

# Changing Housing For Good Federal Election 2025



**Community Housing**  
INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION



# Community Housing Industry Association

The shortage of social and affordable rental housing across Australia means that too many people are paying far more in rent than they can afford and being pushed into deprivation or even homelessness. Solving this problem requires a long term housing strategy, actively led and invested in by the Federal government.

***“You want to think that people in Australia are safe, and that they’re housed and having their basic needs met ... If they’re not being met, and we’re a first world country, you would like to think that’d be pretty high on the priority list of people up in government to create solutions and [meet] basic housing needs for people.”<sup>1</sup>***

Focus Group Participant [Redbridge - Housing Affordability and the Federal Election 2025](#)

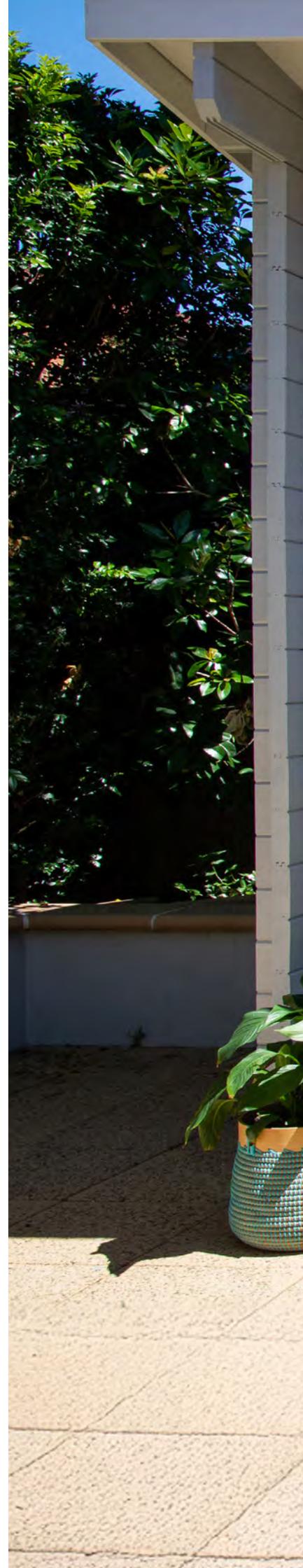
A safe, secure and affordable home is a fundamentally necessary platform for all aspects of wellbeing – whether it is to provide a way of overcoming challenges to enter employment, or the stability needed to succeed at school or enjoy a well-earned retirement.

When people are well-housed they are more productive and suitably-located affordable housing is essential economic infrastructure just as much as roads, rail and utilities.

Australia’s not-for-profit community housing organisations are primed and ready to contribute to the expanded housing production the nation needs.

The community housing industry is eager to partner with all Australian governments, the private sector and the community in this endeavour.

This Federal election we’re asking for all political parties and independents to support key actions that will enable us to help provide the good quality social and affordable rental housing Australia needs for both economic productivity and social wellbeing.



# Too many people do not have a good quality affordable home

## Rents have surged ahead of wages

- During the current term of government median advertised rents across Australia rose from \$480 pw to \$648 pw, an increase of 35%<sup>2</sup>, while wages grew by only 10%.<sup>3</sup>

## And for many years we have not been building enough social housing

- Social housing has declined from over 6% of total occupied dwellings in the 1990s to barely 4% in 2023.<sup>4</sup>
- For most of the past two decades we've been building only around 3,000 public housing units a year, down from 10-14,000 in the 1980s.
- Across most of Australia social housing lettings to new tenants remain at rock bottom levels, down by more than 50% since the 1990s.<sup>5</sup>

## Leading to more households in rental stress...

- Estimates based on the 2021 Census indicate unmet need for social or affordable rental housing totalled 640,000 households, or around one household in fifteen.<sup>6</sup>
- Commonwealth Rental Assistance (CRA) is insufficient to relieve rental stress. Almost 1 in 2 (43% or 533,000) CRA recipient households remained in rental stress even after receiving the payment<sup>7</sup> and
- The Department of Social Services estimate that only 2% of people who currently receive CRA will have moved out of rental stress as a result of recent increases in the payment.<sup>8</sup>

## ...and persistently high homelessness rates

- National survey evidence collected for the 2024 Australian Homelessness Monitor indicates that, as experienced by service provider agencies and local government authorities (LGAs) in most parts of Australia, homelessness had risen to well above pre-pandemic rates by 2023-24.<sup>9</sup>
- Around one-third (33%) of people seeking help from homelessness services are not having their immediate accommodation needs met – up from 29% in 2016.<sup>10</sup>

## And too many Australian homes fail to meet basic energy performance standards, leading to higher power bills. Much state and territory owned social housing is in a particularly poor condition

- The average energy efficiency rating of existing homes in Australia is only 1.7 stars compared to new homes average 6.1 stars.<sup>11</sup>
- Since most social housing dwellings are more than 40 years old, the sector's energy efficiency rating is likely to be especially low.<sup>12</sup>
- There is little public information about the condition or energy performance of social housing. However, 25% of public housing and 15% of community housing-managed dwellings are officially classed as in unsatisfactory condition, according to survey data.<sup>13</sup>



# Changing Housing for Good

2025 sees many lower income renters are in the grip of a housing crisis. Australia lacks sufficient social and affordable housing. Hard-pressed homelessness services are increasingly turning away clients.<sup>14</sup> At this Federal election CHIA is asking for all political parties and independents to support actions to improve the way our housing system works and, specifically, to expand investment in new social and affordable rental housing supply. To do this we badly need a meaningful housing policy road map.

## **The Commonwealth should, therefore:**

1. Legislate an evidence based, comprehensive and funded ten-year National Housing and Homelessness Plan.
2. Incorporate within that Plan, a recognition that social and affordable rental housing constitutes essential infrastructure, and an aim for '1 in 10 in 20': one in ten homes to be social and affordable within 20 years.
3. Ensuring the social and affordable rental sector is climate resilient and achieves net zero emissions.
4. Invest in the further expansion of not-for-profit community housing sector capacity.

## **CHIA also supports**

- the actions to prevent homelessness, provide long term supportive housing and establishing a national tenancy sustainment program as set out in Homelessness Australia's election platform.<sup>15</sup>
- Fixing housing for young people as set out in the Home Time national campaign. CHIA is a proud member of the campaign.<sup>16</sup>



# Legislate an evidence-based, comprehensive and funded ten-year national housing and homeless plan

Recent decades have seen an episodic engagement with housing strategy and policy at the Federal level. The extent and complexity of housing and homelessness problems, and the fact that these both cross over different levels of government and also involve 'non housing' policy domains, demands that Australia breaks with the past in adopting an enduring nationally-led approach.

To clarify overarching goals, to specify accountability arrangements, and to embed the Commonwealth's ongoing engagement we need a National Housing and Homelessness Plan (NHHP) grounded in law. A strategy to re-balance our housing system is a long-term proposition and the institutions that support it must be designed to endure beyond the current electoral cycle.

The Plan must quantify the extent to which housing system outcomes are currently falling short of reasonable expectations. It must define the short, medium and long term actions needed to correct the situation.

CHIA's submission to the current government's National Housing and Homelessness Plan consultation argued that these actions must include commitment to a long-term national social and affordable rental housing investment program, tax reform and measures to improve access to appropriate housing for people with disability, young people and, First Nation's peoples.<sup>17</sup>

## **In summary the NHHP must:**

- Be founded on Australia's international obligations to realise the human right to adequate housing;
- Be enshrined in legislation to ensure ongoing national leadership;
- Include clear objectives, ministerial level responsibility, and delivery plan including responsible agencies and identified investment, operational funding and resources for effective implementation.

*72% of Australians support developing a National Housing and Homelessness Plan*

[Redbridge - Housing, Affordability and the Federal Election 2025](#)

*In May 2024, 117 community organisations and peak bodies, leading housing academics, economists and policy makers, wrote an [open letter](#) to the Federal Housing Minister in support of the proposal to legislate a statutory basis for the National Housing and Homelessness Plan.*

# Recognise social and affordable rental housing as essential infrastructure and aim for ‘1 in 10 in 20’: one in ten homes to be social and affordable within 20 years

The community housing sector recognises that the current Government has made a series of policy and funding commitments that provide a foundation for relieving high and growing levels of homelessness and rental stress. Collectively, the 40,000 new social and affordable rental housing units to be supported by the HAFF and the National Housing Accord, together with those generated via the Social Housing Accelerator, and additional investment in the National Housing Infrastructure Facility (NHIF), represent a significant first step in remediating a decade of national housing policy neglect.

However, the extent of unmet housing need amongst lower income households requires considerable further action via a long term and sustained response. At the time of the 2021 Census, there were 640,000 households either homeless or in the bottom two income quintiles and in rental stress, i.e., paying more than 30% of income on rent. Without appropriate policy interventions, this total is forecast to rise to almost one million households by 2041<sup>18</sup>. Meeting this need would result in around one in ten homes being social and affordable rental housing.

To meet this target will require contributions and / or action from all levels of government.

## Increasing Federal government investment

to help build towards the 1 in 10 in 20 target, the sector is calling for a quadrupling of the HAFF equity stake, to expand the associated annual housing investment program from \$500M to \$2 billion. This would increase the quantum of housing generated, allowing greater flexibility in funding streams (e.g. capital grants vs. availability payments), broadening the resulting range of social and affordable rental housing options, including for example supportive housing models. It would add to the length of the HAFF program – extending the scope to underwrite new construction commitments beyond 2030 – and establishing an ongoing (annual) social and affordable housing development program for the long term.

Broadening the range of social and affordable housing options delivered under the program could encompass projects that take longer to plan and execute; such as situations where new partnerships need to be established, where re-development of existing estates is involved or where organisational capacity must be nurtured, such as in the Aboriginal Community Controlled sector. Assurance that the HAFF can continue to pledge new funding commitments beyond the program’s initial five years, will enable CHOs and their partners to plan strategically and invest in preparatory work.

A longer term program will also assist in establishing social and affordable housing as a new asset class for institutional investment<sup>19</sup> and provide an incentive for matching contributions from state and territory governments to be negotiated via an enhanced National Agreement on Social Housing and Homelessness.

*54% of Australians more likely to vote for a party with plans to increase social and affordable housing- Only 5% less likely to support such a party*

[Redbridge - Housing Affordability and the Federal Election 2025](#)

*The current investment in 30,000 homes via the HAFF will realise \$3.2b in societal benefits (savings in other public services and improvements in health and wellbeing) over 25 years*

*The average cost of living benefit for tenants is almost \$10K pa.*

[HAFF Benefits Report 2025](#)



## Leading the implementation of Mandatory Inclusionary Zoning

Direct government support for social and affordable housing – e.g. through availability payments, capital grants or discounted land – should be complemented by developer contributions facilitated via Mandatory Inclusionary Zoning (MIZ). To enable the large scale application of MIZ arrangements, the Federal government should lead the development of a National Framework that:

- Sets out a consistent national vision for the use of MIZ by state and territory governments, including specifying roles and responsibilities and a timeline for implementation.
- Acknowledges the role of state and territory land use planning and development systems in MIZ, and supports necessary reforms in those systems.
- Is pledged as an action under the National Housing and Homelessness Plan and/or the National Housing Accord, and implemented through the National Agreement on Social Housing and Homelessness (NASHH).

The Federal government should activate state/territory implementation through an annual ‘reward payment’ based on the number of new affordable rental homes generated in the first three years after MIZ is established.

CHIA is part of a partnership with other peak groups, local government representatives, and housing and planning academics that has produced a blueprint for a national framework for MIZ.<sup>20</sup>

### In summary the Federal government should:

- Increase investment in a social and affordable rental housing supply pipeline to \$2 billion per year, through the Housing Australia Future Fund (HAFF), or an alternative funding mechanism.
- Lead the development of a National Framework for Mandatory Inclusionary Zoning (MIZ) to generate a minimum percentage of affordable rental housing in new residential developments.

66% of Australians support establishing minimum standards for affordable housing in new developments

[Redbridge - Housing Affordability and the Federal Election 2025](#)

# Ensuring the social and affordable rental sector is climate resilient and achieves net zero emissions

While precise national data on social housing energy performance remains uncollected, it is established that many of the older State-owned homes managed by CHOs perform poorly, contribute to Australia's greenhouse gas emissions, and damage residents' wellbeing through excessive energy bills. In addition, as extreme weather events become more common, more homes in more communities will be exposed to resulting damage and potentially destruction.

A recent unpublished report by the NSW Government's Climate Change and Sustainability Division (Department of Planning, Industry and Environment) found that 'Most social housing organisations won't have budgets to pay for information on energy ratings, carbon/energy outputs, thermal performance and upgrade recommendations'.

The current government's Social Housing Energy Performance Initiative (SHEPI) is funding some property upgrades to address these issues. But SHEPI is being implemented as an ad hoc program, lacking any overarching strategy that identifies the scale of the problem and outlines an orderly plan to tackle it. What is, instead, needed is a specific social and affordable climate resilience strategy co-ordinated by the Federal Department of Climate Change, Energy, Environment and Water (DCCEEW) and an expanded SHEPI to fund this.

## [The Community Housing Climate Action Network \(CHCAN\)](#)

*has been established by the CHIA with the support of Australian state and territory community housing peak bodies, to help the sector prepare for the inevitable impacts of climate change and reduce climate change causing emissions within their housing portfolios. The network is intended to be a community of practice to enable collaboration, the sharing of knowledge, resources and experience to help build our skills in this complex area.*



# Invest in a strong and sustainable not for profit community housing sector

In the National Housing Accord Federal, state and territory governments committed to 'building a strong and sustainable Community Housing Provider sector'. Governments also acknowledged the sector's critical role in ensuring 'achievement of targets for social and affordable housing are met'<sup>21</sup>. There are two important areas where the Federal government can play a leading role in giving effect to the National Housing Accord commitments.

## Effective Regulation

Effective sector regulation can drive industry capability and build the confidence of all key stakeholders – investors, governments, and tenants – in the quality of management and security of social and affordable rental housing assets.

Currently the three existing sector regulation regimes (Victoria, WA, and NRSCH) operate with similar standards and have similar enforcement powers. They regulate the same types of organisations, indeed in some cases the same CHOs.

However, CHOs wishing to operate nationally are required to register separately under each system and submit to different compliance assessments, adding considerably to regulatory burden. Moreover, there are worrying signs of possible future divergence with the recent belated publication of the Victorian Government's social housing regulation review and government response<sup>22</sup> which add to the urgency of action.

To secure a satisfactory outcome for a new regulatory reform push, we strongly recommend that Commonwealth funding is designated to appoint an independent reviewer to resolve the impasse that has frustrated all post-2013 efforts to establish a genuinely national system.

## Supporting the Development and Implementation of a Community Housing Industry Development Strategy (CHIDS)

In a 2017 report<sup>23</sup> the government's Affordable Housing Working Group recommended refreshing the 2014 community housing National Industry Development Framework.

As well as setting out a vision for the industry's contribution to meeting housing policy objectives set by government, the CHIDS would provide a framework to expand support to individual CHOs aspiring to contribute to meeting government housing policy goals. This would build on the existing industry capacity grant program administered by Housing Australia since 2019.

The growth of similar sectors elsewhere has been underpinned by strong capacity-building support from national governments, including, in some cases, substantial funding. This is a scenario recently well-exemplified by the Canadian Federal Government's Community Housing Transformation Centre, established in 2019 as part of a CAN\$50 million initiative under Canada's National Housing Strategy 2017.<sup>24</sup>

### In summary the Federal government should:

- Lead an overhaul of the 2014 National Regulatory System for Community Housing (NRSCH).
- Foster the capability of the community housing industry by expanding capacity-building support for the sector.

*'There should be a joint Commonwealth-state review to develop and implement a truly national regulatory framework for the community housing sector. The new framework should be designed to support engagement with institutional investors and address the increased complexity of funding arrangements in the sector*

[Barriers-to-institutional-investment-report NHSAC 2023](#)

IFM investors echoed this call in its recent report 'Investing in Australia: Accelerating industry super investment and growing Australia's housing supply'

[Investing in Australia: Accelerating industry super investment and growing Australia's housing supply'](#)

# Summary of key recommendations

## Changing Housing for Good

1. Legislate an evidence based, comprehensive and funded ten-year National Housing and Homelessness Plan.
2. Incorporate within that Plan, a recognition that social and affordable rental housing constitutes essential infrastructure, and an aim for '1 in 10 in 20': one in ten homes to be social and affordable within 20 years.
3. Ensuring the social and affordable rental sector is climate resilient and achieves net zero emissions.
4. Invest in the further expansion of not-for-profit community housing sector capacity.

### *CHIA also supports*

- the actions to prevent homelessness, provide long term supportive housing and establishing a national tenancy sustainment program as set out in Homelessness Australia's election platform.
- Fixing housing for young people as set out in the Home Time national campaign. CHIA is a proud member of the campaign.

## **Legislate an evidence-based, comprehensive and funded ten-year national housing and homeless plan**

- Be founded on Australia's international obligations to realise the human right to adequate housing;
- Be enshrined in legislation to ensure ongoing national leadership;
- Include clear objectives, ministerial level responsibility, and delivery plan including responsible agencies and identified investment, operational funding and resources for effective implementation.

## **Recognise social and affordable rental housing as essential infrastructure and aim for '1 in 10 in 20': one in ten homes to be social and affordable within 20 years**

- Increase investment in a social and affordable rental housing supply pipeline to \$2 billion per year, through the Housing Australia Future Fund (HAFF), or an alternative funding mechanism.
- Lead the development of a National Framework for Mandatory Inclusionary Zoning (MIZ) to generate a minimum percentage of affordable rental housing in new residential developments

## **Invest in a strong and sustainable not for profit community housing sector**

- Lead an overhaul of the 2014 National Regulatory System for Community Housing (NRSCH).
- Foster the capability of the community housing industry by expanding capacity-building support for the sector.

## References

- 1 Focus Group Participant [Redbridge - Housing Affordability and the Federal Election 2025](#)
- 2 <https://sqmresearch.com.au/weekly-rents.php?national=1&t=1>
- 3 <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/economy/price-indexes-and-inflation/wage-price-index-australia/latest-release>
- 4 [Housing assistance in Australia 2024, Summary - Australian Institute of Health and Welfare](#)
- 5 CHIA ROGS analysis 2025
- 6 City Futures Research Centre, UNSW 2023 [Quantifying Australia's unmet housing need](#)
- 7 Ibid iii
- 8 [A closer look at Rent Assistance increases | Tenants' Union](#) 2024
- 9 [AHM\\_final.pdf](#)
- 10 Ibid iii
- 11 [COAG Energy Council \(2019\) Report for Achieving Low Energy Existing Homes](#)
- 12 Supporting energy efficiency upgrades for existing homes through informed policy and program design: Social housing sector perspectives (NSW Government and Meld Studios, 2021 unpublished)
- 13 Productivity Commission 2025 [G Housing and homelessness - Report on Government Services -](#)
- 14 [Homelessness Australia 2024 - Australian Homelessness Monitor](#)
- 15 [Our Advocacy – Homelessness Australia](#)
- 17 [CHIA & National Shelter Submission](#) to the National Housing and Homelessness Plan Discussion Paper 2024
- 18 <https://www.communityhousing.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/CHIA-housing-need-national-snapshot-v1.0.pdf?x22076>
- 19 [ifm\\_investors\\_-\\_investing\\_in\\_australia\\_housing\\_blueprint\\_-\\_dec\\_24.pdf](#)
- 20 Constellation Project: 20250221 - [MIZ proposal](#)
- 21 [National Housing Accord 2022](#)
- 22 [Social Housing Regulation Review | dtf.vic.gov.au](#)
- 23 AHWG 2017 Supporting the Implementation of the Affordable Housing Bond Aggregator
- 24 Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada (2020) [Community Housing Transformation Centre launched – will distribute millions in grants to housing providers](#)

# About CHIA

CHIA, the Community Housing Industry Association, is the peak body representing not for profit community housing organisations (CHOs) across Australia. Our 165+ members manage more than 130,000 homes, housing people on low and moderate incomes who find it hard to access affordable and appropriate tenancies in the private market.

Visit [www.communityhousing.com.au](http://www.communityhousing.com.au)

For enquiries relating to this document,  
please contact: Wendy Hayhurst  
[wendy.hayhurst@communityhousing.com.au](mailto:wendy.hayhurst@communityhousing.com.au)

## **Acknowledgement**

CHIA acknowledges the Traditional Owners of country throughout Australia and recognises their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures, and to elders past, present and emerging.



**Community Housing**  
INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION