

Media Release

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HOUSING CRISIS: Call for proactive and strategic leadership led by the Commonwealth

Australia's largest alliance of women's organisations, the Equality Rights Alliance (ERA), has called for a major overhaul of the way housing and homelessness policy is developed and delivered.

The Productivity Commission is reviewing the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement ('NHHA'), a five-year Commonwealth-State housing agreement which expires next year. [Public submissions close today.](#)

In its submission to the Commission ERA asks for a national and preventative strategy to underpin a new State and Federal government housing agreement, so no one is left behind.

"Housing is arguably the most fundamental cross-cutting issue confronting Australia and yet the existing agreement is failing to make headway in reducing levels of housing stress and homelessness, especially for women," said ERA Convenor, Helen Dalley-Fisher.

"Four years after the current NHHA came into force it isn't any easier to buy into the market, rent or access public housing. Conditions are undoubtedly worse for anyone on low income but especially for young women and older single women."

"We want to see a dramatic increase in the supply of social and affordable housing directed to an 'end homelessness' goal," said Ms Dalley-Fisher.

"Older single women aged 55 and over are the fastest growing group to experience homelessness in Australia, with many being first-time users of the welfare system."

"Overall, women experience compounding disadvantages that make them more vulnerable to homelessness. Gendered and family violence is one of the main drivers of homelessness for women of all ages, made worse by the pandemic."

"Indigenous Australians, people with a mental illness or disability are also more likely than others to experience difficulty securing stable and affordable housing."

"For a future housing agreement to work, there must be proactive and cooperative leadership and a partnership underpinned by a shared vision, massively increased funding for social housing and a stronger public service that can support its delivery."

Equality Rights Alliance

Women's Voices for Gender Equality

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“Australia should have a dedicated federal minister for housing in cabinet and a dedicated federal housing agency - steering high level conversations and action that reflects the urgency of the problem.”

“The private and social housing markets are diverse and complex but direct and indirect initiatives and perverse incentives at different levels of governments can and do undermine national housing agreement objectives.”

“For example, while the Federal Government is trying to ease housing affordability through the NHHA, it is simultaneously biasing the market towards investors through its tax policy,” Ms Dalley-Fisher said.

In its 16-page submission to the PC review, ERA urges:

- A new national, holistic and gender-responsive housing strategy that can inform a new outcome focussed National Housing and Homelessness Agreement
- A dedicated federal housing agency - led by a dedicated federal housing minister in national cabinet - with an advisory structure that allows for regular meeting between jurisdictions and with other stakeholders
- A prevention focus and specific targets for women and an intersectional approach to the entire agreement
- An acknowledged and increased role for local governments
- A substantial increase in the building of social and affordable housing with major direct Commonwealth investment for dwellings (a reverse of the trend since the 1970s that began an emphasis on subsidising the individual and recasting housing assistance as part of a welfare system)
- Reviewing how housing is taxed and rolling back policies that encourage residential property speculation.

“The Productivity Commission’s review presents an opportunity to reset housing policy so it is interconnected with other policy areas including tax, climate and disaster management, retirement incomes and women’s safety policy.”

ERA’s mandate includes strengthening women’s economic security and wellbeing. It names safe and affordable housing as the foundation of economic security for women.

“Many of ERA’s members in the community sector are experts in housing for women.”

“They understand that safe, secure, accessible and affordable housing is essential to employment, educational outcomes, maintaining good health, keeping a family together and providing structure and routine to support public participation and leadership,” Ms Dalley-Fisher added. **ENDS**

Find our full submission [here](#).

For more information and interviews contact ERA’s Helen Dalley-Fisher: 0413 065 822 or Toni Hassan 0435 919 077.

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[Equality Rights Alliance](#) (ERA) is Australia's largest network advocating for women's equality, women's leadership and recognition of women's diversity. We bring together 66 non-government organisations and social enterprises with a focus on the impact of policy or service delivery on women. ERA is one of six [National Women's Alliances](#). We are funded by the [Commonwealth Government's Office for Women](#) and are led by [YWCA Australia](#).

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