

Capital City Lord Mayors call for national action on homelessness and housing affordability

The Lord Mayors of Australia's capital cities have held an urgent meeting today in response to growing pressures on social and affordable housing in inner cities and a sharp increase in housing stress and homelessness across the country.

Lord Mayors called on both the Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition to commit to urgent action, especially funding, to respond to rough sleeping on city streets and the creation of a national housing plan, working in collaboration with local and state governments.

The Council of Capital City Lord Mayors (CCCLM) Chair Lord Mayor of Hobart Anna Reynolds, Sydney Lord Mayor Clover Moore and the Lord Mayor of Melbourne Sally Capp hosted a crisis meeting with national experts from the housing sector.

The CCCLM seeks commitment from the federal government to:

- commit to funding additional social and affordable housing units with a focus on key strategic sites in inner cities, aimed at alleviating homelessness;
- provide more assistance for crisis accommodation for rough sleepers in major cities – including the inclusion of homelessness services in the City Deal process;
- appoint a dedicated Homelessness and Housing Minister to Cabinet;
- prioritise these issues at the next Council of Australian Governments meeting with an urgent review of the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement and Commonwealth Rent Assistance program
- adopt a long-term national housing strategy that:
 - provides more social and affordable housing for people from a range of backgrounds to live in and around cities
 - addresses the drivers of homelessness, including access to affordable housing, as well as family violence, mental health, drug & alcohol use; and
- commission a review of welfare and Centrelink policies, in particular Proof of Identity practices, to ensure the most vulnerable people in our cities can access social security.

Lord Mayors agreed to work together to identify key strategic sites within their cities that would benefit from national funding for crisis, social and affordable housing.

Cities across Australia are facing rising levels of homelessness and housing unaffordability. According to the 2016 Census of Population and Housing, the national rate of homelessness has increased by 14 per cent over the last five years. Latest estimates reveal more than 116,000 people were experiencing homelessness in Australia on Census night.

Based on ABS census data¹, the number of homeless has increased in capital cities. Homelessness in Sydney has increased by 48 percent, by 36 percent in Darwin, by 32 percent in Brisbane, by 21 per cent in Hobart, by 14 percent in Adelaide, by 14 per cent in Melbourne and by 12 per cent in Perth and the number of rough sleepers has also increased in the ACT.”

The Rental Affordability Snapshot² report released on Monday by Anglicare and Everybody's Home identified a severe crisis in affordable housing across Australia, with none of the 69,000 rental listings across major cities classed as affordable for someone on Newstart or Youth Allowance.

The report also showed the link between a lack of investment in social housing and the rise of homelessness in Australia's major cities.

¹ <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/lookup/2049.0Media%20Release12016>

² <https://anglicare-ras.com/>

Quotes attributable to the Lord Mayor of Sydney, Clover Moore

“People are sleeping rough in our cities in increasing numbers. Though this is the most severe and visible form of homelessness, it is the symptom of a widespread, systematic failure of our housing system.

“Today we have come together to call on the Prime Minister, Scott Morrison and the Leader of the Opposition, Bill Shorten to provide urgent funding for social housing, including in strategic inner-city sites around the country.

“The City has developed a proposal for the Waterloo site that could provide more than 3,700 homes for people on low incomes, but to make this happen we need the support of state and federal governments.

“This is just one of many opportunities across the country, where federal, state and local governments should be working together to deliver critical social affordable homes to address the national homelessness crisis.”

Quotes attributable to Lord Mayor of Melbourne, Sally Capp

“Rough sleeping on our city streets is in danger of becoming entrenched, especially in Melbourne and Sydney – our fastest growing capitals. It includes young people and a growing number of older women. Our cities need co-ordinated action, with federal and state governments working closely with us to provide a pathway out of homelessness into long-term, affordable housing.

“In inner Melbourne alone, we know there are around 300 people sleeping rough each night - this is just the tip of the homelessness iceberg. Without urgent action, we know this will escalate as our population increases.

“We are working hard with other local councils, NGOs and the state government to join up our thinking and resources but it’s not enough to solve the problem. Federal action, including a more responsive approach by Centrelink, is critical to overcoming the immediate rough sleeping crisis.

“We also need a long-term plan for housing. We need to ensure key workers, especially young people, are not locked out of our cities. If we are to be successful, equitable global cities, we need affordable housing close to CBD jobs to reach our social and economic potential.”

Quotes attributable to Lord Mayor of Hobart, Anna Reynolds

“Capital City Lord Mayors are very concerned about housing, but we know that local government is limited in what it can do. If we want our capital cities to be successful, we need the Federal Government to commit to funding a further 200,000 public housing units nationally by 2030, with a focus on strategic sites in inner cities.

“We know that the market alone will never provide sufficient affordable housing to meet demand. Government must step in to address the market failure in the housing sector.”

Quotes attributable to Lord Mayor of Adelaide, Sandy Verschoor

“Adelaide is one of the most liveable cities in the world, but we recognise that an increasing number of people have no place to call home on any given night. That’s why we’ve set a community goal of ending street homelessness in our CBD.

“We can’t achieve this alone. We need a partner in Canberra that is willing to make the investments and to work collaboratively to tackle the complex problem of housing affordability and homelessness.

Quotes attributable to Everybody’s Home campaign spokesperson Kate Colvin

Everybody’s Home, the national campaign on housing affordability has supported Lord Mayors’ action in calling on governments to urgently invest in more public housing to address the 116,000 people currently homeless across Australia.

"More than 800,000 Australian households are paying more rent than they can afford, putting them at risk of homelessness. It’s no coincidence that we have record homelessness while spending on social housing has been falling.

“People squeezed out of the private rental market have nowhere to go. The most urgent and effective solution to homelessness is to build new social housing where we need it most.”

For interview:

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- Lord Mayor of Melbourne, Sally Capp: Lucy Sinclair 0432 850 239 or email lucy.sinclair@melbourne.vic.gov.au
- Lord Mayor of Hobart, Anna Reynolds: Umesh Ratnagobal 0411 013 272 ratnagobalu@hobartcity.com.au
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Footage of press conference will be uploaded [here](#)