

Opening Statement 14 November 2024

Chair, Senators and colleagues, it is my pleasure to appear as CEO of Housing Australia having commenced in this role on 22 September this year. Thank you for your invitation to participate in today's public hearing.

As the Commonwealth's housing delivery agency, our 160 staff have two main streams of work:

1. The first is supporting home ownership - As at the end October 2024, Housing Australia has supported over 190,000 people to achieve home ownership through this scheme, including 58,000 home buyers last financial year, including approximately 1 in 3 first home buyers who purchased a home last year.
2. Housing Australia's second stream of work is supporting the development of housing, particularly social and affordable housing – through various financing, investment and grant mechanisms. To do this, we partner with the private sector, Community Housing Providers and all levels of government nationally.
 - a. Under the Affordable Housing Bond Aggregator (AHBA), we have approved finance to support 18,800 new and existing homes held by Community Housing Providers;
 - b. Under the National Housing Infrastructure Facility (NHIF), we have approved \$930m of funding – a combination of loans, grants and investments – to unlock 11,700 homes;
 - c. Under these programs, we are currently supporting construction of 3,800 homes

Since Housing Australia was established in 2018 as the National Housing Finance and Investment Corporation, we have also issued over \$2.8 billion of bonds which have been sold to institutional investors. The funds from these bonds supports loans to Community Housing Providers through the AHBA. Housing Australia has more than 70 institutional investors, including 5 superannuation funds, a significant number of who have been consistent supporters of our bonds in the primary market and are investing to achieve appropriate risk adjusted returns.

In late 2022, we also began preparation for the Housing Australia Future Fund Facility (HAFFF) and National Housing Accord Facility (NHAF) which set a target of a combined 40,000 homes comprising 20,000 units of social housing and 20,000 units of affordable housing.

In line with policy parameters set by the Government, the HAFFF and NHAF also aimed to mobilise institutional capital – including superannuation - to support more social and affordable housing. In February 2023, Housing Australia established an Advisory Group to support preparatory activities and provide strategic guidance on design and implementation of the HAFFF and NHAF programs. The Advisory Group had representation from relevant key sectors including Community Housing Providers, property, banks, superannuation funds, institutional investors, construction, legal and the public sector. The Group's role was advisory to Housing Australia's management and did not extend to any decision-making responsibilities.

The enabling Investment Mandate for the HAFFF and NHAF was registered on 13 December 2023 and we launched the first funding round on 15 January 2024. On 16 September this year, Housing Australia announced 185 projects had been identified as Preferred Projects and we are now working to close contracts with the Preferred Applicants. As we are now in contract negotiations with Preferred Applicants, to ensure we do not adversely impact those negotiations, we are not able to provide substantive details about each application at this stage. Details of successful applications will be released in line with the requirements under our Investment Mandate, however, it is worth noting that eligible applicants includes registered community housing providers, State and Territory Governments, special purpose vehicle undertaking a project to increase available social housing or affordable housing, and/or address acute housing needs.

Thank you again for the opportunity to meet with the Committee. I welcome any questions from the Committee.