

5 October 2016

**Forget the roads! Infrastructure focus on housing sets the right foundations.**

Launch Housing has welcomed the focus on housing in Infrastructure Victoria's plan released this week, saying it lays the right foundations to address housing affordability and homelessness.

Launch Housing CEO, Tony Keenan said the announcement is the right response to declining rental affordability, long waiting lists for public housing, and increasing rates of homelessness.

"We particularly welcome the fact that Infrastructure Victoria has recognised that increasing housing affordability for the most vulnerable Victorians is key to building a productive and healthy state" said Mr Keenan.

Victoria currently has one of the lowest rates of social and community housing in Australia, while more than 32,000 people are on the state's public housing waiting list. Melbourne has also experienced an increase of 74% of rough sleeping in the CBD over the last two years.

"The broad focus taken by Infrastructure Victoria to address these issues is the right approach as there is not just one solution to housing affordability. In particular we welcome the focus on developing a strategy for increasing the supply of affordable housing, fast tracking approval processes, including affordability quotas in new developments and increasing rental subsidies."

"It is really encouraging to see this type of ambitious, inclusive and long term thinking from Infrastructure Victoria."

"However, the report could aim higher in the affordable housing targets. We estimate Victoria needs an additional 60,000 affordable homes over the next 10 years, rather than 30,000 as the report suggests. A range of mechanisms could be used to achieve this, including new social housing and longer term rental subsidies."

"A 60,000 target would help Victoria meet a recommendation by a 2010 Victorian parliamentary inquiry into the adequacy of public housing that social housing account for 5% of total housing. This would also bring us into line with the level of social housing in other states and territories, addressing levels of need among vulnerable Victorians."

"We've also made recommendations to the government to use vacant government-owned land more creatively. Sometimes this land might only be available for 5-10 years but with the right types of construction it can represent a cost effective way to house people."

"The fast tracking of approvals is crucial as we need to move quickly to address the crisis in supply of affordable housing. Sometimes local planning processes can unreasonably delay the development of new affordable housing."

Mr Keenan said that he looked forward to providing input into the next phase of Infrastructure Victoria's report as well as hearing how some of these recommendations might be implemented through the housing affordability work that is being undertaken by the Treasurer.

**About Launch Housing**

Launch Housing is a Melbourne based, secular and independent community agency with a mission to end homelessness. It provides high quality housing, support, education and employment services to thousands of people across 14 sites in metropolitan Melbourne.

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