

Housing Affordability and Supply, Housing Stress and Homelessness - A Productivity and Participation Issue

Submission to the House Of Representatives Standing Committee for Taxation and
Revenue Inquiry into Housing Affordability and Supply

by [REDACTED]
Housing and Homelessness Advocate

It is at the invitation of the Inquiry Chair, Mr Jason Falinski, MP, that I'm writing this submission as someone whose life has been dramatically impacted by the lack of appropriate and affordable housing. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] was homeless from age 14-22 and the impact on my life from an economic, productivity and participation standpoint has been catastrophic.

I am the human side of the Housing Affordability and Supply issue. I say what I'm about to say because I have lived it - for decades. I'm asking you to examine my life and the expenditure by the Government from an investment and cost/benefit analysis perspective. I'm asking you to view me as a commodity. When you do, you will see the lack of adequate and affordable long-term housing I experienced has completely decimated the chances of gaining even a mildly decent ROI until recent years. You will see the economic inefficiency that has marked my life to date, in spite of how hard I've tried to change my circumstances.

By sharing my story, I hope the lack of productivity and participation as well as the economic inefficiency evidenced throughout my life could be prevented for millions of others. Through providing people with access to appropriate and affordable long-term housing, we will move them out of housing stress and into greater economic productivity and social participation. When you consider the number of people currently living in housing stress, moving them into greater productivity and participation will only be of benefit to all of us as a nation.

My aim in this submission is to dissect my life as much as is needed and interweave current statistics, potential policy reforms and economic data in order to create a compelling argument for housing reform in Australia. The economics, policy and data will be explained in greater detail by countless others throughout this Inquiry, however, I want to give a greater understanding of the impact of lack of housing affordability, housing stress and homelessness in direct reference to someone's life. I want to show you the human side of the problems that arise because of the housing system as it currently operates in Australia. I also want to highlight how this is not just counter-productive to the mandates of many social welfare programs currently provided in Australia, it is nonsensical from an economic and investment perspective.

This argument for change should be compelling in and of itself when considered alongside the drop in immediate and longer-term productivity due to the impact of the Covid-19 global pandemic and the aging population the Federal Treasury has predicted in the [Intergenerational Report 2021¹](#) that was released in June 2021. Measures that move people out of housing stress and into greater productivity and participation will only serve to offset some of that predicted immediate and longer-term loss.

¹ <https://treasury.gov.au/publication/2021-intergenerational-report>

This submission will cover the following points:

1. **My story**
2. **The supply of appropriate and affordable long-term housing is a productivity and participation issue**
3. **The potential cost savings to Government and to the Australian Economy**
4. **Where to from here?**
5. **Summary**

Whilst what can be called either public or social housing is a considerable part of the housing supply issue that needs to be addressed, I have chosen to not refer to them as such. I will be referring to them under the banner of affordable housing because of the undesirable stigma that has been attached to them. The affordable housing concept I refer to is 'salt and pepper' style housing with both types intermixed. 'Affordable' is a name that covers both types of housing because they need to be affordable for their tenants - there are just varying levels of affordability. Or, in terms of what is needed to house people in them, there are varying levels of subsidy that are required. I will refer to this in further detail in point 4 of this submission.

Through housing affordability reform, we can create greater productivity, participation and economic efficiency within our economy; greater wellbeing and social cohesion within our society, and save (and even make through greater ROI) all levels of Government billions of dollars in the process.

1. My story

Before I share my story, I want to state the following - what has happened to me does not define who I am as a person. I have never nor will I ever let it do so.

I first became homeless at age 14. Before that, I lived in a family environment that was abusive and tumultuous. As a child, this caused considerable trauma. Added to that trauma was the fact that I was molested for the first time at age 4 by a male known to my parents. I was then molested for the second time at age 8, this time by a different male who was also known to my parents.

The trauma caused was horrific and led me to first try taking my life at age 7. I attempted suicide many, many more times after that. I then became homeless at age of 14 and that continued until I was 22. I mostly couch surfed during that time, sleeping at a different person's place almost every night. The toll this took on my physical and mental health was unexplainable. I lived in a constant state of extreme stress. I was hypervigilant 24/7. This was both traumatic and exhausting.

At 22, I moved into a house with a lady, 4 of her children and 4 other boarders. It was loud and endlessly busy but I really enjoyed being there. About 60% of my income was spent on rent and food but I had a bed; a bedroom; and a wardrobe with clothes in it. We squabbled over who was watching what on TV of an evening, who took too long in the bathroom and who didn't change the toilet roll. It was a home and it was amazing being there.

From this point, I was able to start changing the course of my life. For the next few years, I was all over the place as I tried to process what I had gone on earlier in my life. After a time, I was able to get a job as a waitress however because of the scale of trauma, I couldn't really progress much further from that in terms of education and career options at that point in time.

This meant I was on a low wage and beholden to mostly casualised and seasonal workflow, I typically paid a large amount of my wages on rent, which then left me limited financially in terms of what I could do, what I could buy etc. I did attempt to do a few HSC subjects at one point, but it was hard juggling that with shift work.

I made do. When I think about that time of my life now, it seemed so easy but that was only because there was such a stark contrast between that and what I had experienced previously. I had a roof over my head, clothes on my back, I ate at work most days. While I never had any cash at the end of the week, I thought I was doing okay. Being homeless was a pretty low bar to measure something off and I now know I was still in housing stress.

In 2003, I moved to one of the peak hospitality/tourist areas in one of our capital cities for greater work options, and it is here that I have made my home. I didn't tell anyone I met where I had come from for a very long time but I found a community that accepted me as who I was. I have since been surrounded by incredible role models. As I have gotten to know them and their families, I have watched and learned. I have modeled who I am as a person based on the examples they have set for me.

In my mid 30's, I got an office job with a proper salary and met the father of my children. Unfortunately, because again, there was a pretty low bar already set in terms of how I was used to being treated, my choice of marriage partner wasn't ideal. In [REDACTED] due to domestic violence, my children and I were left at risk of homelessness. I almost had to leave this beautiful community which has become such a huge part of my life and who I am. My children have grown up here, too. I had to fight the biggest fight of my life to stay here amongst this community who are my backbone/support system.

Further, because I was left with nothing at the end of my marriage, and because I don't have the strong fallback position of an education and career, I'm now staring down the barrel of becoming one of the 'Over 55' women going into their retirement with nothing, which means I could be at risk of homelessness yet again.

At the [REDACTED] my children and I moved into our current home. My housing, an apartment privately rented, has a subsidy attached to it and it's stable. My children and I are so happy! We're safe.

Without housing stress, my thinking is the clearest it's ever been. My body isn't carrying extreme tension. I'm not constantly in fight/flight mode nor am I as hypervigilant as I used to be. Then there is my intelligence. This submission is the best example I can give you of how I'm able to use that now that I'm not in housing stress. I've been really surprised by what I'm actually capable of.

As I look back over my life with this newfound clarity and critical thinking, I do see how different things could have been. What went on in my childhood home and the sexual violence I experienced were the things that derailed my life's trajectory. The lack of appropriate and affordable long-term housing is what has prevented me from getting it back on track until recently.

2. The supply of appropriate and affordable long-term housing is a productivity and participation issue

Before I begin this point, I want to clearly state that I'm choosing to focus on this issue as being a productivity and participation issue because this Inquiry is being conducted by an economic committee. However, it needs to be said that housing, or rather 'homes', are this country's most important social infrastructure. They are the conduit for people being able to go and work. They are the conduit for personal, family and social development.

It is from our homes that all of us are able to go and do whatever it is we do that contributes to our country being such a great place to live. Whether someone is a CEO or a shop assistant, their home is the platform from which they are able to complete the work that they do. Without it, they simply would not be able to do all they do. When someone's housing is not affordable; when it is not appropriate; when it is not long term (read secure and stable), then the platform they or conduit that is needed for them to do what they do will never be adequate enough for them to do it to their full potential. This is when housing stress becomes an issue.

The simple fact of the matter is that when you are in any type of housing stress, you are in fight or flight mode physically and mentally. Examples of housing stress include but are not limited to:

- a. an inability to keep up with rent or mortgage payments
- b. having to pay well over 30% of their income on rent or mortgage repayments
- c. working multiple jobs just to afford to pay rent or a mortgage
- d. in insecure, short-term or overcrowded housing
- e. in an unsafe or abusive environment
- f. at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

The greatest impact being in fight/or flight mode has on someone is their productivity and participation. If you are constantly worried about how you are going to keep a roof over your head or where you are going to be living in two weeks or two months, you simply cannot be productive or participate within our society properly. It takes every ounce of energy you have to just get through the day.

I can give no better example of this than when the Covid-19 global pandemic first hit us here In Australia and we went into the first lockdown. There was such worry about what would happen to our economy because everything was shut down. What would happen to people's jobs? Were we going to get infected by the virus? If we did, how sick could we get?

Almost all of us went over our finances because we were worried that, if the worst was to happen and the economy completely bottomed out and jobs were lost en masse, would we be okay? We were all scared we would get sick from the virus. We all sanitised our hands, houses - everything, almost obsessively. We hoarded ridiculous amounts of toilet paper, baby wipes and paper towels, pasta and rice. I don't think people got much sleep nor were they very productive during that time. As our elected leaders, your reaction was probably "Oh my goodness, I have to try and lead my community and this country through this! How on earth..?!"

In one way or another, we collectively lost our minds because we were in fight or flight mode. Can I now ask you to take yourself back to that moment? Do you remember how tense your body felt? Do you remember how your mind was running at a million miles an hour all day? Do you remember how getting even the most basic things done at work and at home seemed so

much harder? In fact, a lot of things probably didn't get done yet you were absolutely exhausted at the end of each day?

Can I ask you a question?

Could you be as productive or participate in your work or home life if you felt that way all day, every day?

Therein lies the problem we need to resolve. The supply of appropriate and affordable long-term housing is ultimately a productivity and participation issue. It is an economic issue, not just a societal or community issue.

If we were to look at Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (see chart below²), we can clearly see that the bottom two needs, which are physiological and safety needs, are both found through the supply of appropriate and affordable long-term housing. I understand that this is a psychological framework and has very little to do with taxation and revenue policy, but simply put, unmet basic needs perpetuate the cycle of homelessness.



There has been a clear cycle:

Youth homelessness left me without an education. A lack of education left me without a career pathway. Not having a career pathway left me more vulnerable to homelessness due to domestic violence, specifically financial abuse. Financial abuse left me with nothing which leaves me at risk of becoming an "Over 55" woman going into retirement with not enough savings or superannuation.

Now I'm not in housing stress for the first time in my life, I'm seeing what it is I'm capable of. I'm reaching the top of Maslow's chart. This leads me to ask some questions:

If this is what can come out of me, the ex-street kid who didn't finish high school, what potential are we going to unlock if we move 1 million households out of housing stress? What will we be able to achieve if we move as many people as possible out of housing stress? What will we realise if we have policy measures nationally in place that minimise the chances of people experiencing housing stress in the first place?

² <https://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html>

Economist [REDACTED] has very generously spent many hours helping me better understand the economic issues of housing affordability and supply. [REDACTED] to this Inquiry, provided a comprehensive explanation into the issues of inflating demand on housing and not addressing supply appropriately. [REDACTED] Economist at Macroeconomics Advisory, whom I've also spent some time talking to as I have tried to understand more about the issues, has compiled a report called [Relinking Mainstream and Supported Housing in Australia](#)⁴. I have also met with [REDACTED] from Deloitte Access Economics to discuss the issues of homelessness and housing stress. They have provided two reports from Deloitte Access Economics, which I will reference throughout this submission

Core Logic released [data](#)⁵ in July 2021 that shows that nationally, rents have seen their highest growth in over a decade. This could then lead us into another cycle in which:

Rising rents with low wage growth means more of peoples' incomes will be eaten up by paying rent. This means they are increasingly likely to end up in housing stress. Housing stress puts them in fight/flight mode. Being in fight/flight mode means their productivity and participation levels will decrease. A decrease in productivity will impact negatively on Australia's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at a time where it is already being impacted by decreasing productivity.

Further, [REDACTED] has spoken of impact the decreasing rate of home ownership will have on the rental market⁶:

"What we've got is home ownership increasingly concentrated among those 50 and over, a significant cohort of people in their 20s and 30s who, in previous generations, would have been able to buy their own homes, but who instead aren't able to."

"They are therefore forced to rent, and for longer – in some cases for the rest of their lives. They have sufficient incomes to be able to rent in the private sector, but in so doing, they push up rents, making life even more difficult for the cohort of Australians who, both in previous generations and in this one, have never had any realistic aspirations to home ownership."

As home ownership decreases and more people end up living in rental properties, the forces of supply and demand come into play. The demand on rental properties will drive rents up, which then leaves us at risk of more people ending up in housing stress which will then affect GDP.

The Federal Government Productivity Commission, in their [2019 report](#) 'Vulnerable Private Renters - Evidence and Options'⁷ research paper stated:

'The trend towards private renting in the past two decades (1994-95 to 2017-18) has been led by households in the low and middle income quintiles (figure 2.4). An accompanying decrease in owner-occupation explained most of the change, but the decline of public housing relative to population growth was the more significant contributor for households in the bottom quintile.'

³ https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House/Tax_and_Revenue/Housingaffordability/Submissions

⁴ https://macroeconomics.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Relinking_Mainstream_and_Supported_Housing_in_Australia.pdf

⁵ <https://www.corelogic.com.au/news/national-rents-record-highest-annual-growth-over-decade>

⁶ <https://www.brokernews.com.au/news/breaking-news/saul-eslake-on-how-australia-is-failing-first-home-buyers-278672.aspx>

⁷ <https://www.pc.gov.au/research/completed/renters/private-renters.pdf>

With house prices growing at such a high rate since that report was completed, leading to an even larger decrease in home ownership by those in the middle - high income quintiles, this means even more people are placing demand on the rental market.

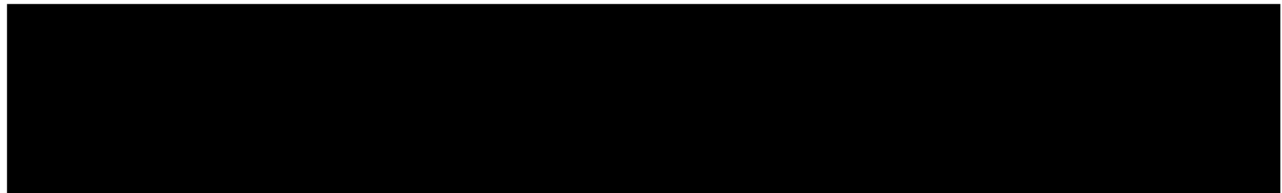
This Productivity Commission report provides all the evidence that is needed to show that letting house prices grow unabated not only doesn't fix the current affordability issues - it actually creates further issues. It will not only keep the people currently in housing stress there; it will actually put more people into housing stress, thus not only perpetuating that existing problem but multiplying it. This fact is especially pertinent when placed alongside the [Federal Treasury Intergenerational Report](#)⁸ from June of this year that has forecast a drop in productivity due to our aging population.

Treasurer Josh Frydenburg himself is [quoted](#) as saying:

*"It is a warning sign and underlines why growing the economy is so important. Only by growing the economy can we continue to guarantee the essential services Australians rely on."*⁹

It is to this point that I ask the question - how can there be true and sustained economic growth within the Australian economy if house prices continue to rise unabated; which inevitably leads to more people renting; which puts upward pressure on rents; which leads to higher rents; which then leads to more and more people ending up in housing stress; which leads to decreased productivity and participation?

There is no way that this will balance itself out unless there is intentional and targeted Government intervention. The property market is driven to maximise profits on property assets. Expecting that same market to also provide the basic need of appropriate and affordable long term dwellings that every human being needs in order for them to be productive and fully participate within society defies logic.



The lack of appropriate and affordable long-term housing completely decimated my ability to be as productive and participate within society to my maximum capability until recently. Whilst mine might be closer to being the worst case scenario than others within this issue, it does give a fairly clear picture of how housing stress can impact on someone's life.

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<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/breaking-news/intergenerational-report-tips-australia-to-be-smaller-older-as-deficits-predicted-for-40-years/news-story/5dcea90858ca660786d155f9ba35e1d0>

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<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/breaking-news/intergenerational-report-tips-australia-to-be-smaller-older-as-deficits-predicted-for-40-years/news-story/5dcea90858ca660786d155f9ba35e1d0>

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<https://www.smh.com.au/business/banking-and-finance/pretty-stretched-westpac-boss-says-housing-affordability-is-getting-worse-20210909-p58qch.html>

3. The potential cost savings to Government and to the Australian Economy

My life is a 'How Not To Do' guide for tax and revenue policy.

When I think back, I don't think it would be a stretch to say I could have had several AUD\$million (possibly \$5-10million) spent on me by the Government - both State and Federal - since I first hit the system at age 7. This would cover everything - medical care, family counselling and interventions, educational support (when I went to school, anyway), housing, Youth and Adolescent services such as refuges and support services, income support, homelessness services, domestic violence support services, Policing, courts costs, Legal Aid, DV Trauma Counselling, Commonwealth Rent Assistance and I could keep going.

Then when you consider the fact that I'm staring down the barrel of becoming one of the Over 55 women who enter retirement with not enough savings to sustain them, I can see I could cost the Government a whole lot more money. I will be entering my twilight years, my body will start falling apart and the cost of that has to come out of someone's pocket and godness knows how much the total cost will be.

Looking at the money spent on me vs. the return for that money, I can say that what has been spent on me so far has not been one of the best investments the Government has made. From a humanitarian perspective, yes it has been. It has been the basic support expected of a civil society, but looking at it from a purely financial/fiscal perspective, that money could definitely have been better invested/spent.

If I had money spent on providing me with appropriate and affordable long-term housing at 17-18, I would have been able to get my head together and deal with the trauma of my childhood and reach my full potential as per Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs sooner. Let's say if maximum AUD\$500,000 - \$1 million was spent on providing me with that, I would most likely have had the headspace, security and stability to have finished high school and completed tertiary education.

Say I had gotten that degree and at 48, I had a successful career, I would have paid more than \$500,000. There would be productivity from me and I would be stimulating the economy with my spending.

I'm am so grateful for the support I have received up until now. I wholeheartedly believe I would be dead had I not had it. Using my critical thinking skills, however, I see so clearly that a far smaller proportion of that money could have been better spent through providing appropriate and affordable long-term housing, which would then, in turn, have enabled me to give you, the Government, a solid return on the money you have spent.

I'm convinced that it is good fiscal policy to fix something properly the first time rather than 'kick the can' down the road with short-term Band Aid solutions. Unless policies are unilaterally put in place at every level of Government, people simply will not have the resources within them to reach their full productivity and participation potential.

To this point, I want to touch briefly on youth homelessness. [The cost of youth homelessness](#)¹¹ in Australia has already been researched and reported on. As evidenced so clearly through my life, the cost of youth homelessness, if young people are not given appropriate and affordable

¹¹ <https://www.csi.edu.au/research/project/cost-youth-homelessness-australia-final-report/>

housing in the first instance, is highly likely to extend into a homeless young person's adult life. It is clearly far better fiscal policy to fix the issue properly in the first instance than it is to run the risk of having that young person effectively still sitting on a Government balance sheet into their adulthood.

The Deloitte Access Economics report [Raising Our Children - Guiding Young Victorians in care into Adulthood](#) provides the clear economic modelling that supports this hypothesis:

*'The modelling results show that under the assumed program cost and program uptake rate (25%), the benefit to cost ratio of the program is 1.84. That is, a dollar invested in the program is associated with an expected return of \$1.84 in either savings or increased income. Looking at benefits and costs which accrue primarily to government – a pertinent statistic given the program outlay is assumed to be from public funds – the benefit cost ratio of public spend is approximately 1.60.'*¹²

Further:

'It should be noted that, in reality, socio-economic returns are likely to be higher than those estimated by the model, as a number of potential benefits including improved mental and physical health outcomes, and improved community engagement, could not be quantified due to lack of data. Such benefits are additional to those included in the model and as such qualitatively serve to increase the return to investment.'

Section 5.4 of this report was, for me, like reading about my early life. They could very well have been talking about what I went through. I lost contact with my school friends and community for decades, which left me adrift and

*'As discussed throughout this report, children in OOHC are less likely to reach educational milestones, be employed, and more likely to experience behavioural problems and depression. They may also experience fragmented relationships with next of kin due to the physical separation brought about (and often legally required) through the OOHC arrangements, as well as because of the source of family abuse itself. Many have also not been able to forge lasting friendships due in part to unstable living and schooling arrangements. As a result, OOHC and foster youth have a higher rate of disengagement with key societal institutions such as the family, education, business (employment) and the wider community – all of which exert a stabilising effect on the wellbeing of both the individual and society in general.'*¹³

I was not in out-of-home-care. I couch-surfed for years and this describes my early life. Completely. Young people who find themselves unable to stay in their family home for whatever reason deserve to have the exact same start in life that every other young person has.

'By contrast, young people in the general population are now more likely to continue to live with their parents well into their mid-20s, entering and exiting the family home several times as they pursue various personal development opportunities. Driven by the increasing uptake of post-schooling education, delayed marriage, the rising cost of housing and the increasing

¹² Page 10

<https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/au/Documents/Economics/deloitte-au-guiding-young-victorians-in-care-in-to-adulthood-anglicare-220816.pdf>

¹³ Page 58

<https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/au/Documents/Economics/deloitte-au-guiding-young-victorians-in-care-into-adulthood-anglicare-220816.pdf>

accessibility of travel, at present, almost 50% of people aged between 18 and 24 are still living with one or both parents'

4. Where to from here?

The areas I would like to speak to are below:

a. That Federal Cabinet adopt a National Housing Strategy with an integrated Homelessness Plan including a Youth Homelessness strategy

I understand completely that the Australian Constitution limits what the Commonwealth Government can do in relation to this issue, as housing is, by statute, a State and Territory responsibility, with Local Governments generally controlling planning outcomes. It is a complicated matrix that basically means the Federal Government is left to use its funding levers to deal with Housing and Homelessness matters through the Partnership Agreements.

There are others far better placed than I to speak to deeper policy positions. It's my role to simply connect the data and policy with the human side of the issues. As such, the Community Housing Industry Association (CHIA), in their [submission](#)¹⁴ to this Inquiry, provides more detail on this and other policy positions. Further, National Shelter has a comprehensive [Policy document](#)¹⁵ that can also be referenced for more information.

With the view of achieving greater economic efficiency, however, I see that having all levels of Government moving in a uniform, strategic and cohesive way will achieve that goal because there is one framework that operates across every jurisdiction. It would prevent duplication and provide considerable cost savings to the Government. A plan such as this could be implemented through [City Deals](#)¹⁶ where the specifics of how a certain area implements the framework relative to the needs of the area, however, there is an overarching goal and strategy that every City Deal is working towards.

To assist with the implementation Deloitte Access Economics, in their report '[A practical guide to understanding social costs](#)¹⁷ have shared tools that can be used from the Federal Government right through to a social service provider 'to better plan, measure and learn more about the cost of social issues and of achieving defined social impact'¹⁸.

However, specifically related to this Inquiry and to Government revenue;

*'For Governments at all levels, it offers different tools for considering where costs fall in the system and how to connect this to more efficient and effective funding approaches as well as encouragement to bring greater visibility to cost data they hold.'*¹⁸

Further, on page 8:

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<https://www.communityhousing.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/2021-CHIA-Response-Inquiry-into-housing-affordability-and-supp-13092021.pdf?x91737>

¹⁵ <https://shelter.org.au/site/wp-content/uploads/National-Shelter-Policy-Positions-FINAL-3.pdf>

¹⁶ <https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/cities/city-deals/>

¹⁷ <https://www2.deloitte.com/au/en/pages/economics/articles/practical-guide-understanding-social-costs.html>

¹⁸ Page 3 <https://www2.deloitte.com/au/en/pages/economics/articles/practical-guide-understanding-social-costs.html>

*'Likewise, we expect both Federal and State/Territory Governments will find this Guide useful. It can be used as a tool to identify the cost of a particular social issue and to connect with the sector in constructing new solutions with a clear emphasis on outcomes, rather than on inputs or outputs as traditionally occurred – sub-optimally.'*¹⁹

Whilst I'm sure there are other tools and frameworks available, I refer to this because of my focus on economic efficiency. If there are clear data sets and consistent end-to-end reporting, I would see the implementation and use of tools such as the Deloitte Access Economics tool as being highly effective in ensuring that there is congruence in the delivery of services and minimising duplication.

b. That a more targeted focus on Youth Homelessness needs be taken to ensure optimal outcomes

I feel considerable frustration that there has been so little change with a long term focus for young people who end up on this pathway. I came forward [REDACTED] in the hope that by telling our stories, help would come for us. It did, but as evidenced in my life, that help was not enough to move me out of the cycle I have been in. So much money has been spent, for very little ROI.

I'm sure there have been others who have found a way out of the cycle they were in but sadly, I know that for most of my peers, the pathway out has not been there. Youth homelessness is a very complex issue but ultimately, what these young people need is very simple. They just need what every other young person needs - appropriate and affordable long-term housing (a home) where they are surrounded and supported by people who will provide them with whatever type of help they need to go on and achieve the best in their life they are able to. People who they can make proud. This is all I wanted.

As to what this housing and the appropriate supports would look like and how it should be implemented is not for me to say. There are youth homelessness policy experts who are far better qualified than I to speak to these types of things. I just know how different my life would have been had the money spent on me been used to provide me with this type of housing and support in the first instance.

With a view of this being an Inquiry conducted by the Parliamentary Committee for Taxation and Revenue, I would suggest that it is worthwhile for the Committee to read the Deloitte Access Economics Report ['Raising our children: Guiding young Victorians in care into adulthood'](#)²⁰ in its entirety. Their data basically sums up what has happened to me. The cost/benefit analysis data based on Government spending alone is a compelling argument for change, but when you factor data related to the socio-economic advantages that are not listed in that report, as evidenced through my life, you will see the provision of appropriate and affordable long-term housing for young people really is just good fiscal policy.

If we give young people as close to the same start in life that the majority of other young people have, then they will have the foundation they need in order to achieve what their peers are able

¹⁹ Page 8, <https://www2.deloitte.com/au/en/pages/economics/articles/practical-guide-understanding-social-costs.html>

²⁰ <https://www2.deloitte.com/au/en/pages/economics/articles/guiding-young-victorians-in-care-into-adulthood-anglicare.html>

to achieve. They will have what I didn't have but my peers had that enabled them to achieve what I wasn't able to achieve.

c. Incorporation of the current Social/Public Housing model into the Affordable Housing model.

Moving into the area I live in changed my entire life. Had I lived in a dwelling in a previous social housing model where I would have been surrounded by people who were from similar disadvantaged backgrounds to me, I would not have had the incredible role models I've had. I wouldn't have been surrounded by people who inspired me to be like them in a positive way. I'm living proof of how well this type of integrated housing can work.

Community support is crucial to the development of any affordable dwelling, however, the stigma that has been attached to previous social housing models is a deterrent for *any* community to be welcoming of these types of dwellings being constructed in their neighbourhood. We will always have a need for them but even the Government's hands are tied when it comes to what the residents of a community want.

This is why I believe it is time we rebrand that type of housing and incorporate it into the Affordable Housing model. Having an intermix of Affordable and Social housing into the one development through a 'salt and pepper mix' of mixing social/affordable housing units amongst market rate units is one very feasible option. No one is able to tell which unit is social/affordable and which unit is not. This differs from older models where entire developments were built with 100% social/affordable housing.

Because these developments would be intermixed, we would then be presented with an opportunity to have a rebrand. By doing so, we can come close to mitigating the pushback from a community to the type of housing that we want to build. The even better part is we are highly likely to see more people who will be inspired by those they live amongst like I have been. As I have said, my life has changed the most dramatically because I've been able to live in a community full of people I can model my life on.

d. That Government optimise the current opportunity it has to unlock Private Sector investment into Affordable Housing

At this current point in time, certain parts of the private sector have been engaged in feasibility studies to determine whether or not there is potential for a ROI into Affordable housing. They have found that this type of Investment is feasible if there is Government co-investment. This presents the Government with an opportunity it has not been afforded before and that is for them to not have to foot the bill to fund this type of housing in its entirety.

The work done by multiple parties but most notably, [REDACTED] [Relinking Mainstream and Supported Housing](#)²¹ report, provides the Government with a comprehensive roadmap, options and most importantly, advice regarding funding options. However, these options will only work when there is this credible Government co-investment in perpetuity. The key point, though, is that the burden of responsibility is not just left to the Government. There are options to unlock Private Sector investment, which is something the Government hasn't had available to them previously. Until now, the burden of responsibility was solely on the Government.

²¹ https://macroeconomics.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Relinking_Mainstream_and_Supported_Housing_in_Australia.pdf

To bring this back to my life, I can give you no more compelling reason to consider this type of Government/Private Sector partnership than my life. If we were to consider the Revenue side of what this Committee does, when viewed as a commodity or investment, it's abundantly clear that I have been a drain on the very revenue that you have oversight of. As such, I would consider co-investment in affordable housing and other long term policies so that people aren't in housing stress to be a far greater way to gain a return on the investment made than the way the money has been spent on me.

When looked at as a commodity and not a person, I'm the living example of economic inefficiency. Had I been given appropriate and affordable housing long term in the first instance, I would have been able to give you, my Government, far greater economic efficiency and what I would hope would have been a pretty decent ROI through productivity, participation and the like.

e. That a National Framework for Mandatory Inclusionary Zoning be established

An integral part of my belief in the way forward is through changes to zoning laws. Zoning is a very complex issue in so many ways, one of which is the overlap between State and Territory Governments with Local Governments. Then, when you have to consider the views of a local community as to whether or not these dwellings are constructed, it becomes an even more complex issue. This is why having a National Framework for Mandatory Inclusionary Zoning, such as the one The Constellation Project has worked on (*see appendix*) would ensure that there is uniformity, prevent duplication and again, ensure there is economic efficiency. A Framework like this again presents Government with the opportunity to minimise the amount of revenue it has to pay up front to build these dwellings.

If you look at the recent Delta Covid-19 outbreak in Sydney, we find another benefit of a change to zoning laws like Mandatory Inclusionary Zoning. On 28 July, 2021, there were 8 LGA's in the Greater Sydney area that were in hard lockdown. According to 2016 Census data on that day, a staggering 36% of the Greater Sydney population lived in those 8 LGA's.

We know many of those residents are key workers. There is high density living but it is affordable. That's why so many live there. The NSW Government was unable to lock those LGA's down the way they locked Sydney's Northern Beaches down at the end of 2020 because those residents work throughout all of Greater Sydney. So much of the city would have been impacted by them being unable to leave their LGAs. Had there, however, been Affordable housing in all of the other Greater Sydney LGAs, then it would have potentially mitigated so many of these issues. It would have been far easier for the Government to lockdown those they needed to in order to contain the virus and we might not have seen the virus spread as much due to key workers travelling to every other Greater Sydney LGA to work.

This then flips one of the arguments that this type of housing will only serve to disrupt or diminish a local community's way of life that comes from those who may be against affordable housing on its head. The complete opposite is actually true. Having Affordable housing in every LGA in Australia actually serves to *protect* people's way of life.

5. Summary

I believe now is the time for action. Whilst [others](#)²² might call for further Inquiries, I say enough is enough. No more. We don't need another Inquiry or Royal Commission. Here is a list of some of the Inquiries that have taken place on the issues of Housing Affordability and Supply:

- *Menzies Research Centre: Prime Ministerial Taskforce on Home Ownership in 2003;*
- *Productivity Commission's First Home Ownership Report in 2004;*
- *A Good House is Hard to Find Report from the Senate Select Committee on Housing Affordability in Australia in 2008;*
- *Western Australia's Affordable Housing Strategy 2010-2020;*
- *National Housing Supply Council (NHSC) State of Supply reports, specifically 2008, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013 and onwards;*
- *Senate Inquiry into Affordable Housing, 2014-2015; and*
- *Parliamentary Inquiry into Home Ownership 2015.*

Further to these Inquiries, here is a list of Federal Government Inquiries, housing and homelessness advocates have made submissions to over the last four years.

- *2017 NHHA Review process which had submissions: Economics Legislation Committee Review of the Provisions of the Treasury Laws Amendment (National Housing and Homelessness Agreement) Bill*
- *2017/18 Productivity Commission Inquiry into Human Services - this included 4 processes and submissions also covering Commonwealth Rent Assistance*
- *2018 Close the Gap Refresh*
- *2018 Treasury Laws Amendment (Improving the Energy Efficiency of Rental Properties) Act 2018*
- *2018 National Housing Finance and Investment Corporation Bill 2018 Exposure Draft*
- *2019 Infrastructure Australia Audit and National Plan*
- *2020 The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs Inquiry into and Report on Homelessness in Australia.*

Whilst far from exhaustive, these two lists serve to illustrate the cycle we have been in with no shift in long term policy. To me, it just seems to have added even more economic inefficiency to issues that show such economic inefficiency already. We will just be 'kicking the can' down the road again if we don't act on the findings from this Inquiry.

As such, I categorically refute any call for further Inquiries into these issues.

I have the right to refute these calls because of my role as a witness at [REDACTED] [REDACTED] That took place over [REDACTED] years ago and there are still 44,000 young people who are homeless every night here in Australia.

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Back then, almost everyone was using hard drugs like speed and heroin. Often, they would 'free base', which was shooting speed into one arm and heroin into the other at the same time. Most users were prostituting to support their

habits (mostly having unprotected sex) and needle sharing was rife. This was also the peak era for HIV/AIDS.

Further, we would all be in our 40's if not 50's by now and statistics show that those stuck in the homelessness cycle don't usually live into their 50's. [REDACTED]

We have had enough Inquiries. We don't need more. We just need to act on the recommendations.

I have provided evidence through my life experiences of the multiple benefits that would be gained if there was a unilateral change of policy. Considerable work has already been done on some of the recommendations I have made already. We have almost all of the information that we need available to us. We just need to connect it together and come up with a National Housing Strategy with an integrated Homelessness Plan which includes a National Youth Homelessness Strategy.

We've done a [REDACTED] hasn't worked as well as it could have if the money that was spent on short term solutions was rather invested in providing appropriate and affordable long-term housing.

Inquiries like this one don't fix issues like housing affordability and supply as well as homelessness. In order to fix them, they require the Government at all levels to act upon findings. I've read countless media reports where the Federal Government has said it's not their responsibility to intervene on housing affordability. Then there is another report where the Reserve Bank of Australia says it's not their responsibility. Then there is yet another report where the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority (APRA) says it's not their responsibility. Then the Federal Government says the issues of affordable housing and homelessness are State and Territory issues but then the States and Territories say the issues need targeted Federal leadership.

The Federal Government's own Parliamentary Inquiry into Homelessness handed down its [final report](#)²³ in Parliament in August 2021 which recommended that, in consultation with state, territory and local governments, the Federal Government develop and implement a ten-year national strategy on homelessness using a Housing First model. If this were integrated into a National Housing Strategy, then we would be able to not just mitigate the risk of having more people end up in housing stress, which would then result in a decrease in productivity and participation. We would also move those already in housing stress out of that and into greater productivity and participation.

We are going around and around in circles here. We have the information that we need available to us already or it is in the pipeline. Now we need the political will from all levels of Government to resolve these issues.

As such, to recap, my recommendations to this Inquiry are:

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https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House/Social_Policy_and_Legal_Affairs/HomelessnessinAustralia/Report

1. *That National Cabinet adopt a National Housing Strategy with an integrated Homelessness Plan*
2. *That a more targeted focus on Youth Homelessness be taken to ensure optimal outcomes than I have had*
3. *Incorporation of the current Social/Public Housing model into the Affordable Housing model.*
4. *That Government optimise the current opportunity it has to unlock Private Sector investment into Affordable Housing*
5. *That a National Framework for Mandatory Inclusionary Zoning be established*

In laying my life bare like this, I hope I have connected the dots on this issue. I'm no economist but I can clearly see the economic benefits of making these changes far exceeds the costs, when looked at through the lens of a patient investor.

If this submission is what the ex street kid who didn't finish high school can put together after not being in housing stress for the first time in her life, then what are we going to unlock if we move millions of households out of housing stress here in Australia? Imagine that potential

Now is the time to act.