



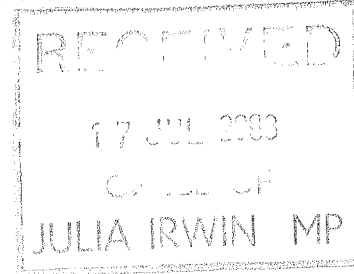
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
PETITIONS

Received 21.7.08

**The Hon Tanya Plibersek MP  
Minister for Housing  
Minister for the Status of Women**

BR08-000756

Mrs Julia Irwin MP  
Chair Standing Committee on Petitions  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600



Dear Madam Chair

Thank you for your letter of 2 June 2008 in relation to a petition about funding for Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) services, emergency accommodation and public housing. I welcome the opportunity to respond to the petition.

I received a copy of the petition from Ms Cathy Crawford of North Queensland Combined Women's Services on 4 March 2008 and I responded to her directly.

As you are aware, many Australians are struggling with the high cost of housing.

Recent NATSEM research on housing affordability commissioned by the Australian Government showed that levels of housing stress are critically high in northern NSW and throughout QLD. This research is supported by the number of signatories on the petition sent to me by Ms Crawford.

The Government is very concerned about the effect of rising rents on low and moderate income households across Australia. Rents are increasing because there are not enough rental homes available, with vacancy rates at or below 2 per cent in all capital cities.

To increase the supply of affordable rental accommodation the Government is investing \$623 million over four years in a new National Rental Affordability Scheme. The new Scheme will provide institutional investors with the incentive they need to build more affordable rental accommodation.

The Australian Government will provide annual tax credits of \$6,000 on 50,000 new rental properties to be offered to low and moderate income earners. State and Territory Governments have agreed to contribute a further \$2,000 per property, either as cash or in kind each year.

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Rent for these properties will be 20 per cent below market rates, and tenants will still be eligible for Rent Assistance – making it even more affordable for individuals and families. If demand for rental properties is still strong, a further 50,000 properties will be built from 2012 onwards.

Addressing homelessness is also a major priority for the Australian Government. We have already announced an additional \$150 million to build new homes for homeless Australians.

As you know the Australian Government released a Green Paper on Homelessness, *Which Way Home? A New Approach to Homelessness* in May to promote discussion about how to reduce homelessness.

We are now developing a White Paper to set the agenda for tackling homelessness to 2020. The White Paper, to be released in September 2008, will include a comprehensive, national action plan to reduce the number of homeless Australians.

I strongly believe these initiatives, over time, will reduce homelessness and address the housing affordability crisis.

I trust this information is of assistance to the committee.

Yours sincerely

**Tanya Plibersek**

8-7-08