

**A comparison of proposals in the National Shelter policy platform, 'Australian housing – a fair share?' (2007), and proposals on the same subject matter from some political parties in a federal election context**

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This document lists policy proposals for an incoming Commonwealth government after the 2007 federal election, as contained in a policy platform document released by National Shelter in Melbourne in April 2007. It then indicates a stated policy position or proposal from the 4 major political parties on the substantive issue of each proposal. (The Liberal and National parties are treated as one 'party' for this exercise, and the policy of the Liberal party is the primary source for their position.)

This memo does not refer to parties' proposals on the headline matter where a proposal of theirs does not address or align with the substantive issue of a relevant National Shelter proposal. So, for example, if a party has put forward a proposal on housing affordability, appropriate housing, etc., and no comparable proposal had been put forward by National Shelter, this memo does not mention such a policy. For instance, Labor party' proposed Housing Affordability Fund and National Housing Supply Research Council are not included here because infrastructure charging and land release supply policies were not identified as issues of interest for National Shelter in its policy platform. Likewise, the Democrats' proposal for increased funding of SAAP is not included, for the same reason. The purpose of this memo is to compare parties' positions and policies against what National Shelter proposed in April, not to outline the full range of their policies. Thus if National Shelter has indicated the best way to address a matter is with a strategy but a party has responded to the matter with a spending proposal instead, the party's proposal is not included here. Or where National Shelter has proposed a national housing strategy, but a party has proposed a national affordable housing strategy, the party's proposal is not included here.

Where a party policy indicates it is 'not known (at this date)' they could mean either that the authors of this memo have not researched the matter, or that the party has not explicitly proposed something along the lines of the relevant National Shelter proposal (or for that matter explicitly rejected it, which would be reported).

The matters and National Shelter proposals indicated in this memo are as in the original document, but the numbering of the matters and National Shelter proposals contained in this memo are not found there. The numberings in this memo have been introduced as signposts to assist walkability.

The information in this memo has been got from parties' websites and information provided by party spokespeople to Queensland Shelter.

## **Matter 1: government responsibilities**

### **1.1. National Shelter proposal:**

A new senior Commonwealth Minister for Housing, Urban and Regional Development, with cabinet status

#### **Liberal/National policy:**

Not known to the author (at this date).

#### **Labor policy:**

A Labor government would appoint a cabinet-level housing minister.

#### **Greens' policy:**

A Greens government would appoint of a Minister for Housing, Urban and Regional Development with Cabinet status.

#### **Democrats' policy:**

A Democrat government would establish a portfolio for housing.

### **1.2. National Shelter proposal:**

A new Ministerial Council for Housing, Urban and Regional Development under the COAG (Council of Australian Governments) system, incorporating the current Ministerial Councils for Housing, Local Government and Planning and including Local Government representation

#### **Liberal/National policy:**

Not known to the author (at this date).

#### **Labor policy:**

Not known to the author (at this date).

#### **Greens' policy:**

Not known to the author (at this date).

#### **Democrats' policy:**

Not known to the author (at this date).

### **1.3. National Shelter proposal:**

A National Housing Strategy addressing the overall direction of housing policy in Australia, aiming at concrete reductions in the level of homelessness and housing stress over a five year period.

#### **Liberal/National policy:**

Not known to the author (at this date).

#### **Labor policy:**

Not known to the author (at this date).

#### **Greens' policy:**

A Greens government would develop a National Housing Plan.

**Democrats' policy:**

Not known to the author (at this date).

**Matter 2: tax and finance**

**2.1. National Shelter proposal:**

A full review of the impact of the tax system on housing affordability, aimed at developing reforms that will improve access to housing by low income households. This review should examine a range of options including:

- (a) tapering negative gearing for higher value properties to provide greater incentive to invest in more affordable housing
- (b) increasing the Capital Gains Tax exemption rate for affordable rental housing
- (c) introducing a tax credit system for investment in affordable rental housing

**Liberal/National policy:**

Not known to the author (at this date).

**Labor policy:**

Not known to the author (at this date).

**Greens' policy:**

A Green government would review all existing subsidies and incentives for housing and property investment to ensure subsidies and incentives improve access to housing for low-income households.

**Democrats' policy:**

A Democrat government would undertake a full review of how government spending, concessions and incentives are currently deployed in relation to housing affordability. They would continue to push for the modification of negative gearing and the phased reduction of capital gains tax concessions for investment properties, while promoting new incentives to invest in affordable housing.

**2.2. National Shelter proposal:**

The development of financing and investment strategies at a national level that can attract institutional investment into affordable housing, with options including:

- (a) the creation of a national housing bond,
- (b) the introduction of tax credits to finance affordable housing, and
- (c) the introduction of a National Affordable Rental Incentive scheme.

**Liberal/National policy:**

Not known to the author (at this date).

**Labor policy:**

A Labor government would establish a National Rental Affordability Scheme that will help create 50,000 new affordable rental properties across Australia. The scheme, costing \$603 million over its first five years, will use tax incentives and financial support to attract an additional \$2.5 billion of private

investment. Within five years, the Scheme will provide rental housing to low and middle income families at 20 per cent below market rents. The scheme will offer institutional investors annual tax incentives and financial support every year for a period of ten years. The two key elements of the scheme are: (i) an annual \$6,000 Commonwealth tax credit incentive to investors who construct new affordable rental accommodation; and (ii) at least \$2,000 per year in direct or in-kind financial support from state governments for investors who access the Commonwealth tax incentives.

**Greens' policy:**

Not known to the author (at this date).

**Democrats' policy:**

A Democrat government would introduce carefully targeted assistance to private investors to provide low cost private rental housing.

### **Matter 3: housing assistance**

#### **3.1. National Shelter proposal:**

That Commonwealth and State/Territory Governments implement a comprehensive National Indigenous Housing Strategy that incorporates strategies to increase Indigenous home-ownership, reduce overcrowding and provide increased rental housing in urban, regional and remote communities.

**Liberal/National policy:**

Not known to the author (at this date).

**Labor policy:**

Not known to the author (at this date).

**Greens' policy:**

Not known to the author (at this date).

**Democrats' policy:**

A Democrat government would implement a National Indigenous Housing Strategy to increase Indigenous home-ownership, reduce overcrowding and provide increased rental housing in urban, regional and remote communities.

#### **3.2. National Shelter proposal:**

That these strategies be designed to maximise self-determination for Indigenous communities, and provide appropriate support for Indigenous-led housing provision.

**Liberal/National policy:**

Not known to the author (at this date).

**Labor policy:**

Not known to the author (at this date).

**Greens' policy:**

Not known to the author (at this date).

**Democrats' policy:**

Not known to the author (at this date).

**3.3. National Shelter proposal:**

That the First Home Owners Grant be targeted at low to moderate income households who need assistance to enter the home ownership market, and be restricted to the purchase of homes at or below the median price for the Local Government Area in which the purchase is taking place.

**Liberal/National policy:**

Not known to the author (at this date).

**Labor policy:**

Not known to the author (at this date).

**Greens' policy:**

A Green government would mean to test the First Home Owners Grant.

**Democrats' policy:**

A Democrat government would mean to test the First Home Owners Scheme to prevent it from applying to properties worth over \$750,000 or where the combined household income is over \$100,000 p.a.

**3.4. National Shelter proposal:**

That Commonwealth and State/Territory Governments work together to introduce shared home ownership schemes that give households the benefits of capital growth in the value of their housing.

**Liberal/National policy:**

Not known to the author (at this date).

**Labor policy:**

Not known to the author (at this date).

**Greens' policy:**

Not known to the author (at this date).

**Democrats' policy:**

Not known to the author (at this date).

**3.5. National Shelter proposal:**

That there be a review of payment levels of Commonwealth rent assistance to ensure that they remain adequate to keep housing costs below 30% for low income households

**Liberal/National policy:**

Not known to the author (at this date).

**Labor policy:**

Not known to the author (at this date).

**Greens' policy:**

Not known to the author (at this date).

**Democrats' policy:**

Not known to the author (at this date).

**3.6. National Shelter proposal:**

That eligibility for Commonwealth rent assistance be expanded to include students on Austudy

**Liberal/National policy:**

Not known to the author (at this date).

**Labor policy:**

Not known to the author (at this date).

**Greens' policy:**

Not known to the author (at this date).

**Democrats' policy:**

Not known to the author (at this date).

**3.7. National Shelter proposal:**

That capital investment in social housing be substantially increased, with the aim of lifting total social housing to 6% of the Australian housing market by 2025.

**Liberal/National policy:**

The Government will include, for the next Commonwealth–State Housing Agreement from July 2008, proposals from state and territory governments, the nongovernment sector and the private sector, on new and innovative approaches to using ‘the available funds’ to increase supply of social housing. It is not clear whether ‘the available funds’ will include an amount of Commonwealth funding in addition to the amount currently given in subsidies to the states and territories for their current social housing programs; if it does not, the proportion of social housing in the national housing market would not increase.

**Labor policy:**

Not known to the author (at this date).

**Greens' policy:**

A Green government will make a greater investment in public and community housing.

**Democrats' policy:**

Not known to the author (at this date).

### **3.8. National Shelter proposal:**

A review of the impact of current rationing processes by State/Territory Housing Authorities to ascertain their impact on low income households and on the social housing system as a whole

**Liberal/National policy:**

Not known to the author (at this date).

**Labor policy:**

Not known to the author (at this date).

**Greens' policy:**

Not known to the author (at this date).

**Democrats' policy:**

Not known to the author (at this date).

### **3.9. National Shelter proposal:**

As outlined under Tax and Finance, governments should also implement other financing strategies to boost supply of affordable housing.

## **Matter 4: Planning and land development**

### **4.1. National Shelter proposal:**

That the Commonwealth and State/Territory Ministers for Planning and Local Government develop a set of uniform standards for planning and land development

**Liberal/National policy:**

Not known to the author (at this date).

**Labor policy:**

Not known to the author (at this date).

**Greens' policy:**

A Green government would develop national planning guidelines for new housing developments that provide for a social mix of public and private housing and incorporate principles of environmental sustainability, and design for maximum energy efficiency; privacy and noise controls; permeable road networks allowing for bus access; segregated bicycle paths and footpaths; landscaping, design and infrastructure for rainwater trapping and wastewater recycling; and at least 15% to be allocated to public open space in addition to community facilities. It would also provide for the location of high density housing and commercial buildings close to high capacity public transport; and the clustering of medium-density housing, community facilities and small-scale businesses around neighborhood shopping centers and other social facilities (including health care and schooling).

**Democrats' policy:**

A Democrat government would focus on national planning and design standards that balance the need for environmentally sustainable and affordable housing with simplified planning requirements.

**4.2. National Shelter proposal:**

That these standards include processes and levers to generate affordable housing through the planning system, with a target of 15% of all new housing to be affordable, one third of this to be social housing

**Liberal/National policy:**

Not known to the author (at this date).

**Labor policy:**

Not known to the author (at this date).

**Greens' policy:**

A Green government would develop national planning guidelines for new housing developments that require a social mix of public and private housing, with a target of 20% low-cost and public housing.

**Democrats' policy:**

Not known to the author (at this date).

**4.3. National Shelter proposal:**

That universal design guidelines be incorporated into planning and building regulations

**Liberal/National policy:**

Not known to the author (at this date).

**Labor policy:**

Not known to the author (at this date).

**Greens' policy:**

A Green government would develop national building standards that strengthen disability access provisions.

**Democrats' policy:**

Not known to the author (at this date).

**4.4. National Shelter proposal:**

That planning for the development of economic 'hot spots' includes measures to ensure that there is adequate affordable housing in these communities.

**Liberal/National policy:**

Not known to the author (at this date).

**Labor policy:**

Not known to the author (at this date).

**Greens' policy:**

Not known to the author (at this date).

**Democrats' policy:**

Not known to the author (at this date).

## **Matter 5: Housing regulation**

### **5.1. National Shelter proposal:**

That the Ministerial Council on Housing, Urban and Regional Development work towards the development of national standards for tenant rights

**Liberal/National policy:**

Not known to the author (at this date).

**Labor policy:**

Not known to the author (at this date).

**Greens' policy:**

Not known to the author (at this date).

**Democrats' policy:**

Not known to the author (at this date).

### **5.2. National Shelter proposal:**

That these include provisions for 'just cause eviction', for limits to the frequency and level of rent increases, and for tighter regulation of the operation of tenancy databases.

**Liberal/National policy:**

Not known to the author (at this date).

**Labor policy:**

Not known to the author (at this date).

**Greens' policy:**

Not known to the author (at this date).

**Democrats' policy:**

A Democrat government would support continued reform and regulation of tenancy databases and the development of consumer protections against the misuse of information.

## **Matter 6: Human services**

### **6.1. National Shelter proposal:**

That State/Territory and Commonwealth governments and NGOs work together to develop new models of housing and support that meet the needs of high need households

**Liberal/National policy:**

Not known to the author (at this date).

**Labor policy:**

Not known to the author (at this date).

**Greens' policy:**

Not known to the author (at this date).

**Democrats' policy:**

Not known to the author (at this date).

### **6.2. National Shelter proposal:**

That the homelessness and housing systems be better aligned to provide sustainable pathways out of homelessness for people accessing the homelessness support system.

**Liberal/National policy:**

Not known to the author (at this date).

**Labor policy:**

A Labor party proposal to fund new dwellings for crisis accommodation – to the extent of \$150 million over 5 years, yielding 600 dwellings over that period – links the allocation of those dwellings to pathways out of homelessness. Applicants for crisis housing would be allocated one of these special dwellings for 12 months and be able to stay in the dwelling after that period (no longer being in housing crisis). The dwelling would be transferred to a state's public housing stock after 12 months, and the resident would be given a tenancy 'in accordance with the normal tenancy arrangements applying for public housing'.

**Greens' policy:**

Not known to the author (at this date).

**Democrats' policy:**

Not known to the author (at this date).