



Improving the Quality of Life for Rooming House Residents of the Inner South

Inner South Rooming House Network

Response to National Housing and Homelessness Plan issues paper – September 2023

Particular focus on questions:

- 1. How can governments and community service providers reduce homelessness and/or support people who may be at risk of becoming homeless in Australia?**
- 5. How could governments work better with industry, community services and other organisations to improve housing outcomes for all Australians?**

Combined response encompassing a range of perspectives:

- Ongoing funding – for stability and more housing options. Needs to be adequate and enduring, addressing that people can't heal themselves and require ongoing support to address often complex needs
- When considering this, look at the issue through a prevention lens with an aim of destigmatising help-seeking
- Recognise the need for including issues around grief and loneliness in the framework for addressing housing needs
- Early prevention – get into high schools and educate about how homelessness and housing shortages can occur along with providing information about where support can be accessed
- Ensure availability of houses, even simply somewhere to stay, flexibility of options beyond looking at home ownership
- Look at tax laws to improve affordability of housing for those who need it
- Look at impact of monetisation/commodification of housing and policy (ie the conscious direction of wealth creation policy), along with the health impacts for individuals of not having housing and modify policy in consideration of this.
- Balance with support rather than creating further challenges for legitimate housing operators due to fast and unrealistic timeframes for upgrades coming out of policy change and consider implications of timing and rental regulation that could squeeze out legitimate operators who do have genuine consideration for the needs of their tenants
- Rooming houses have become more permanent housing options rather than temporary options as was previously the case, demonstrating the need for more housing as rooming houses (also referred to as boarding houses), can be challenging for people to live in permanently, particularly when living amongst others with complex needs and trauma histories when you might be experiencing these issues, others' behaviour can be retraumatising
- Expand accessibility/eligibility for support so broader range of the population can afford to access wrap-around services

- Go back to being informed by what community is, what it represents and the value of it, enabling people to be part of something. Build in social inclusion and belonging considerations in housing policy with a trauma-informed approach
- Need to understand the importance of building community from the grassroots. You can't just build housing, you need to plan how to include community-building, for example having community rooms in the housing and services that outreach to the housing on an ongoing way, not just a series of pilots. Aim to build social capital and strong connections.
- Fund services to help people navigate the housing space help direct individuals when seeking somewhere to live/stay into aged care, reintroduce the ACH Assistance with care & Housing model, the Carefinder role that has replaced this previous program has dropped the previous focus into housing as well, I, and build in support to help people connect to the local community in new/temporary accommodations settings
- Need to support existing legitimate operators to enable sustainability for operations.
- Support/funding needed for social housing providers who are working to provide housing support while struggling with cost of service delivery going up and barely breaking even eg. not able to fund anything new/new additions like heating and cooling and having old housing in need of maintenance
- Better define terms: "sustainable housing". Is this in the forefront of thinking when signing for community housing?
- Build in consideration of essentials ie. provide heating and cooling, create a model that enables this to be funded as well as ensuring workers in the industry are paid fair and sustainable wages to prevent high turn-over and burn-out
- Address social determinants of health so people stay healthy, recognising the interconnected nature of this with housing support needs
- Help translate/raise awareness in related fields eg within law circles (legal, police etc) so they can better understand the context, support with solution-finding with clients/individuals they are working with. Equip them to ask more/the right kinds of questions and to be able to direct individuals to where support can be accessed
- Develop training package to support those in fields that are supporting individuals + ensure tenants are empowered to support themselves and can achieve a sense of belonging, create possibilities in their lives
- Look at places where social housing models work well eg. Denmark and use these to inform what success looks like (also considering local context of how/when this can be applied)
- Re-fund, expand, and socialise tested programs such as 'Journey to Social Inclusion" (J2SI) rather than cut funding.
- Governments need to work better with industry, community services and related organisations to improve outcomes

- State Governments have relied too long on mom/dad investors to provide what is a fundamental right: housing and a secure, affordable and accessible home. This has created a disparate sector that is difficult to regulate. This bleeds into the Rooming House sector, where many operators are under-qualified and unskilled in terms of managing complex social issues that can often be found in such accommodation. The burgeoning Build to Rent sector provides Government with an opportunity to apply tighter scrutiny on the behaviour and actions of rooming house operators. This is undoubtedly a State-based issue, but Federal Government can assist by tying specific housing funding to the development of quality, affordable, and accessible B2R projects, in conjunction with the States introducing better regulatory oversight for operators.

Background

The Inner South Rooming House Network aims to improve the quality of life for rooming house residents of the inner south region of Melbourne (local government areas of Port Phillip and Stonnington City Councils) and be a voice for change.

The network brings together information/service delivery, nursing, community and allied health, outreach and community development professionals working within the catchment, along with people who have a lived experience of living in a rooming house.