

National Shelter's 9 Policy Priorities

National Shelter Vision: Australia needs a *National Housing Strategy* to ensure that all citizens can access the housing they need and want, that is affordable, appropriate, safe and secure. A senior Commonwealth Minister must take responsibility for the implementation of the Strategy, coordinating and facilitating the policies, legislation and resources necessary to lead and engage State and Territory governments and the range of inputs required for its development.

1. National Housing Strategy

A National Housing Strategy must link all areas of National, State and local policy and programs.

Shelter recommends:

- Negotiations over future increased funding for State and Territory governments to consider an incentive arrangement to improve urban design to facilitate affordable housing.
- A Commonwealth strategy to engage with National Shelter, planners, urban designers, architects and developers to develop an appropriate national response to density, planning, design and housing as infrastructure.
- Create base data and the ability to predict future housing need, to design a better housing future through a new National Housing Supply Council.
- Accessible and disability friendly pathways, doors, corridors and living spaces allowing ease of access for people to enter and use dwellings, urban spaces and infrastructure.

2. Taxation Reform

Australia's current tax treatment of housing adds inflationary pressure to the price of housing, distorting housing behaviours. Tax reform is required in removing the exemption on Capital Gains Tax (CGT) for home owners considering thresholds and protections, reducing CGT discounts for individuals and trusts to 25%, limiting negative gearing and quarantining passive investment losses. State Governments must be encouraged to exchange stamp duties for a disaggregated land tax and to introduce vacancy taxes on residential housing that is unoccupied for more than 6 consecutive months. Half of the savings generated from these measures, (circa \$5.3 billion p.a), would generate \$2.65 billion p.a funding incentives for private investment in affordable and social housing.

3. Urban and Regional Development

Affordable housing underpins our economy's ability to attract and retain a skilled workforce, and deeply impacts overall community wellbeing. Key urban and regional planning initiatives should include:

- A policy for all Transit Orientated Developments to include affordable/social housing to improve opportunities for low income households.
- In any City Deal or Commonwealth land release, 30% of housing developments must be affordable housing.
- Capture 30-50% of increased land value as revenue to be administered through the National Housing Finance and Investment Corporation (NHFIC) and distributed to Community Housing Providers towards affordable housing developments.

Commonwealth to provide incentives for States to contain inclusionary zoning provisions in planning legislation, mandating 30% affordable housing requirements in all new developments.

4. Financing Affordable Housing

The NHFIC and Bond Aggregator are helpful instruments in shifting from individual investment in housing, to scale institutional investment over the next twenty years. Alone they are insufficient to meet the gap between rental yield and investment return. Shelter recommends developing incentives provided by the Commonwealth, and matched by State and Territory governments, which could meet this investment gap and help to attract scale private investment into affordable and social housing. The incentive must also build on the National Rental Affordability Scheme approach.

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5. A Fair and Secure Renting System

A re-examination of the rental system through tenancy legislation in States and Territories is required. The Commonwealth has a leadership role to encourage the States to improve their tenancy legislation (i.e. protection against eviction, mitigation of excessive rent increases etc.) by providing additional incentive payments in existing funding agreements. This helps ensure renting is a more positive and long-term experience, supporting a shift to institutional investment.

6. Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Housing Strategy

Australia requires an improved strategy to increase home ownership for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) peoples who account for vastly disproportionate levels of social housing tenancies and specialist homelessness services in 2016–17. The Government must truly engage with ATSI communities to:

- Renegotiate the National Partnership on Remote Housing (NPRH) and National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing (NPARIH) for 10 years.
- Create an urban linkage strategy for travel between urban and remote communities.
- Funding for 20,000 extra ATSI social housing dwellings by 2028 via the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement (NHHA).

7. National Affordable Housing and Homelessness Agreement

Shelter supports the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement (NHHA) to replace the National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA). The NHHA should establish targets for affordable and social housing for immediate to long-term projections. These targets are needed to lift social and affordable housing to 6 to 10% of all housing by 2037, staged as 100,000 properties within five years, 200,000 properties within ten years and 500,000 at the end of the period.

8. End Homelessness Strategy

All drivers of homelessness must be addressed in a strategy that also competently:

- Rehouses people
- Monitors evictions
- Emphasises prevention with increased funding to specialist homelessness services that help maintain tenancies in private and social housing.

There must be early intervention initiatives with measurable targets required in all program reforms to establish responsibilities for prevention within mental health, drug and alcohol, domestic violence, out of home care and justice, with a focus on preventing ATSI homelessness. The strategy must also establish a Housing Led approach coordinating services that provide housing as a primary goal with support tailored to needs. This approach will help meet the achievable targets of halving homelessness in 5 years and ending it completely in 10 years.

9. Affordability & Income Support Reform

In conjunction with increasing affordable housing supply to low income households, there is also an immediate need to review and reform the Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) for renters living on low incomes. This includes:

- Increasing the maximum CRA rate
- Improving overall adequacy of CRA
- Removing anomalies where different cohorts have varied thresholds for payments and payment levels.

Government must also include more of the value of high priced homes in the Age Pension assets test and extend the Pension Loans Scheme so that people disqualified from the Age Pension by their assets can borrow income up to the rate of the Age Pension against the security of their home.