new supply of homes. By the end of June 2023: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 51 new homes will be delivered through the Aboriginal Community Housing Investment Fund. ○ 45 new homes will be delivered through AHO new supply. • 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. <p>In the 2022-23 NSW Budget, LAHC received \$300 million for capital maintenance over three years. Funds will be targeted at homes with the greatest need, across the LAHC portfolio, including properties managed by community housing providers. The program is in addition to LAHC's business as usual activities and will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improve the condition and quality of homes • improve amenity and tenant health and wellbeing • reduce safety risks • extend the life of properties • reduce future maintenance liabilities and prevent many homes from becoming uninhabitable. <p>LAHC is also addressing priorities and actions for implementing key Government initiatives to improve the resilience of social housing and wellbeing of social housing residents. These initiatives include NSW Government Net Zero Plan Stage 1: 2020-2030, NSW Climate Change Adaptation, energy transition, and sustainable and inclusive growth.</p>



<p>20</p>	<p>That the NSW Government work towards ensuring that all new social housing is fully accessible and addresses the needs of older people, including those with mobility issues or physical disabilities.</p>	<p>Supported in principle</p> <p>The NSW Government is committed to ensuring that new social housing stock is fully accessible and addresses the needs of older people, including those with mobility issues or physical disability.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overwhelmingly, new social housing dwellings in NSW meet minimum accessibility standards because they are built to at least Livable Housing Guideline Silver standard. • LAHC’s Dwelling Requirements 2020 stipulate minimum Silver standard for ground level and lift-accessible properties and Silver standard interiors where lifts are not available. LAHC can also consider including gold standard properties if that will deliver optimum outcomes. Modifications are made to existing public housing dwellings where there is a need to increase accessibility for the residents. DCJ works with LAHC, informed by recommendations by occupational therapists, to modify homes to meet needs of tenants. • Similarly, Community Housing Providers construct new dwellings so they are accessible. This includes dwelling delivered under the Government’s Social and Affordable Housing Fund where 96% of dwellings constructed are independently certified to, at least, the Silver (accessible) level under the Livable Housing Australia guidelines, and Community Housing Innovation Fund <p>The AHO is leading critical work to ensure the accessibility of housing for Aboriginal peoples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The AHO Design Guidelines have been developed to benchmark design excellence, sustainability and whole of life requirements in new low and medium density housing projects being delivered by AHO throughout NSW; including remote, regional and inner city locations. • This 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.
<p>21</p>	<p>That the NSW Government investigate the costs and implications of lowering the age limit for access to the Housing Elderly Persons priority group from</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Changes to the eligibility criteria to preference one group must be carefully assessed to ensure they do not inadvertently discriminate against other vulnerable groups.</p>



	<p>80 years to 55 years, and from 55 years to 45 years for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.</p>	<p>Over a third of priority applicant households already include people aged 55 or over, or 45 and over if Aboriginal. This shows that the current policy triages vulnerable and at-risk older people who have an urgent need for housing assistance, in line with the overall share of these households on the NSW Housing Register (30%).</p> <p>Priority applicants include those who have overlapping risk factors and an urgent housing need, including people with a severe and ongoing medical condition, people with disability, people experiencing domestic and family violence, people at risk of assault, abuse or neglect, and/or people experiencing homelessness.</p>
<p>22</p>	<p>That the NSW Department of Communities and Justice make publicly available more data, specifically surrounding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • social and priority housing waiting list data by age, gender, disability status and geographic area • number of social and affordable housing dwellings available in New South Wales, including a breakdown of allocations by age and gender • number of dwellings built under housing commitments in the <i>NSW Homelessness Strategy 2018-2023</i>, Social and Affordable Housing Fund, and Community Housing Innovation Fund. 	<p>Supported in principle</p> <p>The NSW Government publishes annually details of social housing applicants on the NSW Housing Register as at 30 June. The interactive dashboard allows users to see details of both general and priority applicants over a 10 year period. Users can apply filters to disaggregate the data by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age, Gender and CALD background of the household head; • household composition eg single persons vs couples with dependent children • Aboriginal households • DCJ district <p>The dashboards can be accessed through the following link: https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/dcj.statistics/viz/TableA2B1C2D0N68_/Performance_measure</p> <p>NSW Government also publishes the Social Housing Residential Dwellings (SHRD) Dashboard annually which reports on social housing dwellings as at 30 June each year. The dashboard provides a breakdown of public housing managed dwellings, dwellings managed exclusively for Aboriginal people and dwellings managed by community housing providers. The interactive dashboard shows breakdowns by DCJ district, by dwelling type, and by number of bedrooms.</p> <p>https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/facs.statistics/viz/Social_Housing_Residential_Dwellings/Dashboard</p>



		<p>Trends over time at 30 June are also available broken down for public housing managed dwellings, dwellings managed exclusively for Aboriginal people and dwellings managed by community housing providers in this dashboard https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/dcj.statistics/viz/TableA2B1C3D2N75-76_/Performance_measure</p> <p>Information on newly housed applicants in Public housing and AHO properties is also already reported over a ten year period. These dashboards provide breakdowns by DCJ District, main income source, age and gender of household head and household type. https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/dcj.statistics/viz/TableA2B1C3D1N71_/Performance_measure</p> <p>Information on the delivery of new supply under the Community Housing Innovation Fund can be found through the following link: https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/reforms/future-directions/partner-with-the-nsw-government/community-housing-innovation-fund-chif</p> <p>Monthly updates on the number of dwellings delivered by the Social and Affordable Housing Fund are provided at https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/reforms/future-directions/initiatives/SAHF/program-update.</p>
23	<p>That the NSW Government consider funding the construction of new social or community housing that is specifically allocated to older women and is appropriate to their health, safety and accessibility needs.</p>	<p>Supported in principle</p> <p>The NSW Government is committed to delivering new social and community housing, including dwellings that are specifically allocated to older women and that are appropriate to their health, safety and accessibility needs.</p> <p>However, it is important to note that dwellings that are suitable for specific groups must be carefully assessed to ensure they do not inadvertently make housing unsuitable for other vulnerable groups.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As at 30 November 2022, the \$1.1 billion Social and Affordable Housing Fund (SAHF) delivered 3,069 of a total of 3,486 additional social and affordable dwellings across NSW and a further 341 dwellings are under construction. All dwellings are expected to be delivered by the end of 2024. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A total of 1,414 dwellings are targeted to older people with an additional 232 dwellings targeted specifically for older women under the contracts.



		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• As at 30 September 2022 (latest tenancy data), 1,636 dwellings have been allocated to older people.• Currently there are 1,354 older women holding a primary tenancy.• 2,145 of approximately 4,189 residents are older people (aged 55 years and over or 45 years and over for people that identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders) - 1,467 of these residents are older women.• Along with being built to a high standard, SAHF dwellings are required to be close to services and supports such as shopping, and health and education facilities.• The overwhelming majority of new public housing dwellings in NSW are built at least to the silver performance level of the Livable Housing Australia Design Guidelines (Silver Standard). 96% of SAHF dwellings delivered meet the Liveable Housing Australia guidelines. <p>The Community Housing Innovation Fund (CHIF) suite of programs (CHIF-Social, CHIF-DFV, CHIF-Economic Stimulus and Together Home Transition Program) comprises \$225 million and has current commitments to deliver over 800 dwellings. To date (December 2022) 80 properties have been delivered. Nearly 270 dwellings are planned for completion before June 2023 and a further 450 are slated for by June 2024. A tender for \$50 million is aiming for a further 100 or more dwellings to be delivered. Several projects noted the inclusion of older people as tenants.</p> <p>NSW Government is delivering new homes for Aboriginal peoples across NSW, which includes older people. Under the Strong Family, Strong Communities - Closing The Gap Program, new housing will be delivered through the following streams:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• AHO Economic Recovery 23 which comprises two projects for the new supply of homes. By the end of June 2023:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ 51 new homes will be delivered through the Aboriginal Community Housing Investment Fund.○ 45 new homes will be delivered through AHO new supply.• 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.
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AHO Flood Recovery Program which will provide \$70m of grants to Aboriginal Housing Providers to repair and upgrade flood damaged properties in flood affected regions in NSW. For properties to be eligible for funding they are required to be located in the following seven LGA's (Ballina, Byron, Clarence Valley, Lismore, Richmond Valley, Tweed, Kyogle).
24	That the NSW Government develop a campaign to educate health professionals, social workers, police, and other relevant service providers about the nature of domestic and family violence as it manifests for older women and their families.	<p>Supported</p> <p>The NSW Government is committed to the development of a Workforce Development Strategy for the domestic and family violence (DFV) sector in NSW.</p> <p>This is the first Workforce Development Strategy for the DFV sector in NSW, and is currently being developed by DCJ, Women, Family and Community Safety, in close consultation with the DFV sector and victim/survivors of DFV.</p> <p>Specific campaigns for worker learning and development can be considered as part of any action plans and funding requests resulting from this Strategy.</p>
25	That the NSW Government review baseline funding for the specialist domestic and family violence sector to support older women at risk of homelessness due to domestic and family violence.	<p>Supported</p> <p>The NSW Government is committed to supporting cohorts with a disproportionately higher risk of homelessness and undertake regular reviews of funded programs to help ensure supports meets community needs.</p>
26	That the NSW Government consider dedicating one of the already funded Core and Cluster refuges to pilot a crisis accommodation support service for older women who have experienced domestic and family violence.	<p>Supported in Principle</p> <p>The NSW Government's new investment of \$484.3 million for housing and specialist supports for women and children experiencing domestic and family violence (DFV) is inclusive of women of all ages. There are no specific refuges targeting women over 55, however all new Core and Cluster women's refuges have the potential to support outcomes for older women experiencing DFV and homelessness.</p> <p>The independent living model of the Core and Cluster refuges makes these more suitable to keep family groups together, including women presenting with adolescent children.</p>



		<p>The local implementation approach for the new Core and Cluster women’s refuges enables Districts to look at local unmet need for different cohorts including women aged 55 and older, and identify where there may be a need for specialist refuges targeted to a particular cohort.</p>
<p>27</p>	<p>That the NSW Government consider designing protocols to waive documentary evidence requirements in social housing applications for applicants who have a demonstrated difficulty in accessing or providing such documents.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Clients are currently required to provide evidence to demonstrate they are eligible for social housing (as per the eligibility criteria, found in the Eligibility for Social Housing Policy).</p> <p>There are various documents clients can provide in order to demonstrate their eligibility (as outlined in the Evidence Requirements Information Sheet). In some cases, one form of evidence can be used for multiple eligibility criteria. For example, a Centrelink Income Statement can be used as proof of identity, proof of NSW residency and (in some cases) proof of Australian citizenship/residency.</p> <p>The NSW Government will continue to work with clients to assist them to obtain the necessary documentation for proof of their eligibility. It will also continue to work with the support services engaged with clients, to obtain necessary documentation.</p> <p>Any changes to the social housing eligibility criteria to preference one specific group must be carefully assessed and considered, to ensure other vulnerable groups are not inadvertently discriminated against.</p>
<p>28</p>	<p>That the NSW Government consider additional funding for homelessness and other social services that support culturally and linguistically diverse communities, including funding the employment of bilingual workers.</p>	<p>Supported in principle</p> <p>The NSW Government is committed to supporting cohorts with a disproportionately higher risk of homelessness. It is also committed to actively working with members of those communities to inform the development of policies and strategies going forward.</p> <p>The current NSW Homelessness Strategy 2018-2023 recognises that people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities may have increased vulnerability to homelessness due to additional barriers, such as limited proficiency in English, which can make prevention and early intervention difficult. Development of the next social housing and homelessness strategies will provide an opportunity to enhance this focus and identify opportunities for more tailored responses.</p> <p>The Premier's Memorandum M2021-04 Language Services Provision in Multicultural NSW provides that it is NSW Government policy that NSW Government agencies fund the provision of language services when dealing with clients, in order to provide all clients with access to Government services. NSW Government agencies are expected to ensure that interpreting services are</p>



		<p>provided to clients when needed and that appropriate translated materials are made available to support service delivery and amongst other objects.</p> <p>Multicultural NSW developed the NSW Government Language Services Guidelines ('LSG') to provide NSW Government agencies and funded organisations with clear guidance on how and when language services should be used in the provision of services. The intention of the LSG is to make government services responsive to all people, no matter their level of English language proficiency</p> <p>The LSG is currently undergoing a review which will update Multicultural NSW's policy position that is reflective of best practice and provide advice on navigating evolving challenges in the language services industry following various crises that have impacted the state of NSW since the Guidelines' last update in 2019.</p> <p>DCJ provides a range of qualified interpreter services, to ensure that all clients across the state have equal access to housing services and information. This service is provided by <i>All Graduates Translating and Interpreting Service</i> and accessible by telephone to both clients and DCJ staff. DCJ also provides onsite interpreters through block bookings in some DCJ offices, and/or one off (ad-hoc) bookings with interpreters. Clients can also request that a supporting document be translated, as part of an application.</p>
29	<p>That the NSW Government work with ACON and the LGBTQ+ community to develop and fund strategies to address higher levels of homelessness amongst LGBTQ+ community members and in particular target people who are living with HIV and Transgender people who are at higher risk of homelessness and face particular challenges accessing housing and other support services.</p>	<p>Supported in principle</p> <p>The NSW Government is committed to supporting cohorts with a disproportionately higher risk of homelessness. It is also committed to actively working with members of those communities to inform the development of future policies and strategies.</p> <p>During its review of the Protocol for Homeless People in Public Places, the NSW Government worked with a range of stakeholders including ACON and people with lived experience. The Protocol was updated in June 2022 with consideration toward improving interactions with people experiencing homelessness from the LBGTIQA+ community and those with chronic health conditions in an attempt to improve outcomes for all stakeholders. The NSW Government is working to develop implementation guidelines with key subject matter experts to ensure the LGBTIQ+ community needs and those with chronic health conditions are met when using the Protocol.</p> <p>The NSW Government also funds StreetCare, the Public Interest Advocacy Centre's lived experience advisory group, as advisors to government and other key stakeholders. They provide advice, and work with government through co-design, on reforms, policy analysis, initiatives, strategies, and training related to homelessness and housing. StreetCare has a diverse membership including</p>



		<p>people from the LGBTIQ+ community and people with chronic health conditions who provide a voice and guidance on key issues impacting people experiencing homelessness.</p>
<p>30</p>	<p>That the NSW Government dedicate specific resources to ensuring older people in regional New South Wales have access to social and affordable housing, and that this be focussed on communities devastated by natural disasters as a priority area of focus.</p>	<p>Supported in principle</p> <p>The NSW Government is committed to delivering more and better social and affordable housing across NSW. This commitment has been called out in the NSW Government’s housing strategy <i>Housing 2041</i>, social housing strategy <i>Future Directions for Social Housing in NSW</i> and Aboriginal housing strategy <i>Strong Family, Strong Communities</i>. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As at 30 November 2022, the \$1.1 billion Social and Affordable Housing Fund (SAHF) delivered 3,069 of a total of 3,486 additional social and affordable dwellings across NSW. All dwellings are expected to be delivered by the end of 2024. • The SAHF has a target of 30% of all homes to be delivered in regional NSW. This target has already been met. Across the program, 1,139 social and affordable homes have been delivered in regional areas and 1,930 in metropolitan locations. By the end of 2024, approximately 34% of all SAHF homes will be located in regional NSW. <p>The NSW Independent Flood Inquiry examined the NSW Government response to and recovery from flood events in early 2022, and the NSW Government supports or supports in principle all 28 recommendations of that Inquiry. Parts of the Inquiry highlighted the need to focus on social and affordable housing in disaster impacted communities, including recommending that Government ease housing stress in flood prone areas (Recommendation 24) and support vulnerable communities at risk of future disasters to relocate (Recommendation 22). The NSW Government has recently established the NSW Reconstruction Authority, which is the lead government agency for disaster prevention, recovery and reconstruction in NSW. Its legislated functions include working closely with disaster affected communities to manage and coordinate housing renewal and recovery.</p> <p>In its capacity as lead agency for recovery from natural disasters, the NSW Reconstruction Authority will work closely with the Department of Communities and Justice who are responsible for providing welfare and emergency accommodation services during the recovery from a natural disaster. In response to the 2022 flood events in the Northern Rivers, the NSW Government has established multiple temporary housing sites that provide a safe and secure home while people affected by floods begin their recovery. In addition, programs such as the joint NSW and Australian Government \$800 million Resilient Homes Fund which is led and delivered by the Northern Rivers Reconstruction Corporation (NRRC) has been established to support communities rebuild through resilient repairs and retrofitting, house raising and voluntary buybacks.</p>



<p>31</p>	<p>That the NSW Government examine opportunities to make Link2Home more effective, including extending its service hours, providing more training to staff on how to elicit appropriate information from stakeholders, and how to promote the service to older people.</p>	<p>Supported in principle</p> <p>NSW Government’s Link2Home Service has always operated 24 hours a day, 365 days a year since its establishment. Provisions for ensuring its effectiveness for older people include, but are not limited to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Link2Home staff are provided with comprehensive training, including the Salvation Army’s training package. • Link2Home staff are made aware of the digital literacy limitations and mobility issues that could impact this age group, and are able to refer clients to specialist homeless services for support and assistance. <p>Link2Home will engage My Aged Care to identify the best way to promote the service to people over 55 and explore the possibility of including Link2Home’s details on the My Aged Care website.</p>
<p>32</p>	<p>That the NSW Government review and consider additional funding to Specialist Homelessness Services to provide more emergency and temporary accommodation, and transitional housing targeted to older people.</p>	<p>Supported in principle</p> <p>The ten-year strategy Future Directions for Social Housing in NSW expires in 2025. The NSW Homelessness Strategy 2018-2023 has a one-year extension to mid-2024.</p> <p>The new approach will respond to current issues, consider ongoing national reforms, build upon lessons learned, and put people at the centre. Public consultation on both strategies plan to start from mid-2023 and will include opportunities for collaboration with stakeholders.</p> <p>As part of the strategy development process, the NSW Government will explore opportunities for additional funding and support for people who are at risk of, or experiencing, homelessness.</p>
<p>33</p>	<p>That the NSW Government review the need for the 'seeker diary' requirement for accessing temporary accommodation.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>The NSW Government strives to make supports such as Temporary Accommodation or Social Housing accessible for those in need while empowering people to address their own needs where possible.</p> <p>Temporary Accommodation is a short-term, temporary measure intended to provide secure accommodation when there are no alternative options available. The NSW Government Rentstart Assistance Policy outlines the policy and eligibility requirements.</p>



		<p>To demonstrate that there is no alternative accommodation available, clients may be asked to complete a rental application diary outlining the options they have explored. However, this is only one way of demonstrating that a client is seeking alternative accommodation.</p> <p>Other evidence that can be used to demonstrate a client’s eligibility and the lack of available options to resolve their housing situation in the private rental market, may include (but is not limited to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • income and assets evidence • a letter from a support worker • a statutory declaration • medical evidence which demonstrates the barriers the client faces to resolve their housing situation. <p>The NSW Government encourages clients to work with their support service/s or can refer clients to appropriate support services (subject to the client providing consent) where additional assistance is required to source longer term accommodation.</p> <p>The NSW Government will continue to explore ways to improve accessibility to its programs and services.</p>
<p>34</p>	<p>That the NSW Government review the practicalities and feasibilities around extending the maximum length of stay in temporary accommodation.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Temporary Accommodation is a short-term, temporary measure intended to provide secure accommodation when there are no alternative options available.</p> <p>As outlined in the NSW Government Rentstart Assistance Policy, the length of Temporary Accommodation assistance offered is based on an assessment of a client’s immediate housing needs. There is no automatic entitlement to a specific period of assistance. For most clients, a limited period of assistance will be sufficient to locate alternative accommodation.</p> <p>Most assistance offers a few days to enable clients to make arrangements for their immediate and longer-term accommodation needs. In some instances, this may be renewed to provide additional time for the client to secure alternative accommodation.</p> <p>As per the current policy, the total assistance provided will not exceed 28 days in a 12-month period other than in exceptional circumstances, and in this instance, a maximum of 14 days may be approved at any one time. Each extension is subject to assessment and may require escalation to senior officers.</p> <p>The NSW Government will continue to work with partners to explore solutions to help clients address their housing needs.</p>



35	That the NSW Government consider opportunities to broaden the scope of Together Home to capture a wider range of older people who are experiencing homelessness, as well as the feasibility of ongoing funding.	<p>Supported in principle</p> <p>The NSW Government has invested \$177.5 million in the 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. The Together Home program is accessible to older people experiencing homelessness.</p> <p>The NSW Government will consider the Together Home model in future homelessness strategies based on an independent evaluation of the program. The evaluation is due to be finalised in June 2024.</p>
36	That the NSW Government urge the Australian Government to provide funding certainty to the Health on the Streets program.	<p>Noted</p> <p>The NSW Government acknowledges the importance of drug and alcohol and mental health services across NSW for adults experiencing homelessness.</p> <p>The Health on the Streets program supports the collaborative assertive outreach approach in the Central Coast Local Health District.</p>
37	That the NSW Government consider additional funding and support to place-based homelessness and supporting services that target older people who are experiencing homelessness.	<p>Supported in principle</p> <p>The NSW Government is starting to plan for a new strategic approach for social housing and to address homelessness.</p> <p>The current NSW social housing and homelessness strategies are coming to an end. The ten-year strategy Future Directions for Social Housing in NSW expires in 2025. The NSW Homelessness Strategy 2018-2023 has a one-year extension to mid-2024.</p> <p>The new approach will respond to current issues, consider ongoing national reforms, build upon lessons learned, and put people at the centre. Public consultation on both strategies plan to start from mid-2023 and will include opportunities for collaboration with stakeholders.</p> <p>As part of the strategy development process, the NSW Government will explore opportunities for additional opportunities and support for place-based homelessness and services for older people who are at risk of, or experiencing homelessness.</p>
38	That the NSW Government consider implementing a	<p>Supported in principle</p>



	community awareness campaign targeted to older people about the risks of homelessness.	As part of its new strategic approach for social housing and to address homelessness, the NSW Government will explore opportunities to ensure the community, including older people, is informed about the risks of homelessness.
39	That the NSW Government consider training and education that ensures frontline service providers have an understanding of the diverse experiences of older people and homelessness, and of how to appropriately interact with people seeking assistance.	<p>Supported</p> <p>The NSW Government is committed to ensuring that frontline service providers have an understanding of how to appropriately interact with people seeking assistance, including older people. This includes the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) Learning and Development (L&D) Program, which currently offers a course called ‘Disability Awareness and Competency Including Older People and Dementia’ to assist frontline SHS staff with understanding the diverse needs and experiences of older people and homelessness. An e-learning course is also in the final stages of development and will soon be on offer, called ‘Older People: Not Seen or Heard’. • Protocol for Homeless People in Public Places, which assists and guides government, non-government organisations, and private businesses to interact and engage with people experiencing homelessness, so they are treated respectfully, with dignity, and do not face discrimination. Work is currently being undertaken to develop and publish implementation guidelines and accompanying resources, including a specific resource dedicated to providing advice to frontline workers on how to engage with older people who are experiencing homelessness. These will be developed in consultation with stakeholders and people with lived experience and are due for completion in mid-2023.
40	That the NSW Government examine opportunities to streamline application processes for housing and support services, including reviewing documentation requirements and providing easy-to-read supporting materials, and ensuring the need for applicants to repeatedly retell their story is minimised.	<p>Supported in principle</p> <p>The NSW Government is committed to improving the customer experience for all kinds of services. <i>Government Made Easy</i> aims to ensure that customers only need to provide information once, and do not need to repeat information about themselves or their circumstances.</p> <p>The NSW Government continues to seek opportunities with the Government Made Easy initiative to streamline applications for housing and support services.</p>



		<p>The NSW Government uses the <i>Journey on Home</i> application when conducting assertive outreach in the field. This application allows access to client management and housing application systems to improve the worker's capacity to engage and deliver support to clients.</p> <p>The NSW Government has also been working with partners including the End Street Sleeping Collaboration to establish a real-time, by-name database to actively track the number of people experiencing street homelessness in NSW, and coordinate and prioritise housing and service support.</p>
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