



Community Organisations Housing Alliance

Post Election Housing Statement

On Tuesday August 10 2010 the following organisations came together to form a new alliance to advocate housing and related solutions especially in relation to low and moderate income households and households experiencing homelessness:

- The Australian Council of Trade Unions
- The Australian Council of Social Service
- The Community Housing Federation of Australia
- Homelessness Australia
- National Shelter

The “*Community Organisations Housing Alliance*” (*COHA*), has formed with the purpose of encouraging cooperation and coordination in relation to:

- developing and advocating policy;
- undertaking research and disseminating information;
- organising projects, meetings and other activities and
- working with others to develop and promote policy solutions

Our members support the work of to the Affordable Housing Summit Group and have appointed Julian Disney as our independent chair to create a link to the Summit Group.

Key priorities the *COHA* will advocate include:

- **Appoint a Commonwealth Minister for Housing and Residential Development** at Cabinet level with his or her own separate Department
- **Boost the National Affordable Housing Agreement** with an extra \$1 billion per year to help provide at least 200,000 affordable rental dwellings by 2020
- **Link infrastructure development with affordable housing**, in regional and urban communities, including transport and infrastructure related to mining and resource development.

The group says the main priorities for strengthening the National Affordable Housing Agreement are to:

- **Establish an Affordable Housing Growth Fund** of at least \$500 million per year, especially to help provide more non-profit housing
- **Expand the National Rental Affordability Scheme** to help attract private funding for another round of 50,000 affordable rental dwellings
- **Help State housing authorities to provide public housing** which works well for the residents and the communities in which they live
- **Implement the recommendations of the Henry Tax Review** in relation to housing and transfer payments to rebalance the tax treatment of housing

The members of COHA were disappointed by the absence of affordable housing as a prominent issue during the election and now report the following analysis of the various platforms.

ALP

As the incumbent government, The ALP already has significant policy on affordable housing including:

- **The development of a National Affordable Housing Agreement**
- **National Partnership Agreements with States on Homelessness (\$400m), Social Housing (\$800m), Remote Indigenous Housing (\$5.5b over 10 years)**
- **Establish the Housing Affordability Fund (\$512m)**
- **Boost Social Housing by 20,000 properties (\$5.65b)**
- **Create 50,000 affordable rental properties through NRAS (\$1b over 10 years)**

The ALP has committed over \$13b in new funding towards affordable housing programs. It has committed to the creation of an additional 70,000 properties by 2014. It announced the creation of a Building Better Regional Cities Fund of some \$500m in the first week of the election to improve home ownership in regional cities.

Overall this follows a program of improvement outlined by the Affordable Housing Summit Group and members of COHA and is a practical and welcome boost to affordable housing programs. It is fully costed and committed and forms a base for meeting targets and forward programs of the COHA.

There has been no criticism of the building program associated with the stimulus spending on housing and the NRAS program has met any reasonable measure of implementation. The COHA commends the ALP's coherent policy surrounding affordable housing, yet is frustrated by their failure to recognise the issue during the election campaign.

Coalition

The Coalition released its housing policy on the Friday prior to the election and announced its priorities as:

- **Introduce a National Home Affordability Compact**
- **Affordable Housing Vouchers**
- **State Housing Trusts**
- **A National Framework for Community Housing**

COHA welcomes the Coalition's support of NRAS. Whilst some of the measures outlined in the Coalition's policy are consistent with the COHA program including direct investment into the housing market, A National Framework and a National Home Affordability Compact, we believe that the introduction of housing vouchers and State Housing Trusts will have a much greater negative impact on the housing market. There is, however, no costing or funding allocated to any policy measure.

Having State Housing Authorities put all their own housing (and the housing they own but which is managed by community organisations) into State Housing Trusts, appears to be a regression to the old housing commissions from which we have recently emerged; it is an outmoded policy.

Implicit in this is also an incorrect view that State Housing Authorities cannot manage, when all the evidence shows they manage well and have very high tenancy satisfaction rates. The coalition seeks the dismantling of public housing and misses the point of the past three years which is to build the capacity and holdings of the community sector.

The other plank of coalition policy is the creation of housing vouchers which we say are unworkable, expensive and which will add further inflationary pressure to an overburdened market.

Greens

The Greens housing policy broadly reflects the sentiments of the Community Organisations Housing Alliance, and we commend their acknowledgement of affordable housing during the Federal election campaign.

We recognise the innovative approach taken by the greens, and welcome the Convert to rent initiative, which tackles affordability and stock underutilisation in Australia. The Greens policy is a widely coherent policy, which in many ways is reflective of the ALP's and we are encouraged by their support for continued investment into Affordable Housing.