



National Shelter backs push for affordable housing on public land

National Shelter commends Senator David Pocock on the draft Commonwealth Land (Affordable Housing) Bill 2026, being introduced in the Senate today. It is vital that we ensure publicly owned land is consistently used for public benefit across all levels of government.

The draft bill sponsored by Senator Pocock would require at least 30 per cent of developments on Commonwealth land to be dedicated to affordable housing whenever the land is sold or long-leased for residential development.

Under the draft bill, these homes would be managed by community housing providers and rented to low-and moderate-income households at capped rents.

National Shelter CEO Jackson Hills said the ideas in the bill reflect a necessary shift in how governments should manage public assets amid an acute housing crisis.

"Every well-located parcel of Commonwealth land that gets sold or leased is a chance to help ease housing pressures," Mr Hills said.

"This bill says that when the Commonwealth lets go of land, affordable housing should be part of the deal and not an afterthought. We support this and believe that public land should be leveraged for multiple public benefits—supply and affordability are two of those.

"It's very important that disposal of government land is not viewed through a narrow lens of short-term financial return alone. Right now, delivering affordable housing is one of the most critical public benefits we can provide."

"We commend the Commonwealth Government's work on the Housing Australia Future Fund, improving renters' rights, landmark housing tax reforms, and infrastructure to unlock more homes. However, much more is still needed to address the major shortfall of 640,000 affordable homes nationwide."

"With the National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS) winding up for good only days ago—having supported up to 36,000 affordable homes at its peak, we need to look at every opportunity for affordability as well as supply. Publicly owned land should be at the top of that list."

In its submission to the Senate Inquiry into the Management of Defence estate assets, National Shelter advocated for a principles-based divestment framework that prioritises community-benefit uses, particularly social and affordable housing, over private development.



“The government has the opportunity to demonstrate leadership in land optimisation - public land is a valuable asset that can deliver enduring public value rather than just being sold to the highest bidder,” Mr Hills said.

“We urge policymakers at the Commonwealth level, and right across the country, to support the intent of this bill and commit to a framework where public land delivers a lasting and affordable housing legacy for Australians.”

ENDS