

MEDIA RELEASE
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Welfare quarantining “simplistic and unrealistic” in the face of housing costs

Chairperson of National Shelter Adrian Pisarski has responded to the Coalition’s proposal to extend welfare quarantining as “simplistic and unrealistic”.

“If people are struggling to pay the bills, the reasons are far more complex than financial mismanagement,” Mr Pisarski said.

“Housing is the single biggest expense that low and moderate income earners face, and an expense that is disproportionate to the income support they receive,” he continued.

Mr Pisarski called for the Coalition to develop a housing policy which recognises the housing stress suffered by people in the two lowest income quintiles.

“Until the Coalition releases a housing policy that addresses these complexities, they have little credibility in this area,” He said.

As part of its policy platform, **Housing Australia Affordably**, National Shelter called for an immediate 30% increase of the maximum rate of Commonwealth Rent Assistance. In the longer term, supply side solutions need to be implemented.

According to National Shelter, Australia needs to build at least 220,000 new affordable dwellings by 2020. “We need to triple the 70,000 dwellings being built by current programs to 2014,” he said.

- More than 60% of the 1.1 million households in housing stress are renters
- We have 493,000 too few affordable and available rental properties
- Vacancy rates are below 2% in every capital and many regions
- Rents are rising at 3 times the CPI
- More than 105,000 people are homeless on any given night

“Without housing cost relief those people in our community most vulnerable to housing cost pressures including people on income support will continue to struggle to meet week to week costs,” Mr Pisarski concluded.

Measures National Shelter wants commitments to include:

- A specific residential development task force to advise government on how to meet the affordable housing shortfall
- Housing elevated to a Cabinet Ministry linked to Urban and Regional Development
- Honouring Prime Minister Rudd’s commitment to build 100,000 affordable rental units through NRAS
- Sustained spending on Public Housing beyond the economic stimulus

Housing Australia Affordably, National Shelter’s policy platform makes extensive recommendations to parties to improve housing affordability in Australia. It and the data behind this release are available at www.shelter.org.au

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