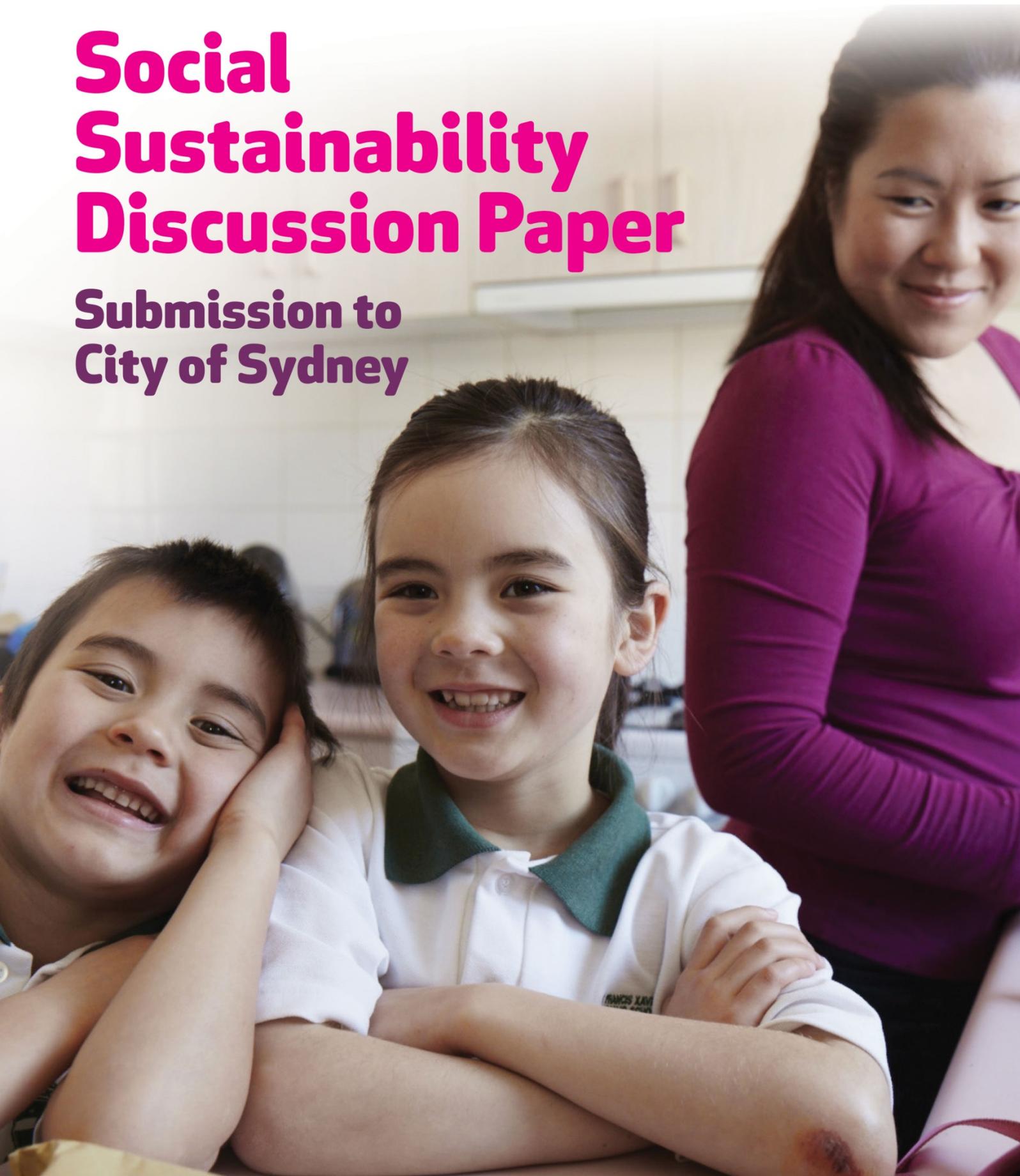


MISSION
AUSTRALIA | together
we stand

Social Sustainability Discussion Paper

Submission to
City of Sydney



Mission Australia Submission

Mission Australia is a leading national support provider and advocate for vulnerable people, with a strategic focus on reducing homelessness and strengthening communities. Last financial year, Mission Australia (MA) delivered more than 100 homelessness programs and has run the landmark homeless programs the *Michael* and *MISHA Projects*, the *Inner City Drift Project*, and our homeless aged care services *Charles Chambers Court* (inner-city Sydney) and *Annie Green Court* (Redfern).

Mission Australia Housing (MAH) is a Tier 1 community housing provider operating across Australia. MAH currently owns or manages more than 1,800 properties, including Sydney's \$32 million Common Ground development.

We welcome the City of Sydney's draft social sustainability policy and look forward to the development of the Action Plan. In particular we support the focus on improved wellbeing, equity of access to opportunity and reducing the gap between rich and poor so everyone thrives. We believe that Affordable Housing should be a priority for the City of Sydney and have focussed our submission on housing and homelessness as well as strengthening communities.

Direction 1: An Inclusive City – Housing and Homelessness

A focus on diverse affordable housing options is an important foundation for social sustainability. We are pleased that the City is proposing to partner with the NSW Government to deliver affordable housing for lower income earners and supported housing for people experiencing homelessness. The City has a significant opportunity to play a leadership role in building an inclusive city that caters for people on different incomes through affordable housing and improved opportunity.

Housing Affordability

Australia is experiencing a failure of the housing market that has resulted in a severe lack of housing that people on low and moderate incomes can afford. This shortage exists both in social housing, the private rental market and the home ownership market and is particularly acute in Sydney.

This shortage is a barrier to productivity. Prospective workers cannot afford to live where there are jobs. Workers who pay too much of their income in housing costs limit their capacity to save for retirement, forcing them to forego spending on education, health and necessities putting them at risk of financial crisis. For people receiving income support, housing costs can limit their opportunity, perpetuating reliance on Government payments.

High housing costs also drive some people into homelessness and can prevent people in crisis accommodation from exiting into sustainable housing, leading to extremely high unmet demand in the homelessness system and suboptimal housing outcomes for many clients. Only 6% of people seeking help from homelessness services who need long-term accommodation actually receive it.

Housing is a fundamental human right and homelessness can have stark personal costs for individuals and families. Housing is an important foundation for education and employment. Without an appropriate home environment, it is difficult for people to connect and belong within the community. The disruption associated with a lack of permanent housing and frequent moves has been identified as an impediment to job retention. On the other hand, a workforce that is stably and

affordably housed is a pool of people able to save for retirement and invest in the future including education for their children.

The evidence is clear – unaffordable and insecure housing causes a range of economic and social problems. If we want to reduce homelessness and increase individuals' capacity to move to independence, we need more social and affordable housing. The City of Sydney has an important role to play in increasing the level of social and affordable housing throughout the City to benefit residents and act as a model for others.

Housing First

We welcome the prioritisation of schemes to provide long term accommodation with on-site social services to support people to successfully maintain their tenancies. Mission Australia has successfully run a "Housing First" model at Common Ground in Camperdown and the evidence around the positive impacts of Housing First approaches is compelling. We would support the roll out of further Housing First models to meet the needs of homeless people in the City who face co-occurring issues and require ongoing supports.

Common Ground

Common Ground aims to end chronic homeless with the provision of permanent supported housing in a congregate housing model combining accommodation for rough sleepers and low-income workers. MA Housing is the community housing provider and Mission Australia provides support services for Common Ground, Camperdown.

The service aims to provide affordable, permanent housing in Sydney's inner city for low income, social housing candidates and those that were previously long term homeless. The Common Ground model focusses on those formerly homeless individuals that 'fall through the cracks' and require a high level for support in conjunction with permanent housing. This includes clients with significant cognitive impairment. This permanent housing provides stability for the individual, whilst onsite support from both housing and case management enhances opportunities for personal improvement. Common Ground remains a 24/7 service, with staff consistently onsite to provide support to tenants when necessary and at the tenant's request.

Since 2011, Common Ground Sydney has housed 108 formerly long term homeless and priority social housing tenants. Of these, 93% have sustained their tenancies over 12 months, and 30 tenants from this group were the first allocated to their unit and have sustained their tenancies for over four years. These are unusually positive results for this complex client cohort.

Mission Australia has also been piloting the Room to Grow program at Common Ground and with other people at risk of eviction. It is designed to address the physical, cognitive and psychological factors which contribute to situations of severe domestic squalor and compulsive hoarding disorder. The program aims to reduce risk of tenancy loss by addressing these factors.

Room to Grow

The Room to Grow program identifies each individual's clinical profile and develops an individualised case management plan from this which responds to the unique needs of each participant. The program utilises a centrally managed referral process to engage with relevant support services, manage progress and facilitate co-ordination and communication between services. The program takes a person-centred approach which is responsive to the goals and needs of each participant, while empowering participants to direct their own involvement and progression through the program. A living skills program, cognitive remediation and cognitive-behavioural therapy program is available for participants to access where required.

The program aims to help participants improve their living conditions, independent living skills and agency and assist clients to gain insight into the cognitions and behaviours associated with compulsive hoarding and domestic squalor. This is a pilot program which is taking place alongside an internal evaluation undertaken by Mission Australia. Participants for this pilot program reside in the City of Sydney and comprise 11 clients of Common Ground, 5 clients of Eastern Sydney Partners in Recovery and 13 tenants with Housing NSW who have been identified as being at-risk of homelessness due to issues related to compulsive hoarding and domestic squalor.

Ending homelessness for the chronically homeless is a particularly cost effective use of public money, not only delivering outcomes for clients but providing savings from health, justice and police spending. However, for Housing First to work as an approach, there must be a supply of housing where homeless people can live. This is challenging in cities like Sydney where there are significant numbers of homeless people and also low rental vacancies, low housing affordability and an undersupply of housing. Therefore, the lack of an available housing 'bank' to operationalise a Housing First model is a key impediment to addressing homelessness.¹

MISHA

Mission Australia's internationally renowned MISHA research project provided homeless men with support to enter and sustain permanent housing. As a result of services provided, 98 per cent of our clients were able to support their tenancy over a 12 month period because of the support they received.

At the same time, this project evaluated the service model in respect to client outcomes and the direct economic benefits to government and the wider society. At project commencement \$32,254 per person per year was spent on health, justice and welfare supports. After just 24 months, this reduced to \$24,251 per person per year, with 89% of participants sustaining secure housing and representing an \$8002 saving per person to government.

¹ Haslem S (2011) *'Housing First' needs housing first! - a review of offshore housing supply strategies*, UBS, accessed at: http://mifellowship.org/sites/default/files/Scott%20Haslem_UBS_Housing%20First%20report.pdf

Collaboration and Integrated Service Delivery

Working in partnership with other agencies can improve service delivery, when done well. Responses to homelessness should facilitate the involvement of the whole community and promote shared responsibility for preventing and addressing homelessness amongst the community, government and business sectors. Responses must be designed to work in harmony to achieve the vision of 'no wrong doors', and to ensure that workers who are the 'first to know' are sufficiently informed and supported to take action.

Agencies working in partnership with each other can result in benefits for clients, including improved access to services and better outcomes. Greater cooperation between agencies at the local level can enhance homelessness service provision across the spectrum, from identifying those at risk of homelessness, providing improved services to those who do become homeless, and locating housing options to exit people from homelessness. This is true both of relationships between Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) and between SHS and mainstream service providers.

The level of service provision in the City of Sydney area, both SHS and other services such as mental health and health services, arguably acts to attract people into the area who may become homeless. We believe there is a role for the City in joining with other organisations in advocating for adequate levels of service provision in suburban and regional areas of the State, so that people can be assisted to remain with their communities of origin, if safe and appropriate, rather than feeling as though they must go into the City for support.

Inner City Drift Project (ICDP)

An evaluation of a Mission Australia early intervention service aimed at stemming the flow of homeless people from western Sydney into the inner city found that no participant followed-up at six months had 'drifted'.

The service model identified assessment and referral pathways as critical to the early intervention and prevention focus of the ICDP. Integral to this was the need to work with 'first to know' agencies, two key agencies being Housing NSW and Centrelink since most people with financial and/or accommodation difficulties will have contact with one or both of these services. There were also other important partnerships that the ICDP developed, including a real estate agency in Fairfield.

Underlying the ICDP was the centrality of a client's needs and this was evident in the 'no wrong door' approach to referrals, undertaking the earliest possible intervention with a client and the persistence or relational continuity regardless of the number of setbacks experienced in a client's journey out of homelessness.

While funding for this service has ended, there is potential for a similar service model to help people where they are located and stop the increase in homelessness in the inner city.

Effective partnerships between agencies can take many different forms, including: government-led initiatives; consortia of local agencies, such as Brisbane's Under 1 Roof, that may even develop new administrative structures as a distinct organisation; or the relatively informal cooperation that takes place between staff in local agencies every day.

Under 1 Roof

Mission Australia is a partner in the Under 1 Roof consortium of homelessness, housing and community agencies based in Brisbane. Under 1 Roof provides a coordinated service system response based on a Housing First model that moves people as quickly as possible into long term housing with wrap-around support as a way of preventing ongoing homelessness. Under 1 Roof also provides assertive outreach and tenancy supports to keep people housed. Under 1 Roof's multi-agency approach extends to a range of partners to deliver integrated and coordinated services geared to achieving sustained housing outcomes.

Relationships in the homelessness sector are often grown in local settings over many years. They may depend on personal skills and a strong level of rapport. However they can be deliberately strengthened by making network development a key performance indicator for staff and sharing training and professional development opportunities between organisations. Place-based collaborations can also draw in local businesses as well as government departments and service providers and work across a variety of issues to achieve outcomes for a particular location.

Mission Australia was involved in helping rough sleepers access sustainable housing and support in Woolloomooloo demonstrating the value of collaborative action. The City's dedicated homelessness team has proved a valuable resource in coordinating service responses to chronic and ongoing issues. Services like Mission Beat provide triage and a gateway to further support while providing an immediate service to rough sleepers. Mission Beat vans patrol inner Sydney streets seeking out those in distress and offering them support and transport to vital services.

Mission Australia's Strategic Plan 2014-17 identifies becoming a Partner of Choice in areas of core expertise for government funders, corporate donors and other organisations (both not-for-profit and corporate) to deliver contracted services. Mission Australia has developed a Draft Partnership Framework, to establish principles for how we work in partnership and to support our partnerships. We have prioritised this to augment our service offering and provide better support for Australians in need.

Advocacy

Mission Australia is keen to partner with the City of Sydney on advocacy on affordable housing. The Registry Week finding that lack of affordable housing options was the major cause of homelessness for the majority of people shows the pressing need for more action at all levels of government.

The City of Sydney is well-placed to advocate for more affordable housing in Sydney with the Greater Sydney Commission, the NSW Government and the Australian Government in partnership with the social sector and businesses.

As Sydney has the highest property and rental prices in Australia, it is imperative that the City of Sydney takes a leadership position in addressing the current housing affordability crisis by advocating for systemic change.

Diverse Communities

Mission Australia agrees that cities need a mix of housing options at different prices. In particular Sydney needs an increased supply of affordable housing. Social housing is a vital safety net and key workers need affordable options.

Planning controls and levy programs have the potential to expand the stock of social and affordable housing in the city both for those at risk of homelessness and for those key workers who struggle to pay the rent. Mixed tenure developments can form an important part of the solution.

Inclusionary zoning – where planning instruments require a component of below-market housing in specified areas – is an effective and proven way to stimulate new supply. It is widespread and effective across the USA, but only has fragmented and small-scale use in Australia.

Well-designed schemes can balance creation of developer profit sufficient to incentivise activity whilst capturing social return from the private value uplift provided to developers and land owners through zoning changes.

While the City of Sydney's targets of 7.5% rental affordability supply and 7.5% social housing supply are a good start, this is unlikely to meet the demand for the 84% of low income households in housing stress in the City More ambitious targets should be adopted such as the 15% affordable housing target for new development in South Australia. Concerted efforts need to be made to allow people with a mix of income levels to reside within the City.

Improving Opportunity

The City is in a unique position to facilitate links between businesses and disadvantaged groups. We know that disadvantaged young people desperately want jobs. For example Mission Australia's 2015 Youth Survey (the largest of its kind in Australia) found that getting a job was relatively more important to our clients than the other young people surveyed – showing that many disadvantaged young people are keen and willing to find work.

With some of the largest employers in the country located in Sydney, linking city residents to employment is a tangible way to improve opportunity. It is great to see priorities around strengthening the social impact of business and the City of Sydney's own workplace diversity, however more could be done in assisting disadvantaged residents to connect to jobs in the city and set them on a positive career pathway.

Strengthening Communities

Mission Australia is also focused on strengthening communities and welcomes efforts to build community capacity in socially and economically disadvantaged areas. We support place-based responses including council involvement in early intervention and prevention, coordination of joined up service delivery and increasing community capacity to lead positive change.

Mission Australia has been involved in community development around social housing in Richmond and Fitzroy estates in Victoria. We also take a community strengthening approach to the provision of community housing in Clarendon Vale and Rokeby and would welcome the opportunity to work with the City of Sydney on a community development approach to housing estates within the City. A community strengthening approach that works with people in social housing has real potential to make lasting change. Where there is entrenched disadvantage and high concentrations of social housing, a community development approach should be taken which aligns housing regeneration with locally tailored service and capacity building.

Community Renewal – Clarendon Vale and Rokeby

Clarendon Vale and Rokeby is one of the country's most disadvantaged communities. In this community, Mission Australia Housing has been commissioned to manage 500 homes for Housing Tasmania over a 10 year period and has developed a decade long plan to provide management, maintenance, property upgrades and new homes.

In partnership, Mission Australia has developed a community renewal model, involving a 10 year community development plan encompassing community improvement projects which will see generational change.

The plan is designed to generate social and physical change within the community. Early initiatives include the creation of a residents group to prioritise projects and address concerns within the community. An initial focus has been on improving safety and the group has successfully lobbied local government to improve amenities including street lights.

Using funding from the Commonwealth Department of Social Services Mission Australia has also been able to develop a community regeneration and workplace training program which helps residents to learn about and develop skills in some of the niche agriculture and food industries established in Tasmania.

And by rebuilding relationships with the local high school, Mission Australia has sought to

create paths out of intergenerational poverty for young people living in the community and provide access to education for other residents to improve long-term employment opportunities.



Links between social housing residents and other residents at a neighbourhood scale should be deepened and strengthened. Our community building activities at Common Ground show some of the potential for such approaches.

Common Ground Neighbourhood Linkage

Integration with the surrounding community is an essential feature of Common Ground Sydney. The neighbouring public housing tenants and the local community are encouraged to use, and are active users of, the facilities on the ground floor - including a gym, community kitchen, art room, computer suite and clinical consultation rooms.

MAH works with a number of local community organisations and service providers in the area. These include, but are not limited to: Mission Australia; Centrelink (fortnightly on-site meetings); Royal Prince Alfred (RPA) Hospital Community Mobile Team Social Work; RPA Drug Health Services, Mental Health Steering Committee; and local GP and psychiatric services.

Programs and social/recreational events are hosted by a range of government and council entities, non-government organisations, local community groups, voluntary associations and businesses. These include: living skills programs, computer classes, boot camps, RSPCA clinics for tenants' pets; cooking classes; tenant-led singing groups; and a partnership with a local gym.

Mission Australia would be happy to discuss any of these initiatives further and work with the city on the development of the action plan.

**Mission Australia helps
people regain their
independence - by
standing together with
Australians in need,
until they can stand for
themselves.**

Contact us

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