

RE: Submission regarding Housing Legislative Package exposure drafts

Dear Secretary,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on the exposure drafts for the Governments Housing Legislative Package: Housing Australia Future Fund Bill, National Housing Supply and Affordability Council Bill, and Amendment Bill.

Homelessness NSW is a not-for-profit organisation that operates as a peak agency for its member organisations to end homelessness across NSW. We exist to build the capability of people and the capacity of systems to end homelessness. We have a vision for a future where there is enough quality and safe housing and support services to ensure no one is homeless in NSW. Our 180 members include specialist homelessness services, allied organisations and services working to end homelessness.

We thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on the exposure drafts for the Government's Housing Legislative Package. We support these pieces of legislation and commend the Government on acting quickly on this important issue.

Homelessness NSW has proposed some minor comments across the legislative package including:

- Increasing the initial funding beyond the \$10 billion into the Housing Australia Future Fund to ensure there is a sustained investment in social and affordable housing at scale
- Including a 'purpose' in the legislation setting a target for social housing as a percentage of total residential dwellings
- Mandating that State Governments should have to match funding that they request from the Housing Australia Future Fund
- Enhancing the reporting requirements of the Housing Australia Future Fund
- Ensuring the National Housing and Supply Council has adequate representation and is informed by people with lived experience of homelessness.

We welcome the opportunity to provide this submission. Please contact Joshua Greenwood, Partnerships & Governance Lead at joshua@homelessnessnsw.org.au should you wish to discuss any element of our submission further.

Yours Sincerely,

Trina Jones

CEO, Homelessness NSW

Homelessness NSW – Submission regarding Housing Legislative Package exposure drafts

Homelessness NSW is a not-for-profit organisation that operates as a peak agency for its member organisations to end homelessness across NSW. We exist to build the capability of people and the capacity of systems to end homelessness. We have a vision for a future where there is enough quality and safe housing and support services to ensure no one is homeless in NSW. Our 180 members include specialist homelessness services, allied organisations and services working to end homelessness. We work with our members, people with lived experience and broad network of partners to understand drivers of homelessness, advocate for solutions, build skills and knowledge, and scale innovation.

We thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on the exposure drafts for the Governments Housing Legislative Package: Housing Australia Future Fund Bill, National Housing Supply and Affordability Council Bill, and Amendment Bill.

Homelessness NSW supports the policy intent of both pieces of legislation

Australia needs a dramatic uplift in social housing supply. Research from 2018 has shown that nationally, Australia needs to build 15,000 social housing dwellings each year to prevent the current homelessness crisis from getting worse. Adjusting for lower than anticipated population growth brings this figure down to 8,000 per year. Factoring in the population forecast *and* the current backlog, an estimated 25,000 social housing dwellings nationally per year would be required.ⁱ

Homelessness NSW welcomes the Government's policy to create the Housing Australia Future Fund and the National Supply and Affordability Council. Both policy interventions are a great start to help tackle the supply crisis. However, as the data shows, more needs to be done.

Housing Australia Future Fund Bill 2023 – Comments

Bill Reference	Comment
Part 2, Division 3, 11 Credits of Amounts (11) \$10 billion is to be credited to the Housing Australia Future Fund 5 Special Account as soon as practicable after the commencement of 6 this section	As noted above, Australia needs an estimated 25,000 social housing dwellings per year to meet population needs and fix the existing backlog. While the initial \$10 billion investment in the Australia Future Fund is welcomed, a sustained investment in social and affordable housing at scale is critical for the safety and wellbeing of Australians and a healthy society and economy.
Part 2, Division 4, Debits of amounts from the Housing Australia Future fund (12) Main purposes of the Housing Australia Future Fund	Homelessness NSW recommends an additional 'purpose' be included to codify the outcome of the fund. Rather than number of dwellings built, this could take the form of a target percentage of social housing as a proportion of total residential dwellings. For example, in a NSW context 4.7% of the total residential dwellings are social housing. Homelessness NSW recommends this to be increased to 10% by 2050.

<p>Part 3, Division 2, Grants</p> <p>(18) Grants to a State or Territory</p> <p>A designated Minister may, on behalf of the Commonwealth, make a grant of financial assistance to a State or Territory in relation to any of the following:</p> <p>(a) acute housing needs; (b) social housing; (c) affordable housing.</p>	<p>Homelessness NSW recommends that where a State or Territory Minister requests funding from the Housing Australia Future Fund (Fund) that the Commonwealth mandate that the State or Territory must match the investment from the Fund.</p> <p>For example, Homelessness NSW has called on the NSW Government to provide an investment of \$2 billion per year over 10 years to build 5,000 new social housing dwellings per year. This funding could be matched 50/50 between the Commonwealth and NSW Governments.</p> <p>Homelessness NSW recommends that grants are only provided to add to the supply of social and affordable housing and that any maintenance or upgrades must demonstrate increase of capacity.</p>
<p>Part 3, Division 2, Grants</p> <p>(24) Publication of information relating to grants</p>	<p>In addition to the reporting requirements outlined in this section, Homelessness NSW recommends regular reporting on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the outcomes of the fund, - breakdown of grant recipients - timeframes from application to approval - a geographic breakdown of funds allocated - timeframe from grant allocation to completed housing project - a summary of housing types, size and tenure

National Housing Supply and Affordability Council Bill 2023 – Comments

Bill Reference	Comment
Overall	<p>Homelessness NSW welcomes the establishment of the National Housing Supply and Affordability Council. Homelessness NSW recommends that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Council has information that is diverse and representative. To achieve this. The Council should have mandatory regular and scheduled engagement with people with diverse experience of homelessness. - A first nations representative is appointed to the Council and the Council seeks regular input and advice from First nations housing and homelessness experts. - Composition of the Council should proportionally reflect the diversity of homelessness services and people experiencing homelessness, by appointing experts or services to the Council who represent cohorts including (but not limited to): First Nations people; victim-survivors of domestic and family violence; young people; and ex-prisoners. - A representative from construction should be included in the council to contribute understanding on opportunities and barriers to construction delivery.

Treasury Laws Amendment (Housing Measures No. 1) Bill 2023 – Comments

Bill Reference	Comment
Overall	Homelessness NSW supports the changes to National Housing Finance and Investment Corporation to expand the remit under the newly formed Housing Australia.

References

^{i i} Lawson, J., Pawson, H., Troy, L., van den Nouwelant, R. & Hamilton, C. (2018) Social housing as infrastructure: an investment pathway, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/306>