

SUBMISSION

Inquiry into Social Housing

Senate Economics References Committee

Thirty years of housing programs, and still an unfair housing system.

Australian Community Housing (ACH)

September 2026

THE SHORT VERSION

Social housing made up around 6% of Australian housing stock in the 1990s. It is about 4.1% now, and on current settings it keeps decreasing because we fund it in bursts inside a housing system that grows every year.

The National Housing Supply and Affordability Council wants the share back to 6% over the medium term, and as high as 10% eventually. ACH strongly supports both targets.

Successive governments have responded to worsening housing affordability largely through demand-side assistance. These measures can help individual households, but most do not directly add homes, and often they push up prices. Social and affordable housing does something different: it adds homes at rents lower-income households can afford and preserves that benefit over the long term.

ACH is calling for a permanent, funded national program.

Australia already has the organisations to deliver it. The community housing sector is regulated, holds \$23.5 billion in assets and is ready to scale further

The next step is to give that system a permanent pipeline.

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Acknowledgement of Country

Australian Community Housing acknowledges the Traditional Owners of lands and waters across Australia, the first providers of shelter, safety and community on this continent. We honour their enduring connection to Country and culture and pay our respects to Elders past and present.

We also acknowledge that, because of the ongoing impacts of colonisation, too many First Nations peoples continue to be denied a safe, secure and affordable place to call home.

Any serious inquiry into social housing in Australia must begin by recognising that First Nations people experience the deepest and longest-standing housing disadvantage in this country, and that the response must be designed and led by First Nations organisations rather than delivered to them. ACH remains committed to working alongside First Nations communities to change this.

About this submission

Australian Community Housing (ACH) is the national peak body for Australia's community housing sector. Our members are registered, not-for-profit community housing providers (CHPs) and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled housing organisations. They build, own and manage around 149,000 social and affordable homes (ACH 2026), housing hundreds of thousands of Australians the market has priced out.

ACH welcomes the Committee's inquiry and thanks the Senate for referring it. The Committee will receive a great deal of evidence describing the problem, and Australia is not short of housing analysis. So instead of working through each question, we have used this submission to put one proposition to the Committee, with the evidence behind it.

THE PROPOSITION

Australia should commit to social and affordable housing reaching at least 6% of housing stock, with 10% as the long-term national goal, and should build the permanent Commonwealth mechanism required to get there.

Registered community housing providers, public housing authorities and First Nations-controlled housing organisations should be confirmed as the owners and long-term stewards of the homes that mechanism funds.

ACH is calling for a permanent, funded national program. The Commonwealth should commit \$2.5 billion a year in real terms as a capital contribution to the Housing Australia Future Fund for 20 years from 2029–30, with HAFF earnings funding availability payments, capital grants and concessional finance.

The detailed mechanism, costings and delivery sequence for a permanent program follow in the full Budget proposal, and ACH would welcome the opportunity to provide that proposal to the Committee and to appear at a public hearing.

Definitions used in this submission

Social housing means rental housing provided at subsidised rents to households on low and very low incomes, including both public housing and community housing.

Affordable housing means rental housing provided at below-market rates to low- and moderate-income households, ideally benchmarked as costing no more than 30% of gross household income.

Where this submission refers to social and affordable housing together, the argument applies to both. Both are non-market housing: homes held permanently outside the speculative market by organisations that cannot extract capital value from them.

Recommendations

01 **Adopt a national target.**

Social and affordable housing should reach at least 6% of Australia's housing stock by 2050, with 10% as the longer-term goal. This should be supported by a published dwelling trajectory and annual reporting to Parliament.

02 **Establish a permanent national program.**

Commit in the 2027–28 Budget to a permanent National Social and Affordable Housing Program commencing in 2029–30, funded through a rolling ten-year investment pipeline. State and territory contributions should be additional, transparent and accountable, with requirements negotiated by jurisdiction. As part of the program's design, affordable housing should be defined consistently by reference to household income, not simply as a discount to market rent.

03 **Fund all three delivery routes using the full funding toolbox.**

Registered not-for-profit community housing providers, First Nations-controlled housing organisations, and public housing authorities must all be able to contribute at scale. The program should use the right mix of availability payments, capital grants and concessional finance for each project, and its long-term pipeline should provide the predictable volume of work needed to scale modern methods of construction.

04 **Establish a dedicated First Nations housing pathway.**

Commit a substantial, multi-year allocation, developed through First Nations-led co-design and supported by reliable access to capital grants.

05 **Keep publicly funded homes in the system.**

Commonwealth-funded homes should be owned or controlled by registered not-for-profit community housing providers, First Nations-controlled housing organisations or public housing authorities, and endure as social or affordable housing. Where a home is sold, it should be replaced and the public subsidy fully recycled.

06 **Measure what the investment delivers for tenants.**

Publish tenant outcomes alongside dwelling completions and program expenditure, including sustained tenancies, affordability, dwelling condition, energy costs, access to support and tenant satisfaction and wellbeing. The Committee should also hear directly from social housing tenants.

01 Australia keeps funding short term programs

There is nothing mysterious about the decline in social housing. Governments have funded it in short bursts, inside a housing system that grows steadily every year.

For three decades the Commonwealth has funded social housing one program at a time. A capital grant round, a stimulus package, an agreement, a fund. Each was announced as the answer, and each came to an end. The housing system those programs sit inside, meanwhile, has grown every year through population growth, household formation and the steady loss of affordable private rental to the market.

Social housing has fallen from around 6% of total stock in the 1990s to about 4.1% today (Pawson and Martin 2026; AIHW 2026a). Some of that slide happened while governments were announcing more housing money than at any point in a generation. Governments have not been idle, but they have been building in bursts against a problem that compounds. Public housing shrank over the same period because Commonwealth capital funding was progressively withdrawn and never replaced with an equivalent mechanism (Productivity Commission 2022).

WHAT HAPPENS IF NOTHING CHANGES

At 30 June 2025 there were 450,607 social housing dwellings in Australia, housing about 429,600 households. Around 190,000 households were on the public housing waitlist, of whom roughly 40% were in greatest need, meaning they were homeless, at risk, unsafe or in housing actively damaging their health. The greatest-need cohort has grown by close to 70% since 2018 (AIHW 2026a; Productivity Commission 2026).

ACH modelling indicates that without a permanent successor to current programs, the combined social and affordable share falls to around 3.5% by 2050: even further away from housing as social infrastructure, despite the largest housing investment in decades.

The Housing Australia Future Fund is significant, but it will not be enough

The current package of Commonwealth measures, principally the Housing Australia Future Fund, represents the most significant Commonwealth investment in social and affordable housing in decades.

The HAFF has done a great deal: it created the first genuine national platform for social and affordable housing delivery in a generation; it aligned Commonwealth and state contributions with community housing capability, land and private finance in a single transaction; it established Housing Australia as a national delivery institution with real market knowledge; and it has built a substantial project pipeline (Treasury 2026).

The early rounds of HAFF also showed that demand from providers ran well ahead of the funding available, and the sector mobilised quickly. On the evidence so far, what is holding back social and affordable housing delivery in Australia is funding rather than delivery capability.

Around 55,000 social and affordable homes are planned for delivery between 2025 and 2029 through Commonwealth and state initiatives (Pawson and Martin 2026), and then the current settings run out. If the Commonwealth does nothing at that point, the share falls again and the delivery capability built over the past five years dissipates: the development teams, the lender relationships, the standing consortia, the builder pipelines. Capability takes years to build and about eighteen months to lose.

Australia has done this before. It has built delivery capacity, run it for a few years, switched it off, and rebuilt it from a lower base a decade later at greater cost. The 2027–28 Budget is the point at which the Parliament decides whether to do it again.

ACH proposes that the Budget commit the Commonwealth to a permanent national investment of \$2.5 billion a year in real terms for 20 years from 2029–30, complemented by state and territory matching contributions. This funding should be included in the forward estimates, with the first funding decisions made during 2027–28. That investment should be able to be deployed as capital grants, availability payments or concessional finance, according to what each project, cohort and location needs, with capital grants a dependable part of the mix. Building on and improving the existing HAFF funding architecture would be faster and more efficient than establishing a new mechanism..

Australia needs a funded pipeline

The Commonwealth already knows how to invest in nationally significant systems over long horizons. It maintains a rolling ten-year Infrastructure Investment Program and a ten-year Defence Integrated Investment Program. Both distinguish between the strategy, which sets direction, and the funded pipeline, which names projects, sequences them and is refreshed as costs and conditions change. Both give industry the visibility it needs to hire, invest and hold capability between projects.

Housing has strategies and plans but it does not have a funded pipeline (Lawson et al. 2018). Every builder, financier, developer and provider in this system is being asked to invest in capability against a demand signal that expires in 2029. They respond sensibly, by not investing. The stop-start premium that results is paid by the Commonwealth in higher costs per home, and by households in homes that are never built.

Demand-side measures don't add new homes

Successive governments have responded to affordability pressure primarily through demand-side measures aimed at home ownership. These measures increase purchasing power without adding a single affordable home, which in a supply-constrained market is capitalised into price (OECD 2026).

Australia has an established, well-funded, permanent architecture for supporting demand, and no permanent architecture at all for supplying non-market homes. That asymmetry is the mechanism by which housing outcomes in this country are increasingly determined by inherited wealth rather than by need (Morris 2023; Parliamentary Library 2025).

02 Who is bearing the shortage?

There are more than 190,000 households currently on the social housing waitlist. These are households already under pressure and housing stress compounds whatever disadvantage they were already carrying:

- **Low-income renters.** Around two in five low-income renters are in rental stress despite receiving Commonwealth Rent Assistance (Productivity Commission 2026). For most this is not a temporary squeeze but a sustained condition, forcing trade-offs between rent and food, medication and school costs, and leaving households one rent increase away from eviction.
- **Older women.** Older women are experiencing homelessness at increasing levels across Australia (ABS 2021). This is the compound result of lower lifetime earnings, unpaid care, and less superannuation, meeting a rental market that has moved beyond the age pension. Many reach retirement without secure housing and with no realistic capacity to earn their way out of it.
- **First Nations households.** First Nations Australians experience substantially higher rates of overcrowding and homelessness, connected to dispossession, systemic inequality and chronic underinvestment in culturally appropriate housing (ABS 2021; AIHW 2026a). Overcrowding has direct consequences for health, schooling and employment, which is how housing disadvantage transmits between generations.
- **People with disability.** Accessible, affordable and appropriate housing remains scarce. Shortages of accessible dwellings, waits for specialist accommodation and discrimination in the private rental market reduce independence and push people toward institutional and crisis responses that cost the Commonwealth far more than a home would.
- **Regional and remote communities.** Affordability pressure is no longer a capital city phenomenon. Regional rents have risen sharply against lower local incomes in thinner markets with fewer alternatives, displacing households from the jobs, schools and support networks that anchor them (Anglicare Australia 2026). Regional and remote delivery is also where the current funding toolbox performs poorly.
- **Women and children leaving family violence.** The availability of a safe, affordable, long-term home is frequently the determining factor in whether a woman can leave and stay gone. Crisis accommodation without an exit into permanent housing returns people to the situation they fled.

WHO THIS IS ACTUALLY ABOUT

Social housing is not a residual service for a marginal population. It is the housing system's answer for older women, for people with disability, for First Nations families, for children whose safety depends on their mother having somewhere to go, and increasingly for working households where no market rental is affordable on a local wage.

03 Give the system a clear destination

The National Housing Supply and Affordability Council has called for social and affordable housing to return to 6% of total housing stock over the medium term, and to reach as high as 10% over the long term (NHSAC 2026). ACH endorses both targets and asks the Committee to recommend that the Commonwealth adopt them.

The Council asked for a return to 6%. That is roughly where Australia was in the 1990s, so the target restores a position rather than reaching for a new one. Nor would it put us anywhere remarkable internationally. Social housing averages around 7% of stock across the OECD and 8% across the European Union. Austria, Denmark and the Netherlands are above 20%, and Finland, France, Ireland and the United Kingdom sit between 10 and 19%. Australia is in the OECD’s bottom band, alongside countries with far less rental affordability pressure than ours (OECD 2024a, 2024b).

WHAT THE TARGETS MEAN IN HOMES

Reaching 6% by 2050 requires approximately 510,000 additional social and affordable homes, or around 23,000 a year from 2030. 10% is the long-term horizon rather than the 2050 task, and reaching it requires the same thing: a permanent mechanism that adds homes every year rather than in bursts.

A trajectory that reaches 6% still leaves Australia below the OECD average of 7%. It is a floor rather than a stretch target.

What the countries with fairer housing systems have in common

ACH has examined housing systems that produce more equitable outcomes across income groups and generations, including Singapore, Austria, Denmark, the Netherlands, Finland and Germany (HDB 2023; Housing Europe 2021; OECD 2021; Norris et al. 2026). The scale and design vary enormously, but the direction is the same. None of them achieved it through the market alone, and five common features recur.

FEATURE	WHAT IT MEANS, AND WHERE AUSTRALIA SITS
Scale	Systems with at least 10 to 20% of housing in non-market forms are able to moderate prices and improve access across the whole market. Below that level, outcomes are set by the private market. Australia is at roughly 4%.
Permanence	Homes retained in perpetuity, and funding retained across political cycles. This avoids the cycle of short programs followed by supply shortfalls, and allows delivery capability to accumulate rather than repeatedly rebuild.
Non-residual access	The most durable systems are not restricted to the poorest households. Including low- and moderate-income working households supports social mix, reduces stigma and sustains political support over decades. Australia’s system has become steadily more residual.

FEATURE	WHAT IT MEANS, AND WHERE AUSTRALIA SITS
Viable long-term renting	Where secure, affordable renting is a genuine long-term option, households are not forced into early ownership, unsustainable debt or dependence on parental wealth.
Policy consistency	Long-term investment pipelines allow workforce development, repeatable delivery and lower unit costs. Consistency is cheaper, not just fairer.

Australia can build the homes

Australia completes upwards of 170,000 dwellings a year. Twenty-three thousand additional social and affordable homes a year is a demanding task, particularly in regional and remote Australia, but it is not a physical impossibility for this country's construction industry. Other submitters will rightly point to planning delays, infrastructure bottlenecks, workforce shortages and construction costs. Those constraints are real, they affect every tenure, and they need to be fixed.

But they are not the reason Australia has 4.1% social housing instead of 6% and fixing them will not produce affordable homes on their own. Development decisions are driven by feasibility and return, so additional market supply is priced where the return is, which is not where the need is. More supply at any price point disproportionately benefits higher-income households.

What is required is intentional supply: homes built to a price point the market alone will not serve, and held there.

Building the homes is within Australia's capacity. Funding them and holding them permanently, is the key decision this Committee can influence.

04 One national task and shared delivery

Setting public housing against community housing, or social housing against affordable housing are false choices that distract from the task of building a fair housing system that works for every Australian.

The national task is in the order of 510,000 additional homes by 2050, against a waitlist that keeps growing and a stock that keeps ageing. The scale of that task leaves no part of the system surplus to requirements.

Public and community housing both have a role

Public housing remains around two thirds of Australia's social housing stock (AIHW 2026a). There is no plausible path to 6% that does not involve state housing authorities building, acquiring and renewing at scale, and the Social Housing Accelerator showed they can do it quickly when given capital. Public housing also carries functions the community housing sector cannot substitute for: it holds the deepest-subsidy, highest-complexity tenancies in the country at volume, much of it on stock with no debt capacity and no prospect of any. That is a public balance sheet task, and it should be funded as one.

As pointed out in Section 1, the decline in public housing was a funding decision, not a verdict on the model. ACH therefore asks the Committee to recommend Commonwealth support for public housing capital renewal and growth alongside community housing growth.

Each part of the system doing what it does best

Homes delivered per dollar depends on giving each role to whoever is best placed to carry it, and on not asking any part of the system to do work it is badly structured for.

PARTNER	WHAT THEY ARE BEST PLACED TO DO
Commonwealth	National ambition, target and strategy; permanent capital; funding-product authorities and standards; national reporting and system stewardship.
States and territories	Public housing delivery, renewal and deep-subsidy tenancies at volume; land, planning, enabling infrastructure and the health, disability and family violence services that determine whether a tenancy succeeds; regional and specialist commissioning.
Local government	Planning and approvals, infrastructure coordination, public land, transparent fee concessions and community confidence.
Community housing providers	Project development and delivery; bringing land, equity and borrowing capacity to each transaction; long-term ownership and asset stewardship; tenancy management and tenant outcomes; partnerships with finance and delivery partners.
First Nations-controlled organisations	Culturally safe housing designed, delivered and governed by First Nations communities, including in remote Australia where no other delivery route works.
Housing Australia and private partners	National program administration and finance; debt and patient capital on terms appropriate to social purpose; delivery capability that improves value while protecting enduring public benefit.

HOW TO DECIDE WHO BUILDS WHAT

Funding should follow the task. The question for any project is which party can deliver and hold that home, in that place, for that household, at the lowest whole-of-government cost over the life of the asset. Sometimes that is a state housing authority. Sometimes it is a community housing provider. In remote Australia it should usually be a First Nations-controlled organisation.

A program that pre-allocates fixed shares between delivery routes, in either direction, will produce fewer homes than one that allocates by capability.

Social and affordable housing are one complementary system

The second false choice is between social and affordable housing- they are not rivals for the same dollar. The concern underlying it is that scarce subsidy will drift toward households nearer the top of the

eligibility range, leaving the deepest need unmet. That is a genuine risk and should be managed through strong and consistent definitions, program design and published reporting.

It is not a reason to treat the two as opposed, instead they should be seen as interrelated parts of one system. The same household moves between them across a life: a person leaving homelessness into deeply subsidised social housing, and the same person three years later in work and better served by an affordable tenancy that costs the Commonwealth less. Affordable housing is also what houses the aged care worker, the early childhood educator and the hospital cleaner who cannot afford a market rental within reach of the job, and whose absence is now a constraint on regional health, education and care services.

Finally, most durable non-market housing systems are not strictly residual (OECD 2021). Including low- and moderate-income working households keeps the social mix, holds down stigma, and maintains the political constituency that keeps funding in place across changes of government. Australia's system has become steadily more residual, and therefore steadily easier to cut.

AFFORDABLE MUST MEAN AFFORDABLE

The real problem with affordable housing in Australia is the definition, and this is something the Committee could fix.

Affordable housing is too often defined as a fixed percentage discount to market rent, commonly 20 to 25%. In a market where rents have risen faster than incomes for two decades, a discount to an unaffordable rent is still an unaffordable rent. It is entirely possible under current definitions for a household to occupy a home officially designated affordable while paying more than 30% of its income in rent, which is to say while in housing stress. The definition lets public subsidy be spent without producing the outcome it was appropriated for.

WHAT A NATIONAL AFFORDABILITY FRAMEWORK SHOULD DO

- Define affordable housing by reference to household income rather than to market rent, so that rents are set at a level that prevents housing stress for the households the housing is intended to serve.
- State clearly who affordable housing is for, with consistent national income bands developed with governments, providers and tenants and tested against household outcomes, local market conditions and operational sustainability.
- Retain appropriate jurisdictional social-rent settings, and report the social and affordable mix annually rather than hard-coding a single permanent proportion. The right mix depends on need, subsidy settings and program scale, and will change over twenty years.

05 Community Housing Capacity

A common concern about programs of this size is delivery capacity: whether the sector can build, own and manage homes at scale. The community housing industry has grown substantially over the last 10 years, and the evidence below sets out where its capacity now sits.

What the community housing industry actually is

THE COMMUNITY HOUSING INDUSTRY AT 30 JUNE 2024

Organisations	329 community housing organisations operating nationally
Homes managed	148,800 homes, of which 135,500 are managed by Tier 1 and Tier 2 providers
Homes owned	More than 43,000 homes owned outright by providers
Total assets	\$23.5 billion
Equity	\$16.6 billion
Liabilities	\$7.0 billion
Annual revenue	\$3.1 billion

Source: ACH 2026.

The equity line is critical – there is \$16.6 billion of accumulated equity sitting on the balance sheets of Australia’s registered community housing providers, and regulation locks every dollar of it to housing purpose. It cannot go to shareholders and it cannot be moved to another business line. That is capital the Commonwealth does not have to appropriate, already working on the problem the Commonwealth is trying to solve.

There is no comparable pool of purpose-locked housing capital anywhere else in the Australian economy. It exists because governments and providers built it, deal by deal, over twenty-five years. A well-structured permanent program puts it to work. Without one, a good deal of it sits idle.

The role of community housing providers

Community housing providers are not just builders or developers. We work closely with many excellent partners across the property sector, and when a CHP delivers a project, it procures from the same residential construction industry as everyone else, and it wants that industry to be competitive, well-supplied and capable of repeatable delivery.

Aggregated, predictable demand from a permanent program is precisely what would allow builders to invest in modern methods of construction and hold capability between projects. There is no real contest here between community housing and the building industry. We both want a pipeline that neither of us has.

WHERE THE OBLIGATION SITS

A builder's obligation ends at practical completion – which is where a community housing provider's obligation begins.

The Commonwealth is buying a long-term commitment that a particular home will remain affordable, be maintained, be re-let to an eligible household, and be held by an organisation that is legally prohibited from selling it into the market for shareholder profit when values rise.

What the sector brings, that others cannot:

- **Regulation with teeth.** Registered providers operate under the National Regulatory System for Community Housing and equivalent state schemes, with regulated standards for governance, financial viability, asset management, and tenant and housing services.
- **Mission lock.** Surpluses are recycled into more housing rather than distributed. Over time this compounds: today's subsidy becomes tomorrow's equity, which becomes the following decade's borrowing capacity. Each home funded is both an immediate answer to need and a permanent addition to an intergenerational asset base.
- **Balance sheet and borrowing capacity.** Providers bring land, equity, retained earnings, development partnerships and access to bank and bond finance to each transaction, reducing the public subsidy required per home.
- **Place and specialisation.** The industry includes large national providers, regional providers embedded in single communities, and specialist organisations working with women and children leaving violence, people with disability, older women, young people leaving care and people exiting homelessness. That diversity is not inefficiency but it is how the sector meaningfully reaches and supports the groups in section 2, which a single national delivery model would miss.
- **First Nations community control.** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled housing organisations hold knowledge, relationships and accountability that cannot be substituted by a mainstream provider or a builder. Their role should be secured by a dedicated funding pathway rather than left to compete for general allocations.

Program design should recognise these contributions and create workable pathways for providers of different sizes, including consortia and place-based partnerships, so that scale is achieved without hollowing out the regional and specialist organisations that make the system work where it is hardest.

06 What a permanent program can achieve: system stabilisation

Residential construction in Australia is violently cyclical. Capacity is hired in booms and shed in downturns, and the cost of that churn is paid in every subsequent cycle through skills shortages, lost productivity and price escalation. Non-market housing is the one segment of the system whose demand is not set by market sentiment. A permanent, funded pipeline can therefore act counter-

cyclically: sustaining orders and retaining workforce through downturns, and being sequenced against market capacity in peaks rather than competing indiscriminately for the same labour and materials.

This gives the residential construction industry a dependable floor of demand, and it aggregates the repeatable order book that modern methods of construction need, which no single provider and no single state can generate alone. Australia gets none of this at present, because its non-market pipeline is as episodic as the market.

Scaling modern methods of construction

The Committee's fifth term of reference asks about modern methods of construction. MMC factories in this country have opened, run below capacity and closed, not because the product failed but because no one could offer them a dependable multi-year order book.

A permanent national pipeline could be the missing ingredient. It can aggregate demand across providers and locations, standardise design and procurement, align approvals where practical, and deliberately address the things that actually determine whether MMC works in Australia: factory-to-site transport and logistics, local infrastructure, climate and place.

07 The tenant case for community housing

The purpose of investing in social and affordable housing is to provide people with secure, affordable and well-maintained homes – and the stability from which they can improve their health, participate in work or education, care for family and remain connected to community.

Australia needs strong public housing, community housing and First Nations-controlled housing. The case for expanding community housing does not depend on diminishing the role of public housing. It rests on the additional capacity, partnerships and long-term stewardship that community housing providers can bring to a much larger and more diverse housing system. Under the permanent program ACH proposes, around 23,000 additional homes a year would be funded through Commonwealth investment matched by state and territory effort, alongside contributions from the planning system and from providers themselves. Delivery would sit with state housing authorities, community housing providers and First Nations-controlled organisations.

CHPs and positive tenant outcomes

The Commonwealth's national data provides strong evidence that community housing can deliver positive outcomes for tenants.

NATIONAL SOCIAL HOUSING SURVEY 2025

COMMUNITY HOUSING

Satisfied or very satisfied with the overall service provided by their housing provider	72.6%
Living in a dwelling of an acceptable standard	83.0%

Source: AIHW 2026b.

These results have been broadly consistent across survey waves. They should give governments confidence that regulated, not-for-profit community housing providers can be trusted with a significant role in delivering and managing additional social and affordable housing.

Community housing providers are also serving people experiencing substantial housing need. In 2024-25, 79.5% of new community housing allocations went to households classified as being in greatest need (Productivity Commission 2026). At the same time, providers deliver affordable rental housing for low- and moderate-income households who may not qualify for social housing but cannot find a suitable home in the private market.

This breadth is an important strength. It enables community housing providers to deliver social and affordable homes within mixed communities while tailoring housing and services to different needs.

Housing quality matters

AIHW data consistently identifies dwelling condition as a core indicator of tenant satisfaction (AIHW 2026b), and condition depends on the age of the stock and the funding available for maintenance and renewal. Programs should therefore fund the whole life of a home rather than its construction alone, with clear obligations for maintenance, reinvestment and long-term stewardship.

What the numbers cannot tell the Committee

Satisfaction rates and dwelling standards are useful because they are national, independent and comparable over time. But they cannot fully describe what changes in a person's life when they have a secure and affordable home.

The Committee will hear considerable evidence expressed in dwelling numbers, percentages and funding totals. ACH also asks it to hear directly from tenants.

Measure what the investment is intended to achieve

National housing programs are generally assessed through units committed, units completed and expenditure per dwelling. These measures are important, but they do not tell governments whether the homes are affordable, appropriate and sustainable for the people who live in them.

A permanent social and affordable housing program should measure and publish tenant outcomes and social impact measures alongside supply outcomes.

ACH and CHIA NSW are developing a sector social impact framework to strengthen the measurement of these outcomes, and ACH would welcome the opportunity to brief the Committee on this work.

Governance

The Committee's eighth term of reference asks about governance and administrative arrangements. ACH proposes the following division, which uses institutions that already exist:

- **Housing Ministers** agree the national ambition and strategy, the funded ten-year investment pipeline, jurisdictional schedules and the consequences for unmet commitments.

- **The Commonwealth housing portfolio and Treasury** own policy, appropriations, intergovernmental agreements and system-level public reporting.
- **Housing Australia** administers Commonwealth project funding and finance and maintains standard program documents and transparent pipeline information.
- **First Nations governance** is designed and led with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing organisations, not established for them.
- **Providers, tenants, states, local government, finance and delivery partners** test program settings before launch and before each major pipeline refresh. Several of the delivery constraints in current programs would have been identified at no cost by asking the people who have to execute the transaction.
- **Independent assurance** assesses additionality, matched effort, value for money, delivery against the national pathway and tenant outcomes, and reports publicly.

08 An offer to the Committee

ACH offers the following practical assistance to the Committee:

- Tenant witnesses for public hearings. ACH would work with the secretariat on selection and support, and would not filter for favourable testimony.
- Site visits to community housing developments and to meet with the tenants that live in them, including regional and remote sites where delivery is hardest and least visible from Canberra.
- Data and modelling, including the National Community Housing Industry Profile, our development and new supply survey, CFO benchmarking, and the underlying assumptions in the 6% trajectory, provided in full for the Committee to test.
- Our fully costed 2027–28 Budget proposal for the permanent national program, provided to the Committee as soon as it is finalised.

Thirty years of Australian housing policy has established one thing reliably: programs end and the need keeps growing.

The Committee has the opportunity to recommend a solution to this – a permanent mechanism, attached to a published target, delivering homes held by organisations whose only purpose is to house people, and measured by what happens to those people afterwards.

The CHP delivery vehicle is already built, already regulated and already carrying \$16.6 billion of its own equity toward the problem. What it needs is a road that does not stop in 2029.

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