

Shelter NSW conference – ‘Estates in the balance’

17 June 2010

Q & A – questions and comments from participants

1. If the research shows long-term strategies are required to sustainable change, why are the community renewal/regeneration strategies in New South Wales only short-term?
2. Is social inclusion/exclusion a useful concept? Do we have a shared understanding of it? What does it add?
3. Need to work on changing rich people’s behaviour towards poor. Need to change government’s attitude towards poor and disadvantaged people.
4. On their own, housing markets tend towards segregation and exclusion. How do we deal with this, especially when projects are trying to involve market forces to generate investment?
5. The minister spoke of partnerships with services in the redeveloped areas, and I wondered how these are being developed and sustained? We are an NGO in the new housing regeneration project in Telopea, and it is noticeable that interagency and consultation has a thin story. We are calling for effective interagency partnerships with Housing NSW.
6. How receptive have government departments been especially Housing NSW to concerns such as those expressed by Kathy Arthurson about social mix?
7. How will residents be involved in developing NSW estates strategy?
8. What about giving communities greater control? In the UK, estate management boards and tenant management organisations have worked when nothing else has.
9. What are the implications [of estate redevelopment] or risks for tenants in areas where there are no organised active, tenant organisations?
10. Is it fair to engage social housing residents in regeneration projects when they will be moved out of the area being regenerated?
11. Why is it that in theory, the rhetoric all sounds great, read the selling of properties and the relocation of tenants, when the reality can be a nightmare? Housing NSW is in the process of selling my property, and it has been a very negative experience to me.
12. Why have community input, feedback, consultation etc when there is no follow-through? This just makes you feel that to attend a meeting is useful, but it goes nowhere, and adds to the feeling of powerlessness. Issues raised are not addressed, but the department ticks a box – the consultation has happened!

13. A consistent approach to redevelopment, with consideration of local needs, and local involvement is needed e.g., Minto was a bad approach initially, Airds–Bradbury an excellent approach. Now the announcement of change at Claymore mirrors the early Minto approach! Three major redevelopments in an LGA at the same time throw the community into crisis.
14. In rural areas, where public housing is transferred to community housing providers, the assumption is that community housing will be able to leverage funds. However, rural house values often stay the same or decline. Who do they sell it to?
15. In the interests of planning for accessible, equitable and healthy communities, is there a way of building social housing into the Metropolitan Strategy?
16. When will the new meaning of the word 'social' be recognised and the division between 'public' and 'community' recognised in literature, reports and policy?
17. Does the director of an area (such as southern and eastern) choose the properties to be transferred to community housing? In addition, who makes the final decision?
18. Changing the social mix in public housing has been discussed over the years as a solution to the various problems in estate living. Now we are told it's mixed tenure instead. How will that improve the social mix? Are there other strategies planned?
19. How do we educate or connect with social housing residents in high-rise buildings who don't care about other residents and make life particularly uncomfortable for older residents?
20. If research does not support the idea that there are definite benefits [to] socially mixed communities, why has Housing NSW embraced this concept as part of their estate regeneration and redevelopment schemes?
21. I am in an estate that is perceived by all of Newcastle as being awful – an estate where residents accept this situation and many seem to have low esteem, or at least have a low opinion of other residents. How can one go about improving this situation?
22. What is the future of Aboriginal housing?
23. How do we get ahead in life, if we work more, but the rent goes up? How are we supposed to save pay bills paid to keep education etc?
24. Some people respect our property and other people's work for us.
25. Where does the Aboriginal Housing Office fit into this?
26. Social housing is not just about putting a roof over ahead – it's about community development. There is too much emphasis on the layout and not about the content within. The community services grants program has been reorganised with too little money to work on the housing areas!
27. Can community housing maintain its individual character, if it has to get big and gain a national profile?

28. How can community housing legitimately call themselves community, when some of the organisations are large bureaucracies? In other areas where community housing organisations are smaller, they are merely landlords and do nothing to engage tenants in community participation.
29. How is it intended to protect government-funded infrastructure and resources such as housing when it is handed over to non-government sector, especially the community housing sector?
30. In talking about Housing NSW/community housing partnerships, will the large majority of any new buildings be handed to community housing groups, as has happened in the past 12 to 18 months?
31. In order to minimise the dislocation of public housing residents caused by redevelopment, better planning should be implemented to ensure that multiple large-scale redevelopment is not occurring in the same LGA simultaneously, e.g., Campbelltown LGA currently has redevelopment at Claymore, Macquarie Fields, Airds, Minto and Rosemeadow–Ambarvale.
32. Will property developers' dollars influence the selling of public housing? For example, will property in areas considered prime real estate be sold for that reason?
33. Do we know which housing estates are earmarked for the sale of stock to the private sector?
34. If Housing NSW rehouses residents while redevelopment takes place, where do the dwellings to rehouse people come from? There is a long waiting list for people yet to be housed.
35. In the redevelopment scheme, are the inadequate and oppressive bedsits being targeted for demolition? I have visited a bedsit which was part of a pilot redevelopment which was divided down the middle, creating an even smaller one-bedroom unit!
36. Is there a serious intention to investigate the possibility of a shared-ownership type scheme for first-time homebuyers and key workers? This would help people to move towards homeownership in an affordable way.
37. How close does the housing affordability SEPP come to achieving affordable housing for all?
38. What can be done to encourage developers to provide affordable housing?
39. How safe are public housing tenants who want to remain public housing tenants, rather than transfer to community housing or cooperatives?
40. Of the housing stock in New South Wales, what percentage of it is public housing? In say 10 or 20 years time, what is the projected figure?

41. What factors are taken into account when determining the proportions of existing residents to new residents, social housing tenants to homeowners that will make up a redeveloped area?
42. At Claymore, the redevelopment announced last week would see the retention of 80 houses out of 900 homes, as well as 2000 new private dwellings. How will 30% of public housing in Claymore be maintained?
43. Housing NSW has a number of approaches, what are they? Which one works best? What are the issues with other approaches?
44. Could Housing NSW consider and implement a self-build program?
45. Will Housing NSW be willing to sell houses to tenants, as was done in the 1960s? This would give you the opportunity to free up houses and give tenants the chance to become homeowners.
46. Please look into cooperative housing – and enable people interested to be involved.
47. Increasingly, Housing NSW and community housing house people needing support and support services.
48. Why in Lawson has a small estate has lost its six flats to auction? Tenants who have pride in their place should stay rather than be dispersed. When were the needs and wishes of tenants heeded?
49. We tenants at Menai (community housing/Housing NSW) have been campaigning for a sound barrier behind our estate. This has been going on for three years. People are very discouraged. We live with constant traffic noise in our backyards. Does anyone ever help?
50. In Minto, some units have had no maintenance since the break-up of the estate. Some of the tenants are long-term tenants. The units are in disarray; they need painting, gutters and down pipes.
51. Why do people who have been in Housing NSW property for 20 years or more not get their places painted, new carpets, and new kitchens, when tenants who have been there only a few years get things done? Is it that you are punished if you look after your place and do the right thing?
52. Housing NSW would save money if it did a better job on maintenance and planning the future.
53. Why does Housing NSW want tenants to stay poor? The current mechanisms for calculating rent are a disincentive to improve economic circumstances.
54. Accessibility and physical factors – is this being addressed as part of construction and redevelopment?
55. For 'special needs' tenants, you need to provide services as required on site, and have multiple tenants with similar afflictions in the same area.

56. Antisocial behaviour continues, year after year – it is reported to Housing NSW many, many, times in writing, but nothing seems to be done. Drug sellers, police raids ... there is no safety for remaining tenants, and after dark, it is not safe to leave your place. All of this is reported many times. We need help; we need safety, at least security doors. It is not fair that you are no longer safe in your own home. We are living in constant fear.
57. Is there a policy in place towards bad tenants who have damaged the dwelling? When they moved to a new place, do they do it again and repeat the offence? Are they punished or thrown out of the public housing system?
58. When placing people with poor social behaviours (drugs, violence), mental illness, the elderly ... why doesn't Housing NSW work with the agencies involved, and with the neighbours?
59. Social mix – what does Housing NSW do about criminals, paedophiles, social outcasts getting housing?
60. Will future low-income earners still be able to afford housing in the future, regardless of the government in power?
61. What is being done about monitoring rorting and corruption in the rollout of all the change that is taking place?
62. Why has FaHCSIA spent \$220 million to date on the 'Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program' in the Northern Territory, and only been able to build 11 community dwellings? When will the gravy train for public servants end?
63. I am a public housing tenant. I would like to know if Housing NSW is making a profit or loss out of total rents collected.
64. With public housing being the main driver of redevelopment projects, at what stage do or should they terminate their commitment to 'improving place' and what then continues to be their role in ensuring what is 'best for people'?
65. What do community housing providers think about the movement of stock from government control to community housing?
66. Are there any plans or partnerships for supported housing – for those with high needs (the homeless, mentally ill, or low functioning)? Some may need a lot of support continually, while others may move to lower levels of support. They need social networks within the area where they are living and using services.
67. What steps does a person need to do to get housing issues addressed?
68. If there is a need to release more land on the urban fringe to the meet housing needs of a growing population, how is this balanced against the need to grow food for all these people, for example, in areas like Narellan and in Oak Park where food production will be lost? Do 'whole of government' approaches include primary

industry, agricultural public-health employment or diversity local industry, transport and the environment?

69. Given the questions or the lack of evidence to support the effectiveness of the social mix and redevelopment strategy ... why is Housing NSW persisting with these strategies ... and when are they really going to start listening to residents about what works and what doesn't and change their strategies accordingly?
70. Housing NSW claim that they have learnt from previous redevelopments to improve the process, but at Claymore residents heard about the redevelopment of their estate on the same day that it was announced publicly. This is exactly what happened in Macquarie Fields when the sales program started 2 years ago. So what has the department really learnt?