

Submission to the draft Tasmanian Housing Strategy July 2023

About us

Mission Australia is a national Christian charity motivated by a shared vision of an Australia where everyone has a safe home and can thrive. Since 1859, we have been standing alongside people in need across Australia, offering real hope that has lasting impact.

In 2021-22, we supported nearly 148,000 individuals through 465 programs and services across Australia. This included over 23,500 individuals in Tasmania supported through services including community services (children, young people and families), employment solutions, housing and disability services (Local Area Coordination and Early Childhood).

In 2009, Mission Australia established Mission Australia Housing (MAH), a Tier 1 Community Housing Provider. In 2013, we took over the management of a portfolio of 500 social homes in Clarendon Vale and Rokeby and this year a further 690 social housing homes were added to the portfolio in Warrane, Mornington, Risdon Vale, Chigwell, Midway Point, Sorell, Orford, Triabunna, Swansea and Bicheno.

Overview

Mission Australia welcomes the opportunity to respond to the exposure draft of the Tasmanian Housing Strategy. We commend the extensive consultation undertaken to inform the development of the Strategy as demonstrated by the *What We Heard Discussion Paper* and *Lived Experience Workshops – Summary Report*.

We participated in the consultation with a [submission](#) to the Discussion Paper which made nine recommendations.

1. Targets are adopted by the Government across Tasmania to drive work and accountability on meeting affordable housing supply needs and ending homelessness.
2. Create the environment for First Nations Peoples to exercise self-determination in addressing the unique housing and homelessness issues they face.
3. Implement a policy of Housing First approach to ensure people can access housing when they need it and that wraparound support be provided where required.
4. Implement build-to-rent affordable housing to address housing affordability and provide security of tenure.
5. Invest in targeted housing models for older women at risk of homelessness.
6. Introduce increased private rental financial assistance and independent support plans into private rental market subsidy programs, using the NSW Rent Choice program as a model.
7. Expand tenancy support programs to cover those at risk of homelessness in social and private housing.
8. Adopt mandatory inclusionary zoning to help boost the supply of social and affordable housing and support the development of strong communities.
9. Adopt strategic commissioning approaches with minimum seven-year funding contracts, to maximise allocative efficiency, realise the full benefits of programs and initiatives and give certainty to service providers, staff and clients.

We are pleased to see a commitment to Housing First and recognition for new housing models such as build-to-rent reflected in the draft strategy along with options that meet people’s diverse needs, including older people and First Nations people. We hope that the Strategy Action Plans provide more specific details on how and when these initiatives will be implemented.

On other fronts, there are missed opportunities including to underpin the Strategy with realisable actions and to use levers available to the State Government without the intervention of the Commonwealth.

The following sections identify critical areas for the Strategy that must be addressed in the final version.

Adopt overall targets, outcomes and measures for the Strategy

One of the most critical elements missing from the Strategy is demonstrative accountability to achieving its stated vision¹ and adequately addressing the very real challenges that are outlined. Putting in place the necessary architecture to connect the initiatives discussed in the Strategy with corresponding targets, outcomes and measures which would support monitoring and evaluation of its four key themes, as well as overall progress, is the path forward. We believe that failing to do this will hinder the Strategy’s purpose and clarity for stakeholders and runs the risk of not realising its full potential.

The draft Strategy provides revised estimates that Tasmania’s population will reach 650,000 people around 2033-2041, far sooner than anticipated in Tasmania’s Population Growth Strategy which projected that population would be reached in 2050.

With this looming demand for housing set to compound existing pressures on the housing and homelessness systems, the proposed Strategy is left vulnerable to failure without detailed targets and underlying outcomes and measures for housing supply, including social and affordable housing to end homelessness. Having that architecture informing and driving the intended activities to be articulated in the subsequent Strategy Action Plans, makes sure activities meet the scale and diversity of need across the housing spectrum.

The following targets are examples of what the strategy should aim for:

- reducing homelessness, including a commitment to:
 - Housing First principles
 - zero street sleeping
 - no exits into homelessness from institutions
- a net year-on-year increase in social and affordable housing

¹ “A well-functioning, viable housing system that provides safe, appropriate and affordable housing for all Tasmanians”

- reducing the number of low-income people living in rental stress
- transferring management of public housing to the community housing sector by 2050.

Once clear targets have been set then appropriate outcomes and measures can be derived to flesh out the rest of the accountability architecture of the Strategy.

Outline the governance structure and delivery of the Strategy Action Plans

We acknowledge that the Strategy states the reporting and governance structure is yet to be determined, however, we stress the importance of the final Strategy containing a firm commitment to identifying relevant private and key community stakeholders, not just as delivery partners but as representatives alongside Government in development, implementation and monitoring functions of the plans.

A multi-sector framework would ideally support the implementation and governance of the Strategy. An expert housing advisory panel could be established to oversee the delivery of the Strategy and its new actions. Such a panel could help to drive cross-sector collaboration, guide future housing-related policies and investment and advise on the establishment of short and long-term directions and performance measures.

The final Strategy should also provide time horizons and delivery dates for the Strategy Action Plans. This should cover the intended lifespan of the Strategy which would ideally be influenced by the ambition set by targets, outcomes and measures as mentioned previously. The NSW Government's *Housing 2041* strategy is an example of how this could be approached in Tasmania. Similar to the draft Tasmanian Housing Strategy, *Housing 2041* describes a long-term vision, objectives and strategies for housing. However, *Housing 2041* also identifies actions that will be undertaken within the first two years of the strategy to address and respond to current needs. *Housing 2041* states "These first short-term actions will shape the foundations for future action plans, including facilitating housing supply in appropriate locations, delivering more diverse housing products and tenure types, improving support for vulnerable groups, and driving building sustainability and resilience. Beyond 2022, future action plans will seek to outline new, longer-term change or reform that aligns with the priorities of *Housing 2041*. This approach provides flexibility and ensures priorities can be updated to reflect changing circumstances, evidence and community expectation."

Fully utilise the levers available to the Tasmanian Government

Mission Australia appreciates housing policy overlaps Federal, State and Local Government roles and responsibilities. However, the Strategy doesn't fully activate the levers that are available to the Tasmanian Government without the need for Federal Government involvement. States and Territories for example have key responsibilities in areas such as housing-related taxes and charges, planning controls, infrastructure policy, transfer of public housing assets or management to community housing providers, delivery of housing and homelessness services and relevant data collection.

A key area where the Tasmanian Government can and should play a more prominent role is in easing unaffordability in the private rental market. The Strategy recognises the problem that "*market conditions have increased demand for social housing and homelessness services, with many young people potentially facing a lifetime of renting given their diminishing prospects of home ownership.*" However, it shifts responsibility to the Federal Government by reference to working constructively together, noting Commonwealth Rent Assistance. We commend the Tasmanian government's Private

Rental Incentives (PRI) program and its commitment to doubling the program by providing incentives for a total of 400 private rentals to be available over the next two years (until 30 June 2024). However, more needs to be done. The Tasmanian Government could look at private rental assistance products, such as adopting a local version of NSW’s Rent Choice as recommended in our submission and/or other solutions proposed to date through the consultation process.

Amend the Strategy’s concept of the housing system

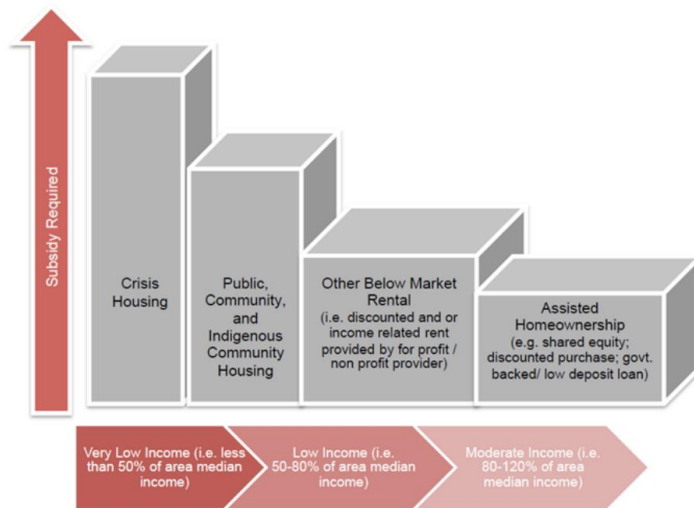


Figure 1 The Housing System

The segments identified at the ‘Homelessness’ end of Figure 1 in the draft Strategy are problematic. These represent failures of the housing system rather than a legitimate part of it. In particular, we object to rough sleeping being identified as a form of housing.

We suggest looking to other conceptual frameworks of the housing system to inform amendments. Examples provided below:

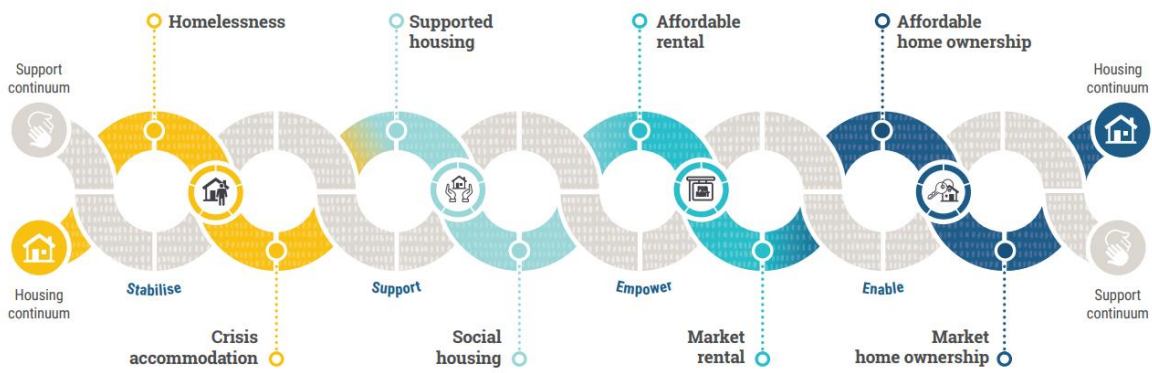
Figure 1: Continuum of housing needs and options



[AHURI](#)



[Housing 2041 NSW Housing Strategy](#)



[WA Housing Strategy 2020-2030 – An integrated housing and support continuum](#)

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