



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **Homelessness Australia welcomes call for a national homelessness strategy, call for Federal leadership on social housing investment**

4 August 2021

The final report of the Parliamentary Inquiry into Homelessness Report out today, vindicates the call for the Australian Government to deliver a national strategy on homelessness.

Homelessness Australia Chair Jenny Smith says the report highlights the important role the Federal Government must play in order for Australia to be a place where everyone has access to a safe, secure home.

“The Federal Government holds the trigger on the critical policies that drive homelessness up or down. The Committee’s recommendation for the Australian Government to develop and implement a ten-year national homelessness strategy, in consultation with state, territory and local governments is warmly welcome,” Smith says.

“A ten-year strategy could be a game changer if it tackles the big issues driving homelessness, like the rate of JobSeeker, the level of social housing funding, and the adequacy of Commonwealth Rent Assistance.”

Homelessness Australia welcomes the Committee’s acknowledgement that lack of affordability of rental housing and declining access to social housing are major causes of homelessness.

“It is great to see the Committee recognise that not being able to find a home you can afford is a major cause of homelessness. However, the Committee then failed to recommend concrete action to fix the problem, specifically increased investment to grow social housing stock,” Smith says.

“It isn’t rocket science – to increase the amount of social housing, Government needs to increase its investment. Instead, the Government persists with the fiction that social housing is primarily the responsibility of the States and Territories.

“The fact is that the Australian Constitution is silent on who is responsible for housing policy. In practice funding social housing has been a shared responsibility since the 1940s when the Federal Government created the National Housing Commission and first Commonwealth State Housing Agreement. The Federal Government can keep saying that a horse is an elephant, but it doesn’t make it any less a horse.”

“We are frustrated that the Federal Government has again failed to acknowledge that its leadership is needed to build adequate amounts of social housing. However, there were welcome recommendations in the report that could improve housing affordability, including: a review of the adequacy of Commonwealth Rent Assistance, refinancing of historical housing-



related debts of state and territory governments, introduction of inclusionary zoning, and encouragement of private investment into social housing, including from super funds.

“Also welcome are recommendations for additional crisis, emergency and transitional accommodation, and associated support services including pathways to long-term accommodation, the recognition of the importance of Housing First approaches, and the development of a national integrated approach to housing and homelessness services for Indigenous Australians, co-designed with Indigenous community-controlled organisations and grounded in the principle of self-determination.”

~ENDS~

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