

Housing

The issues

Australia is in the grip of a housing crisis and there are not enough houses to meet demand

- The forecast shortage in the five years to 2015 is expected to be 328,800 dwellings and could increase to more than 640,000 dwellings over the next 20 years¹;
- This lack of supply has impacted on the affordability of housing and Australia now has one of the least affordable housing markets in the world;
- Both rental and purchase prices are high and the burden of these prices is disproportionately felt by those on lower incomes;
- The gap between the housing haves and have nots is increasing; and
- High rental prices combined with limited social and affordable housing are placing increasing numbers of Australians at risk of homelessness.²

About Mission Australia

Mission Australia is a non-denominational Christian community service organisation that has been transforming the lives of Australians in need for more than 150 years

We are motivated by a vision for a fairer Australia and are committed to eliminating homelessness. We believe that all Australians should be able to live in safe, secure and affordable housing. The holistic nature of our work is reflected in our Outcomes Hierarchy for Pathways away from Homelessness.³

In 2008 we established MA Housing to help address the shortfall in affordable rental housing. Commencing operations in April 2009 as a separate company within the Mission Australia Group, MA Housing is a growing national Community Housing Provider and provides a range of affordable and social rental housing for low income households.⁴ MA Housing's vision is to seek to offer a pathway away from homelessness by providing quality housing that enables people to participate in their communities.

Mission Australia and MA Housing strategies into the future are captured in the Mission Australia 2020 Strategy⁵ and include: growing our prevention programs nationally; building our affordable housing portfolio; and developing placed-based urban regeneration ventures. Our approach is reflected in our service delivery which includes:

- The provision of social and affordable housing through MA Housing – the number of homes under MA management nationally reached 1,418 as at June 2012.
- Facilitating access to support services for our housing tenants in order to address their non-housing needs, including prevention programs to help people maintain their tenancies.
- Leading community development in large developments.
- Facilitating access to employment for our tenants through the development and co-location of social enterprises at our larger sites.

Mission Australia's Position on Housing

It is time to rethink our housing system if there is to be any equity in the housing market now and into the future

Addressing housing affordability requires a substantial financial commitment and collaboration that encompasses public and private sectors, underpinned by policy and program direction from all levels of government. This financial commitment should include greater investment in prevention programs and services that work to prevent homelessness.

There is no quick fix, but there is direct action that can ease the burden disproportionately felt within the current housing market by those least able to afford it; as well as longer-term policy reform that will ensure all Australians are able to gain equitable access 'a place to call home'.

There is a need to ensure the adequacy of housing.

- Housing must offer certainty and security of tenure given the benefits in health and wellbeing, family stability, beneficial outcomes for children, and enhanced social cohesion it delivers;
- Services, materials, facilities and infrastructure are required to support people who need it as they progress through the housing continuum – particularly to help prevent failed tenancies; and
- Housing must be affordable in order to reduce the number of people experiencing housing stress, but there needs to be a broader view of affordability beyond direct housing costs. This includes issues related to the environmental sustainability and location of the housing.

There is a need to increase investment in the private rental market

- There is a need to increase the supply of private rental accommodation, particularly at the low end of the market, as this is where many low income households are located due to the shortage of social housing options;
- Taxation settings must be altered because they currently favour owner-occupiers over other household types and have also skewed the market towards investment in higher cost housing and therefore compounded issues around affordability; and
- There is a need to increase investment in private rental housing through expansion of initiatives like the National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS).

Mission Australia's Position on Housing

There is a need to reform planning processes

- Planning systems must be redesigned so that they encourage, enable and expedite approval processes for construction of affordable housing or mainstream property developments that include a proportion of affordable housing.
- New developments over a certain number of dwellings (eg 50) should be required to allocate a set proportion of the dwellings to affordable or social housing (particularly on Government owned sites).

Social housing sector improvement

- The transfer of stock from state housing authorities to community housing providers should be expedited as this will allow the assets to be used more productively, thereby increasing supply;
- Property development or refurbishment of existing public housing stock should be completed as a matter of urgency so that tenants are not unfairly burdened by the additional costs associated with poor energy efficiency;
- Redevelopment should also consider the changing needs of the current and future resident populations;
- There is a need to develop the capacity of the community housing (not-for-profit) sector given they are well placed to address supply and affordability; and
- The community housing sector must be supported through a national regulatory framework that enables the sector to secure finances and investment in order to grow.

1 National Housing Supply Council (2011) Key findings of the 2011 State of Supply Report, NHSC, Canberra.

2 See for example [http://www.homelessnessaustralia.org.au/UserFiles/File/Fact%20sheets/Fact%20sheets%202011-12/Homelessness%20&%20Affordable%20Housing%202011-12\(3\).pdf](http://www.homelessnessaustralia.org.au/UserFiles/File/Fact%20sheets/Fact%20sheets%202011-12/Homelessness%20&%20Affordable%20Housing%202011-12(3).pdf)

3 This document is available on our website – <http://www.missionaustralia.com.au>

4 <http://www.missionpromotion.com/mahousing/index.html>

5 Also available on our website <http://www.missionaustralia.com.au>