

Attachment A

Joint Letter to NSW Premier

The Hon. Chris Minns MP
Premier
52 Martin Place
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Premier

Secure housing for renters and boarding house residents

Like many other cities in Australia and around the world, Sydney is facing a housing affordability crisis, and we commend the NSW Government for making housing a priority. However, housing production cannot be at any cost – housing must be livable, good quality and genuinely affordable to rent.

On 28 October, the City of Sydney hosted the Secure Housing for Renters Roundtable. Over 40 representatives from housing providers, community and peak organisations, NSW Government agencies, renters and members of the City's Housing for All Advisory Panel met to discuss this challenge and how we can rise to meet it.

In the City of Sydney Local Government Area, there are more than 20,000 households paying more than 30 per cent of their household income on housing, placing them in what is widely regarded as housing stress.

Renters in housing stress and boarding house residents have very low levels of security of tenure. Landlords can increase rents, or redevelop, leaving renters needing to find new homes. This is a particular risk in the inner city, where land values are so high.

Cost of living pressures and the housing affordability crisis are contributing to more people sleeping rough. Many people sleeping rough in our area are excluded from social housing due to their complex needs relating to their lack of residency status, challenges sustaining tenancies or mental health issues. The provision of housing for those on low-moderate incomes is more cost-effective to governments in the long term than the ongoing cycle of homelessness, emergency shelters, healthcare costs, and law enforcement responses.

Boarding houses

Communal living, including boarding houses, cooperatives and other co-living accommodation, plays a vital role in supporting residents, providing connection, care, and a sense of belonging – especially when it is most needed.

Consent authorities are obligated to assess development applications for boarding house conversions under the outdated NSW State Environmental Planning Policy (Housing) 2021 (Housing SEPP) and the Guidelines for Retention of Existing Affordable Rental Housing 2009 (the Guidelines). However, the Guidelines contain outdated viability benchmarks and encourage inflated valuations. This means the Housing SEPP has generally failed to preserve boarding houses or generate monetary contributions to compensate for their loss.

Currently, boarding house tenants do not have the same rights as tenants covered under the Residential Tenancies Act 2010, which limits their security of tenure.

The former NSW Government's 2020 statutory review of the Boarding Houses Act 2012 made 21 recommendations aimed at strengthening the rights of residents of shared accommodation. The current NSW Government must implement them urgently.

We call on the NSW Government to:

- ***Urgently review the Housing SEPP and Guidelines, particularly the viability yield and test and contribution payable, in order to protect existing low-rental housing and other diverse housing such as boarding houses***
- ***Improve the security of tenure for renters and boarding house residents and their rights to improved amenity and living standards as a result of changes to the Boarding Houses Act.***

Strengthen renters' rights

The NSW Labor Government went to the last election promising to end 'no grounds' evictions. Following comprehensive consultation, changes came into effect on 19 May 2025, requiring landlords wanting to evict a tenant so significant repairs or renovations could be carried out would have to ensure there was evidence that work was planned, and not simply a tactic to remove tenants.

Five weeks later, without further consultation, the NSW Government removed the additional evidence requirement in the Regulations. Landlords now only need to provide a written statement of their intention to renovate. Without the full evidence requirements for this prescribed ground for termination there is a real risk to renters' rights and security.

The NSW Government needs to show that it is listening to the voices of renters when developing and amending rental laws.

We call on the NSW Government to:

- ***Improve autonomy, rights and protections for renters, particularly around unfair evictions, rent increases and repairs and maintenance***
- ***Create the conditions for a fair and secure long-term rental market***
- ***Commit to consulting meaningfully with the undersigned and other key stakeholders on future rental reforms.***

Housing reforms

While the NSW Government's housing reforms focus on housing supply, they do not include a standard requirement to deliver Affordable and Social Housing, and there is no real evidence that increasing market housing supply will meaningfully reduce housing and rental costs. Under the recent reforms, affordable housing can be time-limited for only 15 years, after which homes can be returned to the private market. Where will these residents go?

The introduction of State Significant Development pathways for projects incorporating time-limited affordable housing rented at a 20 per cent discount on market rates proves that not all

affordable housing is equal. The City's model for providing Affordable Housing is housing that is genuinely affordable, delivered in perpetuity, managed or owned by a registered not-for-profit Community Housing Provider, and rent-capped at 30 per cent of gross household income.

We call on the NSW Government to:

- ***Implement existing local affordable rental housing schemes in any State Significant Developments***
- ***Enable a pathway for time-limited affordable housing to be delivered in perpetuity***
- ***Amend the NSW Affordable Housing Ministerial Guidelines definitions to mandate the use of income-based rent for Affordable Housing in a standard definition.***

Supported housing

We acknowledge the NSW Government's important investment in building more social and affordable housing. Investment is also needed to support the human services that respond to the underlying causes of homelessness. Without urgent investment in appropriate mental health, alcohol and other drugs and homelessness services, culturally appropriate services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and consideration of families and multi-generational households, many people lucky enough to secure housing will not be able to maintain their tenancies and safely participate in their communities.

The pathway out of homelessness for many people experiencing long-term homelessness is housing with high levels of onsite support, such as at Common Ground on Pyrmont Bridge Road in Camperdown. However, funding must include long-term operational funding to support residents on an ongoing basis.

We call on the NSW Government to fund more supported housing, like the Common Ground model, and consider 'a women's only project'.

Providing secure housing and protecting renters requires action from Local, State and Federal Governments, as well as the development industry, to deliver more social, affordable and diverse housing, and provide support services to renters.


Clover Moore AO
The Right Honourable
The Lord Mayor of Sydney
CITY OF SYDNEY 


Kate Timmins
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WYANGA
ABORIGINAL AGED CARE



Tara Somerville

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Housing For All Advisory Panel