

Social Futures supports appeal for greater investment in social housing.

Social Futures has signed an open letter to the Prime Minister urging a commitment to “significant new investment” in social housing.

[The letter](#), signed by more than 300 organisations cites the need for a significant investment in social housing to meet an enormous and growing shortage of affordable housing and combat homelessness and housing stress in Australia. It also highlights the broader economic stimulus building social housing properties could bring to the nation at a time when it is recovering from a deep recession.

According to the letter, drafted by Everybody’s Home, building 30,000 social housing properties over four years will create more than 18,000 construction-related jobs a year for the building sector.

Tanya Miller, Executive Manager of the Community, Families and Youth branch of Social Futures, believes an expanded social housing program would bring relief to acute problems faced in regional Australia, including in the Northern Rivers.

“Even before COVID-19, waiting lists in Northern NSW were unacceptable. Unless you are in a serious crisis, waitlists can extend longer than a decade in this region. There are many in our community for whom the private rental market is not a sustainable option.”

“More social housing stock is the only realistic way we can meaningfully reduce housing stress. And of course, at the same time, building them will provide much needed employment and boost the regional and the national economy.”

The situation in Northern NSW

Despite high profile pockets of wealth, Northern NSW suffers from chronic homelessness issues. Relatively low incomes, lack of employment opportunities, high welfare dependency, significant areas of social disadvantage and, crucially, limited stocks of affordable housing (especially in the coastal areas) mean above state and national average rates of homelessness, sleeping rough and housing stress.

“A lack of affordable housing and low rental vacancy rates mean there are limited opportunities for people experiencing homelessness to obtain housing and break the cycle of homelessness,” explains Miller.

Anti-Poverty Week

This year’s budget comes on the eve of Anti-Poverty week (October 11-17). With the recent drop in the Jobseeker allowance and with more cuts to come, social service providers are concerned about the impact on poorer households in the region.

A [recent study](#) found that in measures of five areas relating to social exclusion for children - socioeconomic circumstances, education, connectedness, housing and health service access – all but one of the Northern NSW Local Government Areas fell into the bottom 40 per cent of the State.



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“We simply cannot go back to pre-pandemic levels of income support payments and assistance,” says Miller. “We know that since the temporary increase to Jobseeker, individuals and families we support have reported a dramatic improvement in the ability to pay for essentials. Everything from being able to pay bills, buy better quality food for their families and rely less on emergency relief, including emergency housing. “

“Now is not the time to be pulling the rug out from under people, especially when jobs are scarce.”

[Read the letter](#)

ENDS

Note to editors:

Social Futures is a community service organisation based in Northern NSW. We have more than 40 years' experience as a regional leader, advocating with the communities we work in; working in partnership with others; and providing services that promote inclusion, fairness and social justice. Our work encompasses homelessness and housing supports, youth and family services, programs that promote genuine participation for people with disability, community sector support, professional development, and systemic advocacy.



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