**Background notes: Western MP Homelessness Working Group meeting with Minister Shing**

**Context (Sarah):**

* More and more people are becoming homeless as a result of financial difficulty. Previously family violence has been the primary cause of homelessness.
* Homelessness services are unable to find housing for many of our consumers. Data shows that last year, 40% of consumers exited our system still homeless. The situation has become so bad that the Annual Consumer Survey focus for this year has been to ask consumers what assistance we can provide them with, when we can’t assist them with housing.
* Even if sufficient housing is committed today, the delay in construction leaves thousands without homes, whose needs will become increasingly complex. We have seen for years the impact of inadequate housing for single people. Large numbers of single people have experienced chronic homelessness, and an ever increasing complexity of issues. It is then complex and costly to provide assistance to them and there is increased cost/risk to the community.
* The West is no longer an area of housing affordable. Melton and Wyndham are the fastest growing areas in Melbourne so, even despite the crisis in housing affordability, we are not keeping up with supply.
* Twice as many people are awaiting social housing as there are social housing properties in the West. The greatest unmet need is for one bedroom properties. The Brimbank broadband area is the area of greatest need.
* What is the plan to respond to these increasing numbers? The negotiation of the next National Housing and Homelessness Agreement provides our only opportunity for creation of a real plan to end the housing crisis and reduce homelessness.

The [Give Me Shelter](https://housingallaustralians.org.au/whatwedo/give-me-shelter/#download)[[1]](#footnote-1) report, clearly demonstrates the underlying business case for greater investment in affordable, public and social housing. The Report, written by SGS Economics and Planning, found:

* **Every $1 the Australian community invests in social and affordable housing will deliver $2 in benefits. This rate of return is comparable to, or better than, those achieved in many other Australian infrastructure investments.**
* **Failure to act on shelter needs will be costing the community $25b per year by 2051.**
* **The benefits of providing adequate housing are estimated at almost $110b.**

**An update on the state of homelessness and the housing crisis in the West**

We would like to give an update on the experience of consumers in the West, as identified by LASN members and then would like to discuss how we can support the Minister to create a plan to end homelessness.

**Specific issues (Rhonda, Deb, Rebecca):**

* Increasing numbers of families are presenting for assistance.
* Young people 21-25 – no resources
* No resources in the West to respond to single people
* Access point services are turning increasing numbers of people away without an initial appointment
* Many households can not access Private Rental Access Program funding because they can’t find private rental less than 55% of income.
* Inadequate targeted resources for young people, who don’t have access to income, can’t sign a rent.
* No affordable rental for anyone on Jobseeker, Youth Allowance or parents with 1-2 children on social security.
* People are disengaging from the Sector because workers can not assist them to access housing.

**Tiny homes, Big Impact update**

Katie Hall kindly forwarded the Network request for funding for a project worker to Minister Shing. Homes Victoria has met with the Network to provide feedback, identifying that Homes Victoria doesn’t generally fund project workers and that a more detailed business plan would be required before a budget submission could be considered.  The Network will now look for philanthropic funding for a project worker to develop the business case to support the proposal.

**National Housing and Homelessness Agreement**

The NHHA ties both State and Federal Governments to funding homelessness services and social housing. The current Agreement expires on 30th June. The Agreement was reviewed by the Productivity Commission and was subject to a consultation last year – both identified that the current Agreement is inadequate.

The Federal Government has also committed to a National Housing and Homelessness Plan, which is likely to inform the new NHHA.

The Network promotes use of the NHHA negotiations as a vehicle for ensuring resources are directed to housing construction and to homelessness services.

Containing a specific youth homelessness strategy and strategy for people with multiple and complex needs.

**Housing Statement**

The Network forwarded a response to the Housing Statement to the Minister, applauding the creation of a Housing Statement, but are concerned that it did not include targets for construction of desperately needed social housing, particularly public housing. (Twice as many people are waiting for social housing in the West as there are social housing properties.)

**Public housing towers**

Feelings are mixed on the demolition of the public housing towers.  The Network is primarily concerned about the timing – demolishing the towers when there is so little growth in public housing, and ask that the Government consider demolishing the towers once there is enough housing to house the 60,000 households on the Victorian Housing Register.

**‘Houses at Parliament’ campaign.**    
Last year Homelessness Networks across Victoria displayed 6,000 origami houses on the steps of Victorian Parliament just before Homelessness Week. The event was very well attended by State MPs.  Federal Parliament was sitting that week, so the Federal MPs couldn’t attend.

The Networks across Victoria have asked Minister Shing if she would sponsor the event this year (31st July).  Sponsoring apparently just means that the Serjeant at Arms at Parliament is aware that this is a sanctioned event.

The campaign asks this year will be along these lines:

**That State and Federal Governments commit to:**

* **Building at least 60,000 additional, appropriate social homes to meet current need in Victoria; and**
* **Implementing the 10 year National plan, with a commitment to END homelessness.**

1. SGS Economics and Planning, for Housing All Australians, Give Me Shelter

   (Melbourne, June 2022) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)