



20 October 2023

National Housing and Homelessness Plan
Department of Social Services
GPO Box 9820
Canberra, ACT 2601

By email to: Housingandhomelessnessplan@dss.gov.au

Re: Housing and Homelessness Discussion paper

Dear Department of Social Services

The Tasmanian Chapter of the Australian Institute of Architects (the Institute) would like to thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the Issues Paper on the National Housing and Homelessness plan. To develop our response to the survey questions provided, the Institute has worked with our policy and advocacy team and consulted our membership for their perspectives and insights. This is separate but complementary to a national submission made by the Institute and reflects Tasmanian-specific issues and recommendations.

Feedback to survey questions provided

How can governments and community service providers reduce homelessness and/or support people who may be at risk of becoming homeless in Australia?

Tasmania is experiencing a housing crisis. Factors that impact this include the limited availability of affordable rental properties, limited housing stock, numerous social housing developments currently in poor condition, an unmanageable increase in new short-stay accommodation (Airbnb for example), and limited investment in medium-density building housing options in cities such as Hobart and Launceston.

The Institute would like to advocate for an increase in housing stock to reduce the risk of homelessness. The following approaches could be adopted to achieve this:

- Encourage more in-fill development in urban areas and limit new building works on the city edge and greenfield sites. This would locate housing closer to amenities, reduce reliance on car-based transport – a major factor contributing to the cost of living – and work towards minimising urban sprawl.
- Encourage adaptive reuse of existing buildings to facilitate more housing stock and explore opportunities in unused/underused 1st-floor tenancies above ground-floor retail across city areas.

- Encourage small scale dwellings in the city that are consistent with the settlement pattern of surrounding residential developments and can occupy smaller lot sizes.
- Minimise or prevent new Airbnb listings in urban areas in Hobart and Launceston. Based on the new number of Airbnb listings each year across Hobart, it is difficult to imagine a scenario where the introduction of new housing stock can keep up with properties listed as short-term accommodation.
- Make a provision for percentages of new development to include 20% social and 10% affordable dwellings. New housing developments can also explore mixed-use options, to provide further amenity to their local context.

Short-term goals can include taking action on the way housing is currently managed in the city. Medium-term goals can involve encouraging the development of housing stock and adaptive reuse. Long-term goals should be consistent with the aims and targets set out within the 30-Year Greater Hobart Plan, which stipulates 30,000 new dwellings and a 70 / 30 ratio of in-fill development versus greenfield development.¹

There are some notable new building projects in Hobart that provide services to homeless people, such as the New Bethlehem House in Hobart by Tim Penny Architecture.² With new housing projects like these, it is critical that they are well-located in urban areas and located, or integrated with, services that can assist with rehabilitation, job hunting, and physical and mental well-being. An example of a successful model for integrating housing and homelessness services is Auckland City Mission – Te Tūpui Atawhai, in Auckland, New Zealand by architectural practice Stevens and Lawson.³

However, these services and projects can only achieve long-term targets of finding appropriate housing, if there is affordable social housing stock for people to transition out from homelessness services into. Across Australia there are extensive waiting lists for people to access social housing: Australia-wide there are 175,000 on the waiting list, and in Tasmania, there are 4,600 people on the waiting list.⁴

How can governments, across all levels, best work with communities to support better housing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people?

It is paramount that any project that seeks to achieve culturally appropriate outcomes for First Nations peoples is conducted through extensive consultation and deep listening. Built outcomes also need to understand, respect and engage with Country.

How can all levels of governments, along with housing organisations, institutional investors, not-for-profits, and private industry, improve access to social housing, which includes public housing and community housing?

Similar to the Institute's response to Question 1, access to social housing needs to be facilitated by an uptake in more housing development, specifically in areas that are well-located next to services and facilities. The 'right locations' need to consider close access to place of work, amenities, shops, transport, and green and recreational spaces. Current social housing stock also

¹ https://www.greaterhobart.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0009/345717/30-Year_Greater_Hobart_Plan.PDF

² <https://www.bethlehemhouse.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Bethlehem-House-2021-2022-Annual-Report.pdf>

³ <https://www.stevenslawson.co.nz/projects/homeground/>

⁴ <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-08-08/public-housing-wait-list-is-soul-destroying/102698048>; <https://taslabor.org.au/news/media-releases/another-tasmanian-set-to-join-growing-housing-waitlist/>

needs to be re-evaluated to determine if it is fit for purpose, retrofitted or redeveloped so that it is habitable, and meets the needs of occupants.

Locating social housing away from the city centre can be evidenced in suburbs such as Bridgewater, Gagebrook and Clarendon Vale. Distances between social housing and the city centre have various disadvantages for occupants of social housing, which relate to the time and financial investment it takes to commute from home to work, shops, amenities, and health facilities, as well as feeling connected to Hobart as a city. Hobart's public transport service is in need of an overhaul and has recently had services reduced.⁵ This results in the majority of residents requiring to commute by car, which also has a substantial impact on a household's cost of living. Current suburbs with social housing developments in Hobart could be substantially improved through the integration of a robust transport network.

What should governments, private industries, the not-for-profit and community sectors focus on to help improve access to housing and housing affordability in the private market?

Many Tasmanians struggle to enter the private housing market, through either securing a rental or purchasing their first home. This issue stems from rising property prices⁶, limited housing stock in the city, interstate migration, an exponential increase in short-stay accommodation in urban areas, and the presence of unoccupied dwellings in urban areas.

Aside from introducing new housing stock, local and state governments could take further action to address these issues, which can include placing restrictions on new short-stay accommodation in urban areas, further incentives for people to rent or introduce unoccupied dwellings into the property market.

How could governments work better with industry, community services and other organisations to improve housing outcomes for all Australians?

The Institute of Architects would like to strengthen our relationship across all levels of government – local, state, and federal. As our membership base includes professionals with expertise in housing and built environment, we are in a position to offer targeted advice for new developments in relation to:

- Achieving high-quality design outcomes
- The impact of building on the surrounding context – how architecture impacts the social and natural environment of a city
- Suggest a range of architectural precedents as material to consider for housing developments.

How can governments, the private and community sectors, help to improve sustainable housing and better prepare housing for the effects of climate change?

Sustainable building is a key issue that needs to be addressed across all aspects of the built environment. Part of housing resilience is not just tied to the location of housing – such as in a flood zone or a bushfire-prone area – but also to how housing can operate in a sustainable way, through the strategic use of materials and passive design principles. Governments can develop

⁵ <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-08-22/metro-public-bus-service-crippled-by-driver-shortage/102760098>

⁶ <https://www.domain.com.au/news/house-prices-in-the-remotest-and-coldest-parts-of-tasmania-are-soaring-is-it-about-cheap-prices-or-lifestyle-1230640/>

policies that work with residents to retrofit or re-develop existing housing to better respond to natural disasters and to operate more sustainably, such as incentivises for installing solar panels, fully electrifying houses, the provision of greenery in residential lots (to create further positive effects for a wider suburb) and encouraging smaller building footprints for new builds.

Is there anything else you would like to tell us?

“Everyone benefits from good architecture” is the core vision of the Institute of Architects. We believe that there is immense value in promoting high-quality design outcomes across housing and the built environment – an approach that has broad-scale effects that benefit individuals, communities, and the cities we live in.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on this important document. Please contact us if you would like to discuss any of the points raised further, as we are very happy to continue the conversation.

Kind regards,



Jennifer Nichols

Executive Director, Tasmanian Chapter
Australian Institute of Architects

The Australian Institute of Architects (Institute) is the peak body for the architectural profession in Australia. It is an independent, national member organisation with over 13,000 members across Australia and overseas. The Institute exists to advance the interests of members, their professional standards and contemporary practice, and expand and advocate the value of architects and architecture to the sustainable growth of our communities, economy and culture. The Institute actively works to maintain and improve the quality of our built environment by promoting better, responsible and environmental design. To learn more about the Institute, log on to www.architecture.com.au.