



NSW ELECTIONS 2007 POLICY

HOUSING

Nowhere is the failure of Labor in NSW more glaring than in housing and housing affordability.

Flush with campaign funds from the private “developers”, the Lemma government couldn’t even bring itself to mention a target for additional public housing in its *State “Plan”*.

But housing (and urban development) in NSW is a mess that can *only* begin to be solved by boosting public, community and cooperative (social) housing—not only as welfare housing but as a real

alternative to the private housing market.

We live in a wealthy society. There is no excuse for tolerating homelessness or sky-high mortgage repayments and rents.

What are the main problems?

- Since the mid-1980s average house prices have increased from four to nine times average yearly household income, while the deposit required for a first home loan has gone from 25% to 60% of the same;
- 265,000 households are paying more than 30% of income in rent or mortgage repayments;
- 50% of people with mortgages and an income below the average (median) are in an “unaffordable housing situation”;
- The shortfall of affordable rental housing for and low and low-moderate incomes families is 113,000, vacancy rates are at their lowest levels since the 1980s and the public housing waiting list is still 60,000 after the 2005 tightening of “eligibility criteria”.
- 20,000 people lack shelter; and
- 17% of people using homelessness services are Indigenous (while comprising less than 2% of the population).

For an emergency program of social housing

- Establish a large-scale building program to make good quality, environmentally sustainable, affordable public housing. Aim to eliminate the 180,000 housing shortfall in 10 years (this would roughly mean building one new public, cooperative or community house for every two private houses over this period).
- Create more social housing for rent by introducing legislation compelling construction companies to build one new home for rent for every ten new homes built for sale. This would provide around 4000 new homes for rent each year.
- Immediately implement a full maintenance program to bring the actual Housing Commission stock up to scratch..

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Immediately carry out the \$640 million of maintenance work backlogged in the last five years alone. No more privatisation of public housing buildings and land. When a public home unit or house is deemed uninhabitable replace it with a new one.

- Set high standards for private accommodation and require landlords to fix problems and maintain private housing stock in good condition. Rental housing that fails to meet required standard to be taken over and renovated at the expense of the landlord.
- Launch a series of projects in developing environmentally sustainable community and cooperative housing with the building industry unions, with special attention to sections of the community with special needs (young people, Indigenous and aged people).
- Ensure that recreational, cultural, educational and social facilities receive priority in town planning, and that housing, employment opportunities, childcare and public transport are linked.
- Provide high quality, community-based, supported accommodation for people with disabilities or other special needs. Fully fund refuges and other secure emergency accommodation for women and children escaping domestic violence.
- Boost special housing programs for Aboriginal people in city and country. Save the Redfern Block for Aboriginal housing.

Housing affordability

- Place a limit on the period landlords can keep housing vacant.
- Set upper limit for rent at 20% of income.

Funding

- Establish a publicly owned and controlled housing finance corporation to provide low-interest home loans
- Increase land tax on luxury housing.
- Campaign for the federal government to end negative gearing for residential property.
- Expand funding to housing co-operatives

Community control and tenant rights

- Establish public housing tenant associations with real powers at neighbourhood and city-wide level along with similar forums for housing associations, co-operative and crisis housing tenants and for those in the private rented sector.
- Put all Aboriginal housing under Aboriginal control.
- Amend the Residential Tenancies Act so (1) landlords are required to justify rent increases if contested by tenants and (2) rents can only be raised once a year.
- Legislate to give borders and lodgers tenancy rights.

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