



# Housing Ministers' Conference

**Communiqué 17 June 2011**

Housing Ministers met today to progress national responses to increasing supply for affordable housing for low income earners across Australia and address ongoing homelessness efforts.

## **National Regulatory System for Housing Providers**

The Ministers agreed in principle to a blueprint for a national regulatory system for housing providers. This agreement is an important milestone in the introduction of a nationally consistent regulatory framework, which will promote the growth of the not-for-profit housing sector across Australia. Growing this sector is critical to help addressing the growing demand for affordable and social housing across Australia.

The proposed system will include a national register of housing providers, a national regulatory code applied uniformly across Australia, and a lead registrar to be appointed for each housing provider operating in more than one jurisdiction.

The Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to creating a robust and consistent regulatory system that will provide prudential supervision and regulation of housing providers. The purpose is to assist providers to grow across jurisdictions, ensure tenants are protected and assist the sector to attract private investment.

Ministers agreed to public consultation on the design elements of the new system, including the draft national legislative arrangements and the regulation impact statement. Consultations with key stakeholders will take place in the latter half of 2011 with final proposals to be put to Housing Ministers for agreement by the end of 2011.

Ministers will then review proposals before final agreement.

The proposed new national regulatory system is intended to be implemented by the end of 2012.

## **Social Housing Initiative**

The \$5.64 billion Social Housing Initiative under the Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan is on track to deliver around 19,600 new homes by the end of June 2012.

Governments have worked to deliver both a cost-effective and quality social housing program which has resulted in the expected number of dwellings delivered of 19,200 being surpassed.

At the end of May 2011, construction had commenced on over 19,000 of these new homes across the nation, a majority of which will have a six-star energy rating.

The Social Housing Initiative is a commitment by Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments to significantly increase the supply of social housing across the country and provide accommodation to many disadvantaged Australians, particularly those who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

Despite significant weather interruption, particularly in Queensland, Governments will continue to work towards the completion of all dwellings by June 2012. The program is expected to benefit approximately 31,000 Australians and has provided a significant boost to social housing supply across Australia.

### **National Responses to Improve Housing Access, Affordability and Supply**

Housing Ministers considered evidence on the key housing market issues that are negatively impacting on low income households and the most vulnerable members of our communities.

Housing Ministers discussed the need for new approaches and innovative thinking around how to achieve better outcomes for low-income households and agreed that the period leading up to the renegotiation of the NAHA provides an opportunity to explore reform options.

### **Livable Housing Design**

Ministers discussed the progress of the Livable Housing Design Initiative and the importance of incorporating Livable Housing Design elements into social housing developments. The Livable Housing Design Guidelines set out key easy living features that aim to make homes safer and easier to use for all occupants, including people with disability and ageing Australians. The design features can help to increase social inclusion, improve health outcomes and allow greater independence for anyone experiencing disability.

It is intended that the guidelines will be used to inform consumers, the industry and all levels of government about the benefits of Livable Housing Design.

### **Specialist Homelessness Services Collection**

Governments have been working to implement a new Specialist Homelessness Services Collection which is on track to commence on 1 July 2011.

The new system will collect and report data about specialist homelessness services agencies across Australia and clients assisted by those services. The data includes de-identified information about the client, their circumstances, the type of assistance requested and the services provided by the agency.

The new data collection will enable an improved understanding of homelessness, including youth homelessness and risk factors associated with homelessness.

### **National Partnership Agreement for Remote Indigenous Housing**

Ministers welcomed significant progress on the construction and upgrade of houses in remote communities. This is providing support for some of Australia's most vulnerable and isolated people.

Ministers have agreed to continue discussions to formulate a national approach to commence from 2012 / 2013 regarding the improvement of infrastructure in remote communities to support housing and other services.

### **Commonwealth Budget Measures**

Ministers noted the range of measures announced in the 2011 / 2012 Federal Budget which provide support and additional help for people at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

Ministers welcomed the \$200 million National Partnership Agreement on Mental Health which will help to strengthen Governments' response to prevent people suffering from a mental illness exiting from health facilities into homelessness.

States and Territories noted they will be able to bid for funding under the National Partnership Agreement and that the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) will discuss the proposed National Partnership Agreement later this year.

### **National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness**

State and Territory Governments discussed the progress of the implementation of the NPA on Homelessness. The NPA will see the rollout of 184 new or expanded services around Australia to better address homelessness. States and Territories are currently on track to meet the targets set out in the Implementation Plans.

The mid-term review of the NPAH is underway and expected to be completed by the end of August 2011.

### **Homelessness National Quality Framework**

A comprehensive public consultation process on a homelessness national quality framework was completed on 31 May 2011. The framework is intended to ensure quality service delivery by organisations that address homelessness. Governments will consider the possible models once costed.

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