

**National Shelter's Anti-Poverty Week message:
Reform housing system or face new wave of poverty**

Housing peak National Shelter has chosen Anti-Poverty week to warn that unless Australia reforms our housing system we face a new wave of poverty.

National Shelter Chairperson Adam Farrar said that house prices and rents are stretching ordinary Australians to breaking point and far too many people are completely excluded from safe, secure and affordable housing.

"ABS records show that the rate of Australians who owned or were paying off their own home fell from 71 per cent in 1994-95 to 67 per cent in 2011-12.

"At the same time rents sky-rocketed and public and social housing numbers were steadily eroded leaving low and even middle income Australians with few affordable housing options.

"On any given night in Australia, one in 200 people are homeless. Others are paying so much in rent or mortgage payments that they can't afford other necessities of life.

To address these issues, National Shelter calls on government to:

- **Recognise that housing affordability is an issue for each and every Australian by appointing a cabinet level Minister for Housing and investing in a national housing plan**

"Access to affordable housing impacts on every single area of life Australians consider important. Without it, health, education and access to employment are all compromised, leading to ever increasing costs for government.

"We need the focus of a dedicated housing minister and a national affordable housing agreement to address these issues.

- **Use the upcoming tax review to examine how tax measures impacting on the housing system can be better targeted to make the system fairer and more effective for everyone.**

"The Reserve Bank of Australia has recently noted that our housing market is so dominated by investors that housing inflation has reached dangerous levels," Mr Farrar said.

"These concerns are shared by HIA, ACOSS, economist Saul Eslake and, of course, National Shelter.

"Negative gearing is untargeted and does virtually nothing to help address our massive housing supply shortfall. It adds inflationary pressure and cost the government bottom line massively.

“There are positive tax measure that could have real impacts on the supply of affordable housing. We need to investigate these.

- **Arrest the decline of public and social housing numbers and support innovation in the development of new stock**

“It is essential that Government live up to its responsibilities in all parts of the housing picture, including in the provision of social housing for those people that the market continues to fail.

“There has been significant innovation by the community housing sector in recent years, including the provision of more socially and economically viable mixed-use developments which include social housing, private housing and retail space.

“Government needs to invest in growth in this space as well as providing a supportive regulatory and tax environment.

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For comment: Adam Farrar, National Shelter Chairperson 0409 669 936ß

*Anti-Poverty Week is a week where all Australians are encouraged to organise or take part in an activity aiming to highlight or overcome issues of poverty and hardship here in Australia or overseas. It was established in Australia as an expansion of the UN's annual International Anti-Poverty Day on October 17. In 2014 Anti Poverty Week will be held from the **12th to the 18th of October.***