



MEDIA RELEASE

CHIA hails Wendy Hayhurst's legacy as housing champion

The Community Housing Industry Association (CHIA) has hailed the critically important contribution of outgoing chief executive, Wendy Hayhurst, recognising her as the most crucial advocate for the establishment and expansion of the Housing Australia Future Fund (HAFF).

Wendy Hayhurst is retiring at the end of May after more than six years of insightful and intelligent leadership of the national community housing peak body. Hayhurst previously led the NSW division of CHIA and before that held leadership roles in community housing in Australia and the UK. CHIA chairperson, Chris Smith, said Hayhurst's strategic vision and relentless advocacy have been instrumental in bringing the housing crisis to the forefront of national conversation.

"Wendy's contribution to the social and affordable housing sector is profoundly significant and has been marked by substantial policy achievements, most notably her pivotal role in the establishment and subsequent push for the expansion of the Housing Australia Future Fund.

"Under Wendy's leadership, CHIA has been at the forefront of advocating for a comprehensive National Housing and Homelessness Plan, mandatory inclusionary zoning, and greater collaboration between federal and state governments. Her work has ensured that the voices of those experiencing housing stress are heard at the highest levels of government.

"Wendy has consistently and persuasively pointed out that investing in social housing delivers substantial returns, not only in providing homes for those in need but also in stimulating the economy and reducing long-term costs associated with homelessness and housing insecurity. Her legacy will be felt for generations."

CHIA also announced Karen Walsh will start as interim CEO from 2 June. Walsh brings over a decade of executive leadership experience in the social and affordable housing sector to her new role at CHIA, most recently with National Shelter and Head Start Homes and before that, leading Venture Housing Company and serving as CEO of Shelter NSW

"The housing affordability crisis we face requires bold, innovative solutions, and I'm committed to working collaboratively across government, industry, and community sectors to deliver them," Walsh said.

"The community housing sector has tremendous potential to deliver more social and affordable homes, and I look forward to helping unlock investment and policy reforms that will allow our members to scale up their impact across the country."

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