

Shelter NSW

'Building blocks: housing challenges and opportunities for New South Wales' seminar: report on outputs and learning outcomes

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Summary

The event was a one-day seminar held on 9 November 2006. The intended audience was the core body of policy workers and social activists interested in the seminar topic.

The aim of the seminar was to canvass key policy matters affecting housing outcomes for the people of New South Wales. The seminar provided an opportunity for discussion of policy options which would allow for more effective advocacy by nongovernment organizations in New South Wales.

There were 69 registered participants in attendance.

Outputs

The outputs were:

- a seminar
- presentations by speakers at the seminar
- an article for Shelter's newsletter, *Around the House*
- this report

The seminar

The seminar was called 'Building blocks: housing challenges and opportunities for New South Wales'. It was held on Thursday 9 November 2006.

It was held in Architecture Lecture Theatre 1, Wilkinson Building, University of Sydney. This building houses that university's Architecture Faculty. The program was a full-day, with a scheduled 9:30 am start and 4.30 pm finish. The venue was chosen because it was reasonably centrally located in Sydney, was suitable for a 'chalk and talk' format, and was familiar (having been used for previous seminars).

Speakers were primarily from universities and the nongovernment sectors. See the program (see page 6).

The seminar was advertized by:

- a flyer to Shelter NSW members sent as a special mailout;
- flyers inserted with *NCOSS News* (September 2006);
- broadcast email notices to Shelter NSW members and to miscellaneous contacts held in an e-list by Shelter;

- notices in *NCOSS News* (August issue, p.15, September issue, p.15, October issue, p.15);
- a notice in *Around the House* (September 2005, back page);
- a special suite of pages on the Shelter NSW website, as well as references to it on the home and education pages of that website.

There were 80 paying registrants, of whom 47 (over half) attracted the 'early bird' rate. Of the paying registrants, 69 attended and 11 did not attend. There were 14 others (speakers, facilitator for panel, chairs and logistics). Altogether there were 83 persons in attendance.

Of the paying registrants, around one in three (N=25) came from 'not-for-profit' non-government welfare organizations, one in five (N=17) came from 'not-for-profit' non-government housing organizations, and one in five (N=16) were social housing tenants. See Figure 1.

The paying registrants came overwhelmingly (N=73) from greater Sydney. See Figure 2 on page 3. (However, a number of organizations had multiple registrations and the catchment area of their head office is recorded because it is not known where the representatives who attended are employed.)

Figure 1: Category of registered participants (%)

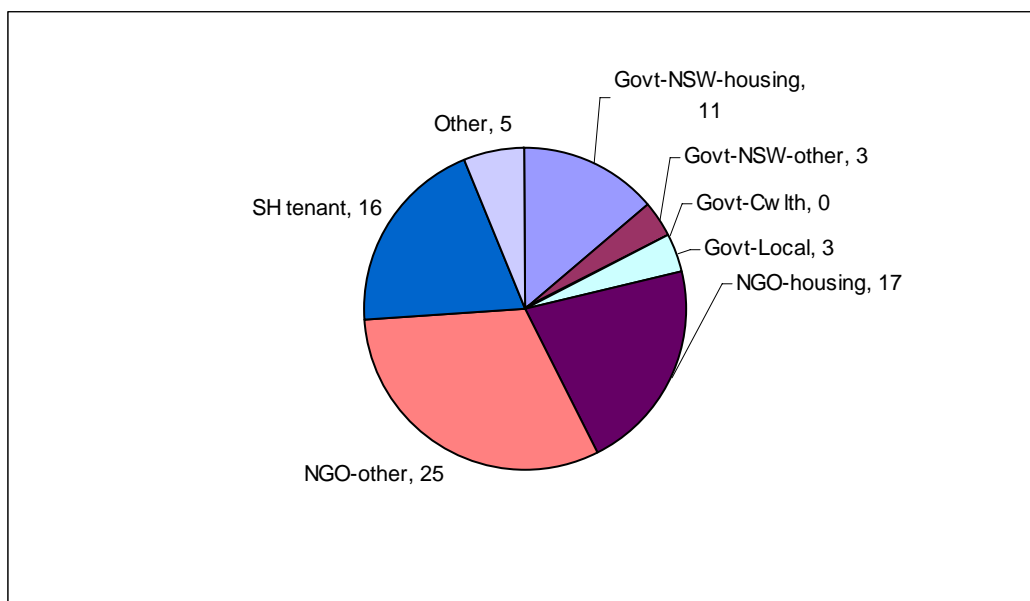
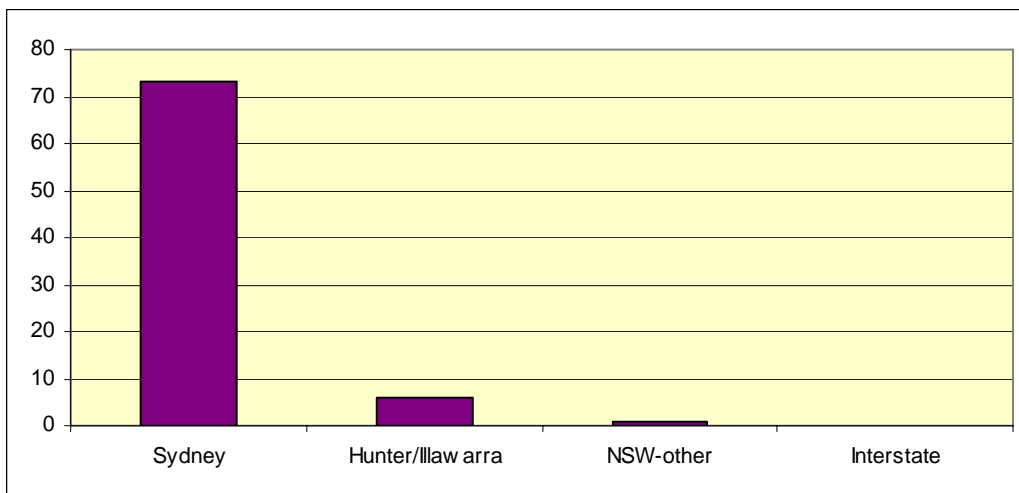


Figure 2: Geographic catchment of registered participants



The seminar was opened by the Director-General of the Department of Housing, Mike Allen. This was followed by sessions of 1 to 3 speakers focusing on particular themes: federal housing policy, housing unaffordability, taxation, environmental planning system, social housing. The programming did not canvass a key area for affordability for low-income earners because Shelter had run a 1-day seminar just on this matter on June 15.

The final session took the form of a moderated audience discussion and brainstorming on three set questions. This session was moderated by Shelter staffer Joy Connor, with scribing assistance from David Skidmore of the Public Interest Advocacy Centre.

Participants in this session were asked to reflect on three questions:

- It is 2020 and New South Wales has the best and fairest housing system on the planet: what will it be like?
- Does becoming the best and fairest depend on decisions made in Treasury and Planning rather than in Housing and other human service agencies?
- If you were elected premier on March 24, what is the first action on a housing issue that you would take?¹

There were 25 participants in this session (a third of the total paying registrants who attended), 17 of whom completed a question sheet that was collected by Shelter staff. A write-up of the answers suggested by those 17 participants is given in dot-point format on page 7.

The presentations

Speakers were not asked to provide written talks but were invited to provide presentations for publication on the Shelter website. Most speakers took up this offer.

¹ A NSW state election will be held on 24 March 2007.

Reporting

Reporting on the seminar takes 2 forms:

- this report, which is available on the Shelter website; and
- an article for Shelter's quarterly newsletter, *Around the House* – a Shelter senior policy officer is writing an article for the next that newsletter, which will be published in December 2006.

Evaluation

The evaluation methodology had one component: a 'customer satisfaction' style feedback from participants using a formal evaluation questionnaire.

Participants' evaluation

An evaluation sheet was distributed to all participants (registered participants and speakers) in a seminar folder. This sheet was a simple easy-to-use self-administered tool comprising open questions and one closed question. See page 12.

28 completed forms were returned – a return rate of two-fifths, compared to three-quarters at the last seminar (see Table 1 on page 5). The forms do not identify whether the respondent was a registered participant or a speaker; no Shelter staff person completed a form.

The *category* analysis for those 28 respondents was:

8	Nongovernment organization – housing
8	Nongovernment organization – welfare
5	State government
2	Local government
2	Social housing tenant
1	Other
2	Missing data

Asked to rate the seminar overall, using a 5-point Likert scale, 1 respondent rated it as 'fair', 1 as 'so so', 21 as 'good', 5 as 'excellent', and 1 did not respond to this question.

The mean rating was 4.07 (out of 5). Table 1 indicates the mean scores for previous Shelter 1-day education seminars.

A dot-point summary of responses to the open questions is given at page 13.

Table 1: Participants' mean score rating of Shelter seminars

Title	Date	Returns (N)	Paying registrants who attended (N)	Response rate	Mean score from usable returns ¹
Building blocks	Nov 2006	28	69	Two-fifths	4.07
Private rental	June 2006	53	71	Three-quarters	4.13
Housing action	Nov 2005	17	86	One-fifth	4.12
Housing dollars	July 2005	29	78	One-third	4.0
Housing Australians	June 2004	34	63	A half	4.21
Money matters	Nov 2003	11	52	One-fifth	4.54
Renewing the estate	June 2003	31	108	A quarter	3.35

¹ A usable return is a return where there is a response to the question on overall rating; missing data are not included in calculation of the mean (i.e. returned forms that have no answer to this question).

Product realization processes (formative evaluation)

The three positive aspects of the seminar most reported (in order of ranking) were:

- Good variety of speakers
- Good range of topics
- Presentation of program

The three negative aspects most reported (in order of ranking) were:

- The public address system
- The venue
- Not enough question time

Outcomes (summative evaluation)

The three positive aspects of the seminar most reported (in order of ranking) were:

- The session on taxation
- The session on housing
- The session on Local Government

The three negative aspects most reported (in order of ranking) were:

- Lack of solution
- Not many political ideas given
- Showing crisis unlikely to alter for the better

The overall rating of the seminar by respondents who completed an evaluation form was 'good' or 'excellent', with 26 of 28 rating it so.

In the answers to the question 'What did you learn that will be of use to you in your community or working in communities?', the main areas listed by respondents were:

- Research on housing affordability and work location was interesting
- Taxation information and housing policies.
- To think outside the square of the DOH and social housing.

Attachments:

Program

08:45	Registrations
09:30	Welcome and introduction Speaker: Mary Perkins
09:40 Chair: MP	Session 1: Opening address Speaker: Mike Allen, Department of Housing
10:00 Chair: MP	Session 2: The Australian policy context Speaker: Julian Disney, University of NSW
10:30 Chair: MP	Session 3: Housing affordability, occupation and location Speaker: Judy Yates, University of Sydney
11:00	Morning tea
11:15 Chair: SC	Session 4: Taxation and housing affordability Speaker: Frank Stilwell, University of Sydney
12:00 Chair: KS	Session 5: The environmental planning system and housing Speakers: Ken Morrison, Property Council of Australia (NSW) Dominic Johnson, Northern Sydney Regional Organization of Councils
01:00	Lunch
01:45 Chair: SC	Session 6: Social housing -- challenges and opportunities Speakers: Bobbie Townsend, Women's Housing Company Garry Mallard, National Tenant Support Network Michael Darcy, University of Western Sydney
03:00	Afternoon tea
03:15 Moderator: JC	Session 7: Audience discussion In 2020, the NSW housing system is the best and fairest in the world: what will it be like? Does becoming the best and fairest depend on decisions made in Treasury and Planning rather than in Housing and other human service agencies?
04:15 Chair: MP	Wrap-up
04:30	Close

Final session: notes

Twenty-five persons attended the final session, 17 of whom completed a question sheet. The notes in this section are drawn from points made during the session and scribed by David Skidmore, and points made during the session and written on question sheets, which were collected by Shelter staff.

Question 1

Participants' answers to the question, 'It is 2020 and New South Wales has the best and fairest housing system on the planet: what will it be like?'

In New South Wales ...

- 60 day notices? Never heard of them.
- A mentor/mentee program is conducted for every adolescent.
- A spectrum of options
- Ability to transfer within your community as needs change.
- Accessibility to housing is seen as a right not a privilege.
- Accessible and modified housing is available to all who need it.
- Adequate housing is located where the work is.
- Affordable and attractive dwellings.
- Affordable housing for all who want to make application.
- Affordable housing for everyone who wants public/social/community housing.
- Affordable housing is available to all.
- Affordable housing provision linked to improving the social capital of a community, e.g. key workers.
- Affordable rents that enable households to meet all of their non-housing expenses.
- Aged people will be housed in areas best suited to specialist services needs close to amenities.
- All housing services are provided in different languages, i.e. CSOs, multilingual call centres, etc.
- All levels of government have an indexed annual financial commitment to social housing and an integrated affordable housing strategy.
- All tenants have security of tenure.
- All tenants living in appropriately sized accommodation.
- Ample supply of affordable housing.
- An affordable range of housing is available for every part of the life cycle.
- Appropriate housing to meet the lifecycle needs of a population.
- Architectural crimes against humanity will be identified and prosecuted.
- Areas that have a higher cost of living will not be used to house tenants on social security.
- Attractive, well-amenitied housing communities.
- Broad range of housing options.
- Case management provided by housing services.
- Ceiling gaps on rental for all based on a sliding scale of income.
- Communities can recover.
- Communities determine their own governing policies.
- Communities determine their own policing.

- Communities determine their own restorative justice.
- Communities have adequate infrastructure.
- Design is ecologically and environmentally friendly.
- Different options for different household needs.
- Disabled persons are respected and included.
- DOH provides for people's needs not greed.
- Ecological and economic sustainability.
- End to homelessness.
- Every has access to safe, secure, affordable and appropriate housing.
- Everyone has housing that suits their needs.
- Everyone is able to afford housing via subsidies across tenures.
- Everyone knows everyone else's first name (trust).
- For each according to their ability to each according to their needs.
- Funding for modification for the disabled is increased.
- Funds from sales of public housing are used to redevelop existing housing to meet changing demographic need and don't disappear into a central fund.
- Government engages in community consultation re fate of affordable housing stock.
- Government will own all rental properties that may be managed by nonprofit organizations.
- Great mix of social housing tenants.
- Growing, affordable housing with government and private sector investment.
- Home ownership isn't the most valued tenure.
- Housing appropriate to needs.
- Housing estates have high levels of social capital.
- Housing for me, housing for you, housing for all.
- Housing is a home and not an investment.
- Housing is a right not a privilege.
- Housing Ministry tied to Prime Minister's role with performance indicators.
- Housing tenants will be able to live close to family and other supports.
- Housing will still be Government owned but everyone will have access to it.
- International exchanges with poverty issues in Third World countries.
- Investment in community renewal has led to a significant reduction in poverty.
- It's safe to roam the streets.
- John Howard pays his rent arrears via community service.
- Knowing people in power is not a criterion for housing.
- Leadership and participation are recognised and rewarded.
- Leverage growth of social housing assets.
- Liveable urban centres with amenity and wide social mix.
- Long term tenancy for private tenants.
- More affordable housing (in the broad sense).
- National, co-ordinated housing system.
- No homelessness because everyone will be provided with their own homes.
- No Homelessness.
- No housing waiting lists.
- No poverty exists.
- No rent. *Pied a terre* rights for all.
- Opportunities for community building, skills building and educational opportunities.

- Ownership options – opportunity for public housing tenants to own or partially own their housing or keep renting.
- People are assisted to move into private housing with dollar incentives.
- People can stay within their community when their circumstances change – housing is varied to accommodation needs.
- People from non-English speaking background can understand and access the housing system.
- People have a real choice about where they live.
- People will be housed in areas according to type and existence of tenants.
- People with disabilities are living in housing of their choice that meets their specific needs.
- People with disabilities can live independently in the community.
- Private investors prefer to buy units in social housing trust rather than individual investment properties.
- Promote pathways from social to home ownership.
- Provide continuum of housing options – social through to private rental.
- Public gardens and landscaping is admired and respected.
- Public housing waiting lists are minimal.
- Regular and well maintained housing.
- Safe and secure housing.
- Share residency exchanges i.e.: swaps between rural and urban DOH so kids can experience rural living, coastal, inner city – decentralisation options.
- Social capital is an intercommunity tradeable commodity.
- Social housing tenants elect the Housing Minister.
- Social housing which meets the needs of all persons whom require it.
- Social polarisation reduced.
- Strengthen tenants' rights via legislation.
- Strengthening the roles for community and housing associations.
- Support for those in need.
- Tenants can move from subsidised rental to market rent to shared equity and back, while living in the same house.
- Tenants have a say in decisions about their housing.
- Tenants with interruptive mental illnesses are not housed with elderly or frail persons.
- Tenants with problems are helped not evicted.
- That 1948 tenancy legislation was bloody damn good.
- That affordable housing provision is given a high social worth.
- The development of an affordable housing system beyond that of a welfare model.
- The mentally ill receive ongoing support to sustain housing.
- The monuments and plaques to elders are respected and admired.
- The private rental market has been socialised and 20-30 percent of dwellings are managed by nonprofit landlords.
- The village model community settings, community gardens, cottage industry with young people picking the fruit and older people making jam, self-sufficiency, extended community, families.
- There is a diverse mix of public/community housing.
- Those unable to move into private housing retain rights to public assistance.
- True open and transparent consultation partnership.

- Varied housing types well located to services and employment.
- Well maintained, self sufficient.
- Well-designed and mixed range of housing stock.
- Westpac builds 100,000 units of affordable housing with transaction fees levied.
- Workable housing for individual needs.

Question 2

Participants' answers to the question, 'Does becoming the best and fairest depend on decisions made in Treasury and Planning rather than in Housing and other human service agencies?'

Yes, Treasury and Planning are the most important government agencies affecting housing outcomes, rather than Housing and other human service agencies. And the evidence for saying 'yes' is ...

- Economies work on 5 year plans.
- Funding and motivation behind how it is distributed is a big factor.
- Linking housing and planning generates better outcomes.
- Neither portfolio's have a minister.
- One can generate new stock as a by product of urban growth and change.
- One can only improve things with more money.
- Outcomes are only dependant on planning for the amount of finance allocated for housing by treasury.
- Outcomes dependant on funding.
- Planning – regulate investment ensure affordability outcomes.
- Planning, because without whole of NSW planning in all facets of the community and its needs, the decisions will always end as a crisis needing restructuring.
- Taxes and charges shape planning decisions.
- Taxes, charges and incentives shape property investment decisions.
- Taxes/Charges shape investment decisions.
- The Housing Minister isn't powerful enough to get the necessary funding without treasury support.
- They have been delegated the funds to do just that.
- Treasury – taxation is fundamental.
- Type of housing outcomes are dependant on the amount of money distributed/allocated to the DOH, and not for other purposes.

No, Treasury and Planning are not the most important government agencies affecting housing outcomes, rather than Housing and other human service agencies. And the evidence for saying 'no' is ...

- 23,000 vacant properties – take them over.
- Collective public attitudes inform political decisions about funding decisions to do with social policy matters.
- Crime rate and other indicators of social dysfunction.
- Direct interaction with consumers.
- Flexible, respond quicker.
- Frontline at grassroots.

- Grass roots responding more directly.
- Housing agencies can monitor impact on people, more subjective criteria.
- Housing creates the policies and leads on the issues and provides the direction (or lack there of).
- Housing is about people, fundamental human right, housing needs to play lead role.
- Housing is more than just the building you live in.
- Housing needs to become central focus, maintain central role within State Government, that should be a key portfolio.
- MOUs between departments, i.e. disability, mental health, education etc.
- More focused on social outcomes.
- Networking.
- Number of homeless
- Number of mental health services.
- Policy formation more in Housing and Doc's.
- Positive outcomes seen by tenants in securing tenure such as breaking poverty cycle.
- Providing people with shelter.
- The Treasury is only focused on balance sheet, they need to focus on outcomes.
- Treasury and planning do not see housing as a priority and are not prepared to implement things.
- Treasury can spend money on housing but this might not be suitable, the tenants and human service agencies should determine the need.
- Treasury only concerned with bottom line.
- Working at the front line.

Question 3

Participants' answers to the question, 'If you were elected premier on March 24, what is the first action on a housing issue that you would take?'

- 20% inclusionary housing across the state.
- All vacant properties became available for immediate occupancy on want and needs.
- Allocate extra funds to housing needs and re-determine eligibility of present tenants.
- Amend the residential tenancies Act 1987 so that tenants can only be charged fair rents and there are no more no cause terminations.
- Establish affordable housing.
- Given that the social housing sector of NSW is only 5%, I would make sure that people in housing stress unable to secure housing from a housing register are able to sustain other terms of housing through adequate subsidies.
- Incentives for tenants of DOH to see waiting lists reduced to 3 months.
- Invest in community housing to build to its capacity, approximately \$100 million
- Re-shape public housing.
- Throw a big party for the tenants.
- To put in more money to help those in need.
- Withdraw the 'Reshaping public housing' reforms and accept it was not a good bill, on paper or in practise.

Evaluation form

What 3 things did you like most about this seminar?

What 3 things did you like least?

What did you learn that will be of use to you in your community or working in communities?

Overall, how would you rate the seminar on a scale of 1 to 5? (*Circle one.*)

1 = poor 2 = fair 3 = so so 4 = good 5 = excellent

Do you have any other comments?

Is your primary connection with housing policy/services as ... ?

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> State government | <input type="checkbox"/> Federal government | <input type="checkbox"/> Local government |
| <input type="checkbox"/> NGO—housing | <input type="checkbox"/> NGO—welfare/other | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Social housing tenant | <input type="checkbox"/> Other | |

Summary of participants/respondents' comments

This 'dot point' summary is taken from completed evaluation forms returned by 28 respondents. The points listed do not necessarily reflect the views of all respondents. Where two or more respondents identified the same matter, the matter has a number in parentheses indicating the number of reports. Comments made about a particular person (e.g. speaker) by name are not included here.

Things most liked about the seminar

Matters about product realization:

- Friendly and very knowledgeable employees from Shelter NSW
- Good information (4)
- Interaction with others (3)
- Presentation of program. (4)
- Relaxed and humorous atmosphere. (2)
- Structure of discussions.
- The agenda
- The final, audience discussion, session
- The venue was good (3)
- Well organised

Matters about learning outcomes:

- Good contributions from a range of participants
- Good discussion
- Good range of topics (9)
- Good variety of speakers (14)
- The session on challenges and opportunities in community housing
- The session on housing unaffordability and work location (3)
- The session on local government (2)
- The session on social housing.
- The session on taxation (7)
- Variety of possible solutions to issues

Things liked least about the seminar

Matters about product realization:

- It was very Sydney-centric.
- Lack of healthy food alternatives.
- Lack of publications supporting material
- Last session was a bit tedious.
- Not enough question time (3)
- People leaving after afternoon tea
- The public address system was woeful. (11)
- The session on planning system.

- Speakers not using overheads and PowerPoint.
- The day did not include any reference to legislation as an integral part of housing provisions.
- The venue, e.g. room, seats and facilities (7)

Matters about learning outcomes:

- Lack of solutions (4)
- Not many political ideas given.
- Showing crisis unlikely to alter for the better.

Anything useful that was learned

- Challenges facing community housing sector.
- Co-operative housing.
- Examples of how Local Government can effect provision of affordable housing.
- Further consolidated my understanding on tax
- General information on future of housing.
- Greater understanding of Shelter NSW
- Greater understanding of the overall framework pertaining to affordable housing.
- How tax system relates to housing.
- I need to know more about housing.
- I wanted an overview of social housing and I was pleased with content of the seminar.
- I was encouraged to look beyond client service and look at how long term plans can be effected to develop increased numbers of affordable homes.
- Information on the fact that Government won't take responsibility.
- Innovative ideas about the future of social housing.
- Knowledge about housing.
- Knowledge about positions of different community organisations.
- Mostly an intellectual increase.
- Research on housing affordability and work location was interesting. (3)
- Step up to the plate and take responsibility for initiating change and inviting others to do so.
- Tax information, and housing policies. (2)
- Tax system and the potential it ca offer as one of many pathways towards affordable housing.
- That there needs to be a re-building of bridges between the tenancy sector and the community/social housing providers and tenants.
- Think about new housing products.
- Think about partnerships.
- Think outside the DOH/social housing square.
- To further advocate for client services.
- Trying to find the time to follow up all the good info and sites currently available.

Other comments

Matters about product realization:

- Excellent mix of speakers
- Food was great
- Good location
- I enjoyed the last session as it was a good way of encouraging people to think of solution.
- Interactive sessions may be better after morning tea.
- It would be good to demonstrate a commitment to sustainability through use of eco-friendly disposal plates instead of polystyrene.
- Thank you for another well rounded group of attendees with open ears, eyes and open minds.
- Thank you for catering and to the facilitators.
- Thanks for the opportunity.
- Very impressive and of very high standard.
- Well done Shelter NSW
- Well organised – great lunch – well informed speakers
- Why was there no speaker on tenancy legislation or the rights of tenants.
- Would have liked to have used biodegradable plates.

Matters about learning outcomes:

- Would like to see us talking about practical models and strategies for change.
- Greater emphasis on how local government, developer and housing associations could work together to deliver affordable housing
- Good points were raised for further discussion