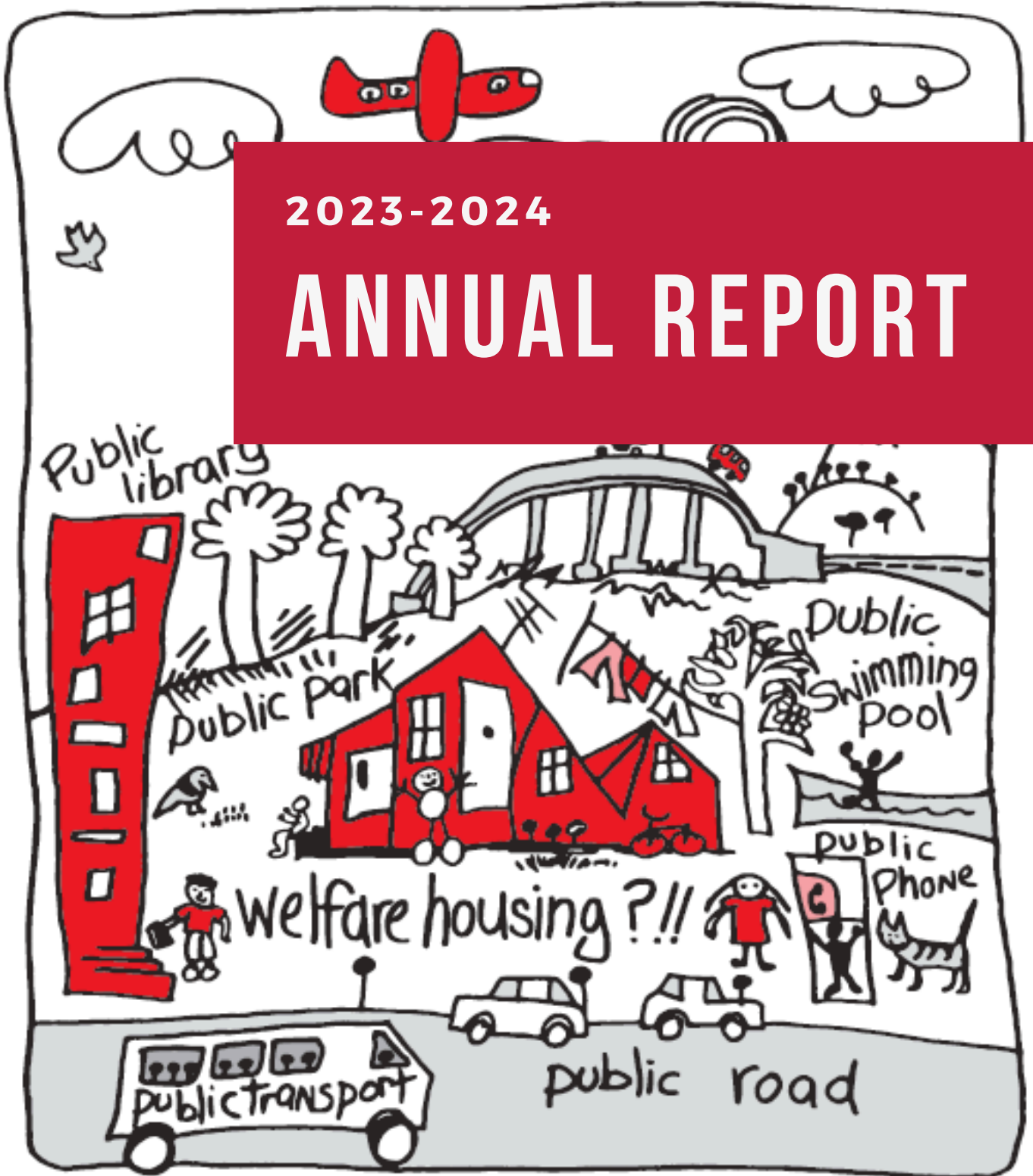


2023-2024

# ANNUAL REPORT



# HOUSING

a right not a privilege

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# ABOUT NATIONAL SHELTER

**NATIONAL SHELTER IS A NON-GOVERNMENT PEAK ORGANISATION THAT AIMS TO IMPROVE HOUSING ACCESS, AFFORDABILITY, APPROPRIATENESS, SAFETY AND SECURITY FOR PEOPLE ON LOW INCOMES.**

Since 1975, National Shelter has been a trusted voice working towards influencing government policy and action. We raise community awareness about housing issues and illuminate the experience of low-income households within Australia's housing system.

## THE SHELTER NETWORK

National Shelter is supported by the Shelter network. There are Shelters operating in seven States and Territories.

The Shelter Network forms a strong and collaborative voice ensuring that everybody has the right to a place to call home.

The Shelter Network plays a key leadership role across Australia championing the development of an effective housing system and bringing all parts of the housing system together to drive systemic change. It is a rich network that creates strong collaboration between organisations, government, the community and individuals working towards our collective goal of a healthy housing system.



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# CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT



As I write this report, National Shelter moves closer to the beginning of what will be our 50th year as a National Housing Peak. Half a century, a Golden Age indeed, and unfortunately, given the growing chorus of concern around housing I can certainly say we are “50 and not out”.

So, it is my pleasure to present the Chairperson's Report for the National Shelter for the 2023-2024 financial year. This period has been one of significant achievements, continued advocacy, and important partnerships. As the need for social and affordable housing continues to grow, and the housing crisis worsens, National Shelter has remained committed to addressing these challenges and advocating for policy reforms that support vulnerable populations.

It feels like an eternity ago, but it was in the recent financial year that we finally saw the passing of the Housing Australia Future Fund (HAFF) to deliver Commonwealth's \$10billion signature housing response to create a pipeline of funding for social and affordable rental housing. The package also established the institutional architecture of Housing Australia and the National Housing Supply and Affordability Council. In the current financial year we look forward to the announcements of the first round of the HAFF and seeing the housing being delivered.

In the ten months since the passing of the HAFF, we have seen the housing crisis continue to deteriorate creating an even greater sense of urgency of the responses needed by all levels of government, not-for-profits and the private sector, and the need for collective action.

The National Housing Supply and Affordability Council so starkly put it in their first State of the Housing System Report earlier this year *'There is no denying the housing crisis we are in. It is a longstanding crisis, fundamentally driven by the failure to deliver enough housing of all types – from social housing through to market home ownership...These all combine to create an environment in which prices and rents are growing faster than wages, rental vacancies are near all-time lows, 169,000 households are on public housing waiting lists, 122,000 people are experiencing homelessness and projected housing supply is very low... This is not an abstract and theoretical topic. We're talking about homes, not assets. Access to shelter is a basic human need and right. The lack of a secure home, whether rented or owned, is a source of significant stress for families.'*

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It is within this context that National Shelter continues to advocate for at least 10% of all homes in Australia being social homes, the inclusion of targets for social and affordable housing in supply outcomes of the National Housing Accord, better rental protections for a tenure that will be lifelong for so many, the introduction of mandatory inclusionary zoning, and fundamental changes to our taxation system.

National Shelter's work is both public facing supporting or critiquing policy proposals as well as behind the scene, often with our sector partners.

To this end we have contributed a range of submissions either individually or jointly with our peak partners on inquiries and consultations on the rental market, the National Housing and Homelessness Plan, Build to Rent, the cost of living, Help to Buy, and the Covid inquiry.

The Rental Affordability Index, produced in partnership with SGS Economics and Planning, remains our hallmark research. There has been significant growth in the media attention of the index in the past three years, with the 2023 edition achieving over 2000 media articles. We look forward to celebrating the 10th anniversary of the RAI later this year.

This year we saw the publication outcome of our support to Oculi photography collective of their Meta grant from the Walkley Foundation. The photo essay series published by the ABC of 'The Great Crumbling Australian Dream' provided powerful and provocative images of elements of the housing crisis confronting Australia. The images from this work are throughout this report. I strongly urge you to look at the images and read the stories online.

The images from the photo essay are a reminder of who it is we are attempting to represent – lower income households who are in housing need and precarity, facing homelessness, and requiring urgent solutions.

We cannot do this work and make these representations without the support of our members. On behalf of the Executive Committee, which includes Jackson Hills (Secretary), Annie Taylor (Treasurer), Travis Gilbert (Deputy and Public Officer), and Toby O'Connor (General Member), I would like to thank our members for their consistent support and valuing the contribution of the work that we do. Your commitment to National Shelter is critical to our presence and our work.

However, it must be said that peak organisations that represent the interests of low-income households cannot function adequately without government funding. We remain perpetually disappointed that, despite our best efforts, the Commonwealth government does not see itself funding organisations such as National Shelter. We rely on the generosity of our members, and this means that difficult decisions must be made about where we prioritise our expenditure. Again, as we head into our 50th year, these considerations become much more urgent, and this financial position is reflected in our Treasurer's report.



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I would like to take this opportunity to thank my fellow Executive Committee members and National Council members for their commitment and enthusiasm for National Shelter.

I would like to acknowledge our exceptional CEO Emma Greenhalgh who continues to be a formidable force, often working solo, travelling great distances, covering diverse areas of housing, policy, and politics. She continues to on our behalf deftly move between advocate, agitator, and advisor for a fairer housing system for all.

We work closely with many peaks, stakeholders, industry groups, campaigns and organisations, including CHIA, Homelessness Australia, NATSIHA, NARO, Better Renting, ACOSS, and the member of the National Affordable Housing Alliance, and I extend our thanks.

Finally, I would like to close by acknowledging the life and contribution of Steve Bevington, Founder and Managing Director CHL and National Shelter Council member. We were immensely shocked and saddened by his sudden passing in May. Steve was a visionary leader who played an instrumental role the community housing sector. He was a very good friend to National Shelter and we will miss his wisdom, passion, and dedication.

John Engeler  
**Chairperson**



Image: Aishah Kenton (Oculi Photography Collective), from 'Home for a Time' via The Great ~~Crumbling~~ Australian Dream. funded by Meta and The Walkley Foundation.

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# CEO'S REPORT



In my annual report last year, I had said it had been extraordinary year of engagement on housing policy. If last year was extraordinary, this year has been immense. With the government consolidating their agenda and beginning to deliver on their commitments we have been engaging with the processes through various organisations to implement the initiatives including the Housing Australia Future Fund (HAFF), Help to Buy, Build to Rent, and the National Housing and Homelessness Plan.

Coupled with supporting our members and other points of engagement throughout the year focused on achieving solutions to the housing crisis, I reflect on why many in the sector are needing to catch their breath. The sector is stretched while they not only engage with various levels of government about delivering a range of housing and homelessness policy initiatives, they are also delivering services to a growing client base during a worsening housing and homelessness crisis.

Some highlights for me this year included joining with our sector colleagues at the National Association of Renters' Organisations (NARO) to continue to apply pressure to the federal government about the importance of renters' rights and the need for reform for this significant tenure. This included a joint submission to the Senate Committee for Community Affairs inquiry into 'The worsening rental crises supported by 80 organisations nationally. I was also incredibly privileged to join the Housing for the Aged Action Group (HAAG) and their delegation to Canberra in August 2023 to advocate for better solutions for older women experiencing housing precarity and homelessness. The delegation included older women from across Australia to engage directly with parliamentarians about the situation facing older women. The combination of quantitative research, policy responses, and lived experience provided a rich combination to advocate for better housing and homelessness responses for older women. From an organisational perspective we finally updated the National Shelter website and included a donation button. Thank you to those who provided donations to support our work this year.

I will not use my report reiterate the activities of National Shelter this year – this has been adequately covered elsewhere in this annual report, and also by John in his Chairperson's Report. What has been provided is not an exhaustive list. I would prefer to focus on the continuing national presence of National Shelter and how we are able to engage meaningfully in national housing debate despite the lack of funding from the federal government. Considerable effort this year has gone into seeking government funding to support and enhance the work that we do. Despite the support of many parliamentarians, we have not been successful.

I cannot express enough my deep disappointment that funding has not been forthcoming from the federal government. This places National Shelter in an unenviable position of continuing to rely on members from a sector that is focused on front line service delivery and historically under-funded. Without government funding to supplement the funds from members, National Shelter is at a crossroads as an organisation. Additionally, the lack of funding from the federal government reflects poorly how they perceive the role of peak bodies and systemic advocacy. To this end I would like to thank Andrew Wilkie MP and Senator David Pocock for their unwavering support of National Shelter, and for their persistence advocating for sustainable funding.

## NEWS

### Labor's homelessness blind spot



**Karen Barlow**

In the midst of a housing crisis that will surely shape the next election, the government is battling for support on key policies opposed by both the Greens and the Coalition. While the focus in Canberra has been on this three-way stoush, two peak national bodies for homelessness are themselves fighting for survival. “They’re not looking to fund organisations, even though the ask that we have is really quite small,” says National Shelter’s Emma Greenhalgh.

The housing crisis continues, and it deepens. It is combined more broadly with a cost-of-living crisis that is enveloping not just low-income households but also moderate-income households. It is a crisis of our own making from our previous policy choices. We are now seeing organisations coming together in good faith to stand together to seek solutions. This includes National Shelter working with what may appear to be strange bedfellows to develop solutions and advocate for more social and affordable housing. I will not apologise that we work with the Property Council of Australia, the Master Builders Association, or the Housing Industry Association either individually or through the National Affordable Housing Alliance (NAHA).

While organisations can come together to develop solutions, federal politics is dominated by policy brinkmanship, political point scoring, and political campaigning. We need to see politicians coming together to resolve the housing crisis. We need to see all parties come together at all levels of government to deliver to a housing crisis that is not just decades in the making but will have inter-generational implications. We know how we got here, and as the National Housing Supply and Affordability Council report points out, we know how to get out of it. This means we need a response by all parties that is not based on party lines or ideology. This housing crisis requires the approach of a war cabinet otherwise our parliament has failed the people of Australia and will be dealing with the fallout of the crisis for years to come.

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We lost National Shelter Council member and sector leader Steve Bevington this year. Our former CEO Adrian Pisarski has penned a reflection of Steve – not just his contribution to National Shelter but also his contribution to the sector more broadly. We will miss his passion and his ambition.

I would like to sincerely thank my sector colleagues for their support during this year including Wendy Hayhurst (CHIA) and Kate Colvin (Homelessness Australia). I am always grateful for their support and guidance. They are in a similar position of leading small but mighty national organisations. In no order I would also like to thank Fiona Scott, Maiy Azize, Leanne Mitchell, Jeremy Hill, Julijana Todorovic, and David Havercroft.

I would like to acknowledge my family for their support and bearing with me for unusual hours and my work taking me away from them.

Thank you to the National Shelter Council and the Executive Committee of John Engeler, Toby oConnor, Travis Gilbert, Jackson Hills, and Annie Taylor. I remain deeply appreciative of the time they take away from their own organisations to assist with National Shelter.

Every year I acknowledge that the strength of National Shelter is supported by the State and Territory Shelter network, and its members. It is something I feel much more deeply this year than previous years. Your support, and membership is vital to our work. National Shelter is indebted to your contribution.

We continue to engage with parliamentarians across the political spectrum because the housing crisis does not discriminate based on electorates. We thank all those who have been responsive and that we have been able to meet this year and thank them for their constructive engagement.

As we look towards a federal election anytime between now and May 2025, I would like to borrow a key word from my colleagues at Q Shelter – momentum. The federal government have made their commitments and are in the process of delivering them – but we cannot stop. We must consolidate these efforts and expand on them. This includes achieving at least 10% of all dwellings are social and affordable housing dwellings. It includes making bold decisions focused on reform and an intentionally designed housing system.

We cannot afford to stop in our work while so many remain unhoused, live in housing precarity, or while there continues to remain upward pressure on housing prices and an urgent and unrelenting call on the sector to respond. We will continue to advocate for immediate responses as well as structural changes that have inter-generational impact.

Emma Greenhalgh  
**Chief Executive Officer**



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# TREASURERS REPORT



In the 2023/24 financial year, National Shelter recorded a deficit of \$27,776.93, decreasing from \$40,518.68 the previous year. National Shelter's 2023/24 income increased to \$190,631.13, (\$161,387.51 in 2022/23). Operating expenses were \$218,408.06, compared to \$201,906.19 in 2022/23. National Shelter's total equity is \$14,701.42 as of 30 June, 2024.

Please note that the National Shelter Audited Financial Report 2022/23 has been amended due to two minor GST classification errors and the misreporting of three grants, totaling \$27,500, received in advance as income received for the 2022/23 financial year.

Due to retained earnings, National Shelter can meet our liabilities as we move into the new financial year. However, as highlighted in the 2022/23 Annual Report, the longevity of National Shelter is increasingly tenuous. By the end of financial year 2024/25, National Shelter will have expended all reserve income.

Over ten years, since the withdrawal of operational funding for the Abbott Government, National Shelter has been effective with limited resources. Critical operational funding from the Federal Government has not been reinstated, despite ongoing collaboration with the Federal Government and multiple attempts to engage the Federal Government in funding discussions.

I would like to thank our CEO, Emma Greenhalgh, who continues to achieve a vast amount of work on a limited budget and who, despite funding challenges, has pressed on in her advocacy for low-income households in national housing policy.

I thank our bookkeeper, Kelley McGilvray, for her work and my National Shelter Executive colleagues for their ongoing stewardship of National Shelter's finances. I would like to thank our members for their continued support of National Shelter.

I extend our appreciation to the sponsors of the Rental Affordability Index, Beyond Bank, and partners SGS Economics and Planning. We also thank Rights and Inclusion Australia and Enliven Communities for their collaboration on the Opening the Door project funding through an Information Linkages Capacity Building Grant from the Department of Social Services.

Annie Taylor  
**Treasurer**



# ACTIVITIES 2023/24

## July 2023

- Panelist at National Youth Homelessness Conference (Melbourne)

## August 2023

- A week in Canberra supporting a delegation to Canberra with Housing for the Aged Action Group and older women for Homelessness Week (Photo 2)
- Convened a panel discussion at Labor Fringe on 'Our Housing Future' with Minister Collins providing opening remarks (Photo 5)
- Panelist Allegra Spender MP Wentworth Housing Forum
- Joined Shelter NT on 'Sharing the Couch'
- Joint peaks event 'Ending the Australian housing and homelessness crisis - time for a real plan'
- Sector submission to Senate Community Affairs Committee inquiry on 'The worsening rental crisis' with NARO endorsed by 80 organisations
- Organisation submission to the Senate inquiry on 'The worsening rental crisis'
- Provided evidence at the Senate Community Affairs Committee hearing on 'The worsening rental crisis'

## September 2023

- Attended Shelter WA Community Housing Symposium & Innovation Showcase
- Panelist Shelter WA Forum on 'Working with Local Government to End Homelessness' (Photo 3)
- Attended Digital ID System Inclusion Roundtable
- Panelist Festival of Urbanism 'From social housing to the missing middle: How do we unlock affordable supply in NSW?'

## October 2023

- National Shelter Council meeting
- National Shelter AGM with Minister Collins and guest speaker Aaron Schroyer, US Dept. of Housing and Urban Development
- Attended National Housing Conference (Brisbane)
- Attended National Housing and Homelessness Plan consultations
- Joint submission with CHIA to the National Housing & Homelessness Plan

## November 2023

- Launch of the Rental Affordability Index with Senator David Pocock
- Parliamentary Friends of Housing on Rental Affordability Index, cochaired by Senator Pocock, Josh Burns MP and Angie Bell MP (Photo 1)
- Panelist at Committee for Sydney on Rental Affordability Index
- Attended SEARMS 20th Anniversary
- Submission to the Community Services Advisory Group on 'A stronger, more diverse and independent community sector'

## January 2024

- 2024-25 Sector Pre-budget Submission
- Pre-budget submission for National Shelter funding



PHOTO 1



PHOTO 2



PHOTO 3



PHOTO 4



PHOTO 5



PHOTO 6

## February 2024

- A week in Canberra with CHIA and Homelessness Australia advocating for increased funding for social and affordable housing including Everybody's Home Campaign and Strategy meeting and attending the Regional Australia Institute regional housing forum (Photo 4)
- Submission to the Senate Economics Legislation Committee - Help to Buy Bills 2023 (with CHIA)
- Panel convenor 9th Affordable Housing Development & Investment Summit (Melbourne)

## March 2024

- Attended Australasian Housing Institute (AHI) International Women's Day Breakfast (Sydney)
- Attended Roundtable on Community Housing convened by the National Housing Supply and Affordability Council
- Speaker at Gold Coast Homelessness Symposium
- National Shelter National Council meeting (Canberra) joined by Max Chandler-Mather MP, Michael Sukkar MP and Helen Haines MP.
- Attended launch of Foyer Edition of Parity Magazine
- Attended COTA Australia Housing Roundtable
- Provided evidence at the Senate Economics Legislation Committee hearing on Help to Buy Bills 2023
- Submission to the Senate Select Committee on Cost of Living (with CHIA and Homelessness Australia)
- Letter to Ministerial Housing and Homelessness Council on National Agreement for Social Housing and Homelessness

## April 2024

- Member Expert Advisory Group Meeting - Reconnect Review

## May 2024

- Attended launch of National Housing Supply and Affordability Council 'State of the Housing System 2024'
- Submission to Australian Human Rights Commission on Accessible Housing Guidelines
- Canberra for the Federal Budget
- Presentation at the National Housing and Homelessness Forum on the Federal Budget outcomes
- Joint peaks sector briefing on the Federal Budget (with CHIA and Homelessness Australia)
- Attended RoGS review on housing and homelessness
- Attended Everybody's Home People's Commission
- Attended ACOSS Post-Budget Event

## June 2024

- Contributed to Rental Burden Research (for DSS)
- Submission to Economics Legislation Committee on Build to Rent matters (with CHIA And PowerHousing Australia)
- Panelist at 'Unlocking solutions to the housing crisis' (Melbourne)
- Speaker at Labor for Housing Policy Launch (Melbourne)
- A week in Canberra advocating for more social and affordable housing (with CHIA and Homelessness Australia) (Photo 6)



# THE GREAT ~~CRUMBLING~~ AUSTRALIAN DREAM

National Shelter partnered with Oculi photography collective on a 12month photojournalism and visual story telling of the housing crisis in Australia.

The project was funded from the META Australian News Fund, via the Walkley Foundation.

The stories were published by the ABC this year as photo essays. The essays were compelling and told stories of young people in share housing, young people at risk of homelessness, housing cooperatives, housing precarity and the impact of secure, affordable housing, the loss of home, the demolition of public housing, and the health impacts of poor housing for First Nations people in Tennant Creek.

The total page views of the photo essays: 1.626million.  
The average page views per story: 203K

The stories are available at  
<https://www.oculi.com.au/the-great-crumbling-australian-dream>



Image: Sean Davey



Image: Abigail Varney



Image: Aishah Kenton



Image: Rachel Mounsey



Image: Sean Davey



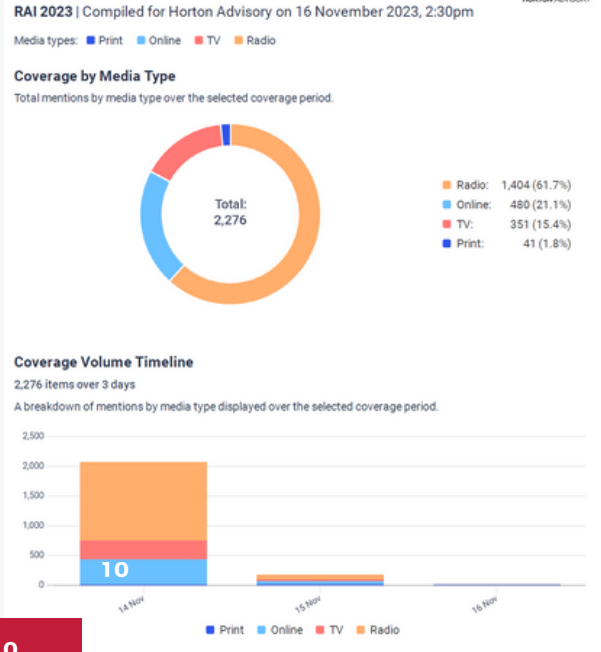
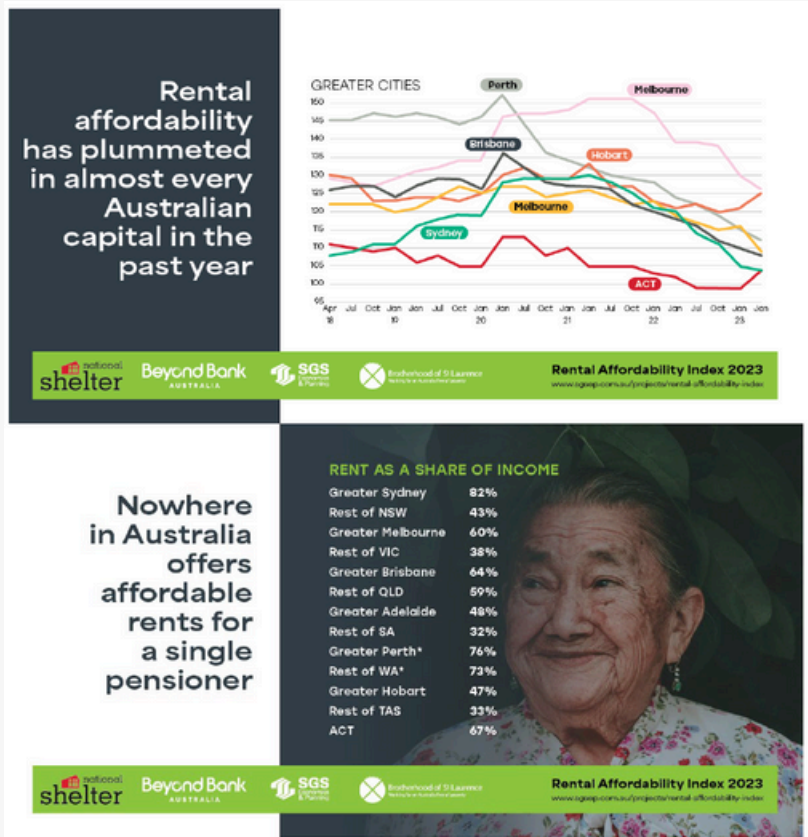
Image: Abigail Varney



# RENTAL AFFORDABILITY INDEX 2023

THE ANNUAL RENTAL AFFORDABILITY INDEX (RAI) CONTINUES TO LEAD THE MEDIA ON THE DAY OF IT'S RELEASE AND IS ALSO REGULARLY REFERENCED BY MEDIA THROUGHOUT THE YEAR. THE RAI IS PRODUCED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH SGS ECONOMICS AND PLANNING.

THE REPORT IS GENEROUSLY SPONSORED BY BEYOND BANK. THIS YEAR THE RAI WAS LAUNCHED AT PARLIAMENT HOUSE WITH A BRIEFING HELD BY THE PARLIAMENTARY FRIENDS OF HOUSING.



## Reform taxes or it's shelter skelter in a lucky country

**Emma Greenhalgh & Ellen Witte**

If you think Sydney's rental market is out of control, you are mistaken. It's actually far worse. It is a full-blown social calamity.

The 9th Annual National Shelter SGS Economics and Planning Rental Affordability Index released today shows that despite living in one of the world's wealthiest nations, we are utterly failing on one of our most basic human needs: Secure, stable housing.

The index cross references median rents against average incomes. For people on low incomes – such as single people on Jobseeker, single or coupled pensioners, and single part-time worker parents on benefits – Sydney rents were classed as either extremely unaffordable or severely unaffordable.

It raises the question: If we were designing our housing system from scratch, is this what we would aspire to? A rental market where our most vulnerable citizens are thrust into a harsh contest for basic shelter?

Things aren't much better for those on more typical incomes. An average renter in Sydney now needs to put themselves on the cusp of rental stress just to rent an average home.

Sydney's affordability dropped a massive 13 per cent in the past year, joining Hobart as the nation's most unaffordable capital.

Median rents of \$650 a week consume 29 per cent of the average rental household income of \$117,019 per year.

The Sydney story, sadly, also is a national trend. Regional NSW is enduring its worst affordability in a decade. In some suburbs, hospitality workers are spending up to 60 per cent of their income on housing.

We must never forget that behind these figures are families living in unsafe housing, forgoing essential healthcare, and not being able to afford food. For others the problem is living far away from work or support services.

This crisis is damaging our economy, too. It's no wonder businesses are struggling to find workers when potential employees can't afford to live near available jobs.

So, how do we fix the problem? Although it's politically hot for governments to handle, we urgently need tax reform.

The capital gains discount and negative gearing have dramatically increased the number of investors who compete with homeowners for available property, and kept more households out of home ownership.

We must also build more social and affordable housing. Sharp declines in recent years have forced low-income Australians to rely on the private market. As it stands, 42 per cent of all low-income renter households are in rental stress, compared to 35 per cent in 2008. This rises to 47 per cent for households in NSW. To ease this pressure, at least 10 per cent of Australia's housing stock must be social and affordable.

In the short-term, we should increase Commonwealth Rent Assistance and, like the ACT, cap rent increases relative to inflation while vacancy rates are extremely low and renters have no bargaining power.

Income support payments also need to be substantially increased.

We owe it to ourselves and future generations to ensure that every Australian has access to affordable housing. The cost of inaction to our social and economic wellbeing is simply too high.

**Emma Greenhalgh is CEO of National Shelter and Ellen Witte is principal of SGS Economics and Planning**

**THE RAI ACHIEVES MILLIONS OF DOLLARS OF VALUE THROUGH MEDIA EXPOSURE, INFLUENCING NATIONAL HOUSING POLICY PLATFORMS FOR THE HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS SECTOR. IT HAS STRENGTHENED THE MEDIA RECOGNITION AND REPUTATION FOR THE RAI, AS WELL AS NATIONAL SHELTER.**



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# VALE STEVE BEVINGTON

By Adrian Pisarski, former National Shelter CEO

I retired two and a half years ago and got to take the trip of a lifetime this year. I returned from that trip on May 7 2024 and the next day learned that Steve Bevington had died. It was a shock to the system, Steve would have been looking forward to retirement as I am now appreciating, alas he never lived to enjoy it.

I met Steve sometime in the early 2000s, the 'go get 'em' CEO of CHL. I was part of the Affordable Housing Summit Group, we were building momentum for new social housing programs and what became NRAS. Steve was one of the few community housing leaders who immediately embraced the agenda and pledged support. It wouldn't be the last time he was an early adopter and fervent supporter.

I make no claim to have known Steve well, but I always got on with him and was impressed by him. Most community housing 'leaders', especially these days are fairly conservative, risk averse creatures seeking the certainty of full backing from governments or lenders before embarking on ambitious projects but not Steve. Steve had built CHL into a considerable powerhouse with little certainty, considerable entrepreneurship, taking risks few would and making deals and plans few could contemplate and even fewer make happen. When eventually PM Rudd did deliver the Nation Building social housing stimulus and NRAS, CHL was in a great position to take advantage of it. He could make things happen with little support and so when there was programs and capital to also draw on CHL grew into the powerhouse it is now.

Steve only ever saw this as the way to proceed and as a prelude to greater things. CHL is still our only multi-national community housing provider with operations in Timor Leste, India, Chile and Africa, he never chose the easy environment preferring the greater need as a motivator.

This also led Steve to pioneer projects with First Nations Peoples, establishing arms of CHL to take on the great housing shortage among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



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# VALE STEVE BEVINGTON

When NRAS came under threat from the Abbott government and earlier from some internal mistakes and issues, Steve immediately put his weight behind campaigns to save and reform the program, it was his nature to be bold and take things on. Perhaps that came from a background which included time as someone who'd experienced homelessness on the streets of London and in fighting the Thatcher government but I believe it was an innate quality he possessed.

When National Shelter, CHIA and Homelessness Australia were defunded, Steve was ready with both his energy, commitment and cheque book to help out. He was one of the first to agree to becoming an associate member of National Shelter and eventually a full national member. This eventually led him to become a valued and considered board member of National Shelter, having already made significant contributions to CHIA and other peaks.

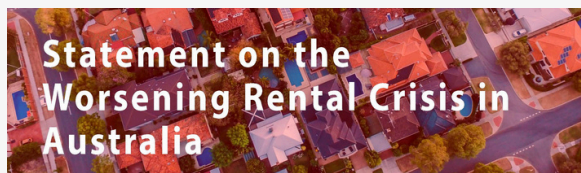
Steve wasn't just a doer, but a thinker, an activist, a dreamer and an (over)achiever. He was never afraid to speak his mind, never content to go along with majorities and if he felt it required, quite prepared to go it alone. Sometimes I wished he were a greater team player, in reality he was, just for a broader and deeper team than most of us commit to. Ultimately he was always about the people we helped to house and he was fearless in promoting CHL because that was always the mission. He is missed and has hopefully left an example for others to follow to continue his legacy.



Image: Sean Davey (Oculi Photography Collective), from 'The Kelly gang's last stand' via The Great Crumbling Australian Dream. funded by Meta and The Walkley Foundation.

# THE NEED FOR RENTAL REFORM

We continue to work with the National Association of Renters' Organisations to advocate for a more secure, safe, and affordable rental sector in Australia - for both private renters and tenants in social housing. In August we provided a submission to the Senate Community Affairs Committee Inquiry into 'The worsening rental crisis in Australia'. The submission was supported by 80 organisations across the country.



Dear Chair and Committee Members,

We are a broad and diverse range of organisations, including renting and housing, health, youth and community advocacy organisations, community legal centres, unions and faith based organisations. Our organisations are committed to ensuring better outcomes for people who rent their homes across Australia.

We are jointly submitting this statement to the Senate's inquiry into the Worsening Rental Crisis in Australia to highlight the need for urgent action to address the challenges faced by renters and ensure access to safe, secure, affordable and healthy homes.

We note that in addition to this joint statement, many of our organisations will also be providing separate submissions to contribute their perspectives and insights into the worsening crisis in rental housing.

## Background

As ownership has become less and less affordable, a growing number of people are renting, with over 8 million Australians now making homes in the rental sector. Around two in five of these households include dependent children, and a growing number of people are long-term renters who will rent through their entire life, including into retirement. Renting is not a temporary step: it is a way of life for many people whose ability to have a decent home is determined by the conditions in the rental sector.

However, the current state of the rental market is characterised by instability, insecurity, and a lack of adequate protections for renters. Market rents are unaffordable with many renters struggling to secure a new rental property in the fiercely competitive private rental market. Most renters continue to face significant insecurity, making it very difficult to assert their rights such as requesting repairs.

Many rental homes are in poor condition, the cost of rent is increasing, and the security of tenure is being undermined by a combination of factors including the lack of legal protections for renters.

Immediate measures to address these issues include: increasing the proportion of social housing; increasing the supply of affordable rental homes; and measures to address the challenges faced by renters.

We collectively state and demand that the government develop a comprehensive plan for rental reform across all jurisdictions to establish a secure and healthy rental sector for all.

Priority action is needed to address the worsening rental crisis in Australia.

Greater stability and security for people who rent their homes.

Without better protections against no-cause evictions, including at the end of fixed-term leases, renters cannot enforce other rights without fear of reprisal. We recommend the prioritising of reforms to ensure landlords must provide renters with a valid reason for terminating a tenancy to provide better protection against arbitrary and unfair evictions.

Stronger protections and fair limits on rent increases. Reforms are urgently needed to stabilise rent prices. Setting fair limits and stronger protections against excessive rent increases is a crucial, timely intervention that can help address the housing insecurity and financial stress the increased unaffordability of rents is creating.

Safe and healthy homes for renters. Renters have a right to live in a safe, accessible and healthy home that meets a clearly articulated basic minimum standard. This must include basic energy efficiency standards to reduce the energy required to heat or cool a home, and ensure access to an affordable energy supply. Renters must also have the right to modify their home where necessary to ensure it is accessible and they can live safely and independently.

Better enforcement, oversight, and accountability so that compliance is the norm. The current enforcement paradigm relies on renters to enforce the laws - despite having less power and being vulnerable to retaliation through eviction or rent increases. Government agencies should be better resourced to respond to and support tenant self-advocacy, while also pro-actively enforcing rental laws and applying penalties to deter non-compliance. Introduction of landlord registration (or licensing) schemes that provide greater transparency, accountability and data to our renting systems should be considered.

Access to free advice, assistance and advocacy. It is vital renters across Australia have access to high quality tenancy advocacy advice and assistance. Tenancy Advice and Advocacy Services have demonstrated they are effective at sustaining tenancies, reducing evictions directly into homelessness, and reducing debts. Resourcing of services across Australia has not kept pace with the growth in the number of

residential tenancies and the growth in the number of disadvantaged households in the rental market whose tenancies are especially precarious. There is also very limited resourcing provided to housing advocates with experience and expertise in residential tenancy systems to take part in consultation and conversations and ensure renters' voices are heard, in particular at the national level.

Substantial investment in social housing is required from both federal and state governments. Alongside rental reforms, the inquiry should recognise that housing is a complex system with interacting parts. Unaffordable, inadequate housing in the private rental sector puts greater pressure and cost on the social housing and homelessness system. A robust and healthy social housing system likewise eases pressure on the private rental sector. High property prices put pressure on all.

We note that if social housing is to be a viable option for all, it must be able to meet the needs of all, including those with complex needs, and be able to provide a safe and secure home.

Conclusion. The worsening rental crisis in Australia is a national emergency that requires immediate action. We call for a national coalition to develop and implement a comprehensive plan for rental reform across all jurisdictions.

Governments must take action to address the rental crisis. We call for a national coalition to develop and implement a comprehensive plan for rental reform across all jurisdictions.

## Signed by

National Association of Renters' Organisations  
Circle Green Community Legal  
Darwin Community Legal Service  
Tenants' Queensland  
Tenants' Union of NSW  
Tenants' Union of Tasmania  
Tenants' Victoria

The Shelter Network  
ACT Shelter  
National Shelter  
NT Shelter  
Queensland Shelter  
Shelter NSW  
Shelter SA  
Shelter Tasmania  
Shelter WA

Councils of Social Service  
ACT Council of Social Service  
Australian Council of Social Services  
Northern Territory Council of Social Service  
NSW Council of Social Services  
Queensland Council of Social Services  
Tasmanian Council of Social Service  
Victorian Council of Social Service  
Western Australia Council of Social Services

Amelia Housing  
Anglicare Australia  
Anglicare WA  
Arc Justice (Victoria)  
Asthma Australia  
Australian Lawyers for Human Rights  
Better Renting  
Brotherhood of St. Laurence  
Canberra Community Law  
Central Coast Tenants' Advice and Advocacy Service (NSW)  
Central Tablelands and Blue Mountains Community Legal Centre (NSW)  
Colony 47 (Tasmania)  
Community Housing Central Australia  
Community Housing Industry Australia  
Community Housing Limited  
Community Legal Centres Australia  
Community Legal Centres Qld (CLCO)  
Consumer Policy Research Centre  
Council of Single Mothers and their Children  
Council on the Ageing ACT  
Domestic Violence NSW  
Enhance Care Inc (Queensland)  
Everybody's Home

Federation of Community Legal Centres Victoria  
Financial Counsellors' Association of Western Australia  
Foundation for Young Australians  
Gold Coast Youth Service (Queensland)  
Hobart Women's Shelter  
Housing for the Aged Action Group  
Hervey Bay Neighbourhood Centre  
Hobart City Mission (Tasmania)  
Housing Matters Action Group (NSW)  
Hunter Tenants' Advice Service (NSW)  
Illawarra Legal Centre (NSW)  
Ipswich Regional Advocacy Services Inc (Queensland)  
Justice Connect  
Kimberley Community Legal Services  
Marricville Legal Centre (NSW)  
Mid Coast Tenants' Advice Service (NSW)  
Mission Australia  
National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Housing Association  
New England and Western Tenants' Advice and Advocacy Service (NSW)  
Peninsula Community Legal Centre (Victoria)  
Public Interest Advocacy Centre  
Queensland Alliance for Mental Health  
Queensland Youth Housing Coalition  
Redfern Legal Centre  
Rights & Inclusion Australia  
The Salvation Army Australia Territory  
Shelter Housing Action Cairns (Queensland)  
Southern Youth and Family Services  
St Vincent de Paul Australia  
Sweltering Cities  
Sydney Alliance (NSW)  
Think Forward  
Tasmanian University Student Association  
UMSU Legal Service (Victoria)  
Unions Tasmania  
Uniting Communities  
Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service  
Victorian Public Tenants' Association  
Western Sydney Community Forum (NSW)  
Westjustice  
Women's Legal Service NSW

1 Choice, National Shelter, NATO (2018) Disrupted.  
2 For example see Foodbank Australia (2023)  
Submission in response to the Senate Select Committee on Cost of Living inquiry.





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# ACTIVITIES

## ALLIANCES

- National Shelter participates in the National Affordable Housing Alliance
- National Shelter participates in The Constellation Project which aims to end homelessness in a generation. National Shelter contributes to activities on Mandatory Inclusionary Zoning.

## CAMPAIGNS

- National Shelter is a campaign partner of the Everybody's Home campaign - a national campaign to fix the housing crisis.
- National Shelter supports the "Home Time" campaign to fix housing for young people.



**Home Time.**

## RESEARCH

- This year National Shelter continued to support the Renter Researchers through Better Renting. They help renters advocate for minimum energy efficiency standards for rentals by recruiting people across Australia and give them the tools and training to be part of the campaign. Renters then track the data in their own homes, speak out through the media, and some have gone on to meet with their state representatives.
- Partner Support Organisation for the Housing Insights Lab - funded by NSW Chief Scientist under a National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy (NCRIS) Support Program

## PROJECT PARTNERSHIP

We continued to work with Rights and Inclusion Australia and Enliven Communities on the Opening the Door project. An ILC funded project from DSS, Opening the Door continued to deliver forums to people with disability both online and face to face, as well as the development of resources, to support people with disability to achieve choice and control with their housing options.



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# GOVERNANCE

THE FOLLOWING EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS PROVIDED OVERSIGHT OF NATIONAL SHELTER'S ACTIVITIES FOR 2022-23.

**Chairperson**  
John Engeler

**Deputy Chairperson**  
Travis Gilbert

**Secretary**  
Jackson Hills

**Treasurer**  
Annie Taylor

**General Committee Member**  
Toby oConnor



National Shelter Chairperson John Engeler with Hon Julie Collins, Minister for Housing and Minister for Homelessness at the National Shelter AGM October 2023



National Shelter Council meeting, March 2024, Canberra,

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# THANKS TO OUR MEMBERS

**NATIONAL SHELTER EXISTS DUE TO THE FINANCIAL SUPPORT OF ITS MEMBERS. WE WOULD LIKE TO THANK AND ACKNOWLEDGE OUR MEMBERS FOR THEIR SUPPORT IN 2023-2024. WE WOULD ALSO LIKE TO PASS ON OUR APPRECIATION TO OUR SUPPORTERS AND FRIENDS.**

## **OUR MEMBERS IN 2023-2024 WERE:**

### **STATE MEMBERS**

Q Shelter  
Shelter NSW  
ACT Shelter  
Shelter TAS  
Shelter SA  
WA Shelter  
NT Shelter

### **NATIONAL MEMBERS**

Community Housing Industry Association (CHIA)  
Community Housing Ltd  
Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI)  
National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Association (NATSIHA)  
Rights and Inclusion Australia  
St Vincent de Paul National Council of Australia Inc

### **DEEMED MEMBERS**

National Alliance of Renters' Organisations (NARO)

### **ASSOCIATE MEMBERS**

Anglicare Victoria  
Anglicare WA  
Blue CHP  
Brisbane Housing Company Ltd  
Churches of Christ  
Cities Research Institute, Griffith University  
Community Housing Central Australia  
Henry Halloran Trust  
Hobart City Mission  
Home In Place  
Launch Housing  
Link Wentworth Housing  
Mission Australia  
Southern Youth and Family Services  
St George Community Housing  
The Salvation Army  
Unity Housing  
Uniting Communities SA  
Wintringham Specialist Aged Care



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