

MEDIA RELEASE

NSW Budget – horses or houses? Where’s the priority?

Shelter NSW is encouraged to see NSW’s recovery underway with unemployment falling. We remained concerned however, that the state’s improving fortunes are not being shared - with crippling housing unaffordability leaving many behind and driving inequity especially for younger generations.

“With a windfall of over \$1 billion in additional stamp duty”, said John Engeler, CEO Shelter NSW, “it was disappointing to see so little directed back to support people unable to compete in the private housing market.” Those people range from the homeless through to low-income workers forced to commit most of their income to private rent let alone enter the housing market. “This budget sees the NSW Government backing expensive options like thoroughbred stabling when ordinary punters are struggling to pay rent”.

Shelter NSW notes the very modest investment of \$147.1 million to construct an extra 800 social housing properties over two years. This compares to a waiting list of over 50,000 household applications (including in excess of 5,000 priority cases) across NSW.

“In 2020, the NSW Government demonstrated that street homelessness could be quickly reduced. We commended the Government and the broader sector for their efforts”, said Mr Engeler. “ We support the expansion of the *Together Home* program which will see an additional 250 packages to support people ‘rough sleeping’ into accommodation, but suggest that without a major expansion of social housing it will provide little overall impact”.

Regional towns across NSW are experiencing an unprecedented housing crisis. It is extraordinary therefore, to see a relatively large commitment of \$67 million on upgrades to racetracks and additional capacity for stabling thoroughbreds around New South Wales. This includes a \$20 million package for Scone in the Hunter Valley. By contrast, scant attention has been given to alleviating housing concerns. “The people of Scone are currently dealing with a 0.1% rental vacancy rate and a wait of up to 5 years for social housing. I wonder what they think of this?”, wondered Mr Engeler.

Shelter NSW supports the ambition to develop Western Sydney as home to good, well-paid jobs and commends the NSW Government for investing in the infrastructure to support it. We note with concern however, the assumption that new housing supply will guarantee the delivery of affordable housing for the thousands of low-income people who will live there. Proposals for Government land like Bays West, Ingleside and Bradfield for example, propose thousands of new homes yet no commitment to additional social housing that will inevitably be required nor any requirement for Affordable Rental Housing for key workers. “The NSW Government places a lot of faith in the private housing market to supply affordable housing for low income people. We do not share their confidence”, cautioned Mr Engeler.

Shelter NSW calls on the NSW Government to commit to acquiring or building 5,000 additional social housing dwellings each year for the next decade to ensure that everyone in NSW is able to participate and share in the improving fortunes of the state’s recovery.

Media contact: **Cathy Callaghan** (Senior Policy Officer), cathy@sheltersnsw.org.au 0407 067 587

