

20 February 2015

Social Housing Policy Team  
Department of Family and Community Services  
Locked Bag 3002  
Australia Square NSW 1215

To whom it may concern

**Re: Social Housing in NSW**

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this important review of social housing policy in NSW.

ACON is New South Wales' leading health promotion organisation specialising in HIV and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) health. Incorporated in 1985 as the AIDS Council of NSW, ACON has been widely recognised as an innovative, successful organisation which has adapted to changes in the HIV epidemic and responded early to emerging health issues among our communities.

Housing is an important social determinant of health and one that affects our communities in particular ways. In this brief submission we have focused on issues that older LGBTI people face. Our comments are based on consultations we undertook with older members of our communities and service providers during 2013. The housing issues identified through these consultations are similar to those that older people living with HIV (PLHIV) have identified as issues that they face.

Access to secure and affordable housing in supportive neighbourhoods was a significant concern for many of the participants in our consultations. While this is a concern shared by many older Australians, the issues of homophobia and transphobia, social isolation and access to services add a further layer of concern for LGBT elders.

For those in metropolitan Sydney, the increasing costs of living in inner city areas, where most social, cultural and medical services and facilities are concentrated, raised major concerns about how social and service networks could be sustained into older age.

The relatively low rate of home ownership and high levels of renting, which data from the Social, Economic and Environmental Factors sub-study of the Sax Institute's 45 and Up study shows to be disproportionately high among gay men, underscores the potential for even greater experiences of social isolation, intensified by concerns about discrimination, should

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those individuals be obliged to move away from their networks of support and services due to housing instability or affordability issues.

Participants in our consultations resolved that it would be worthwhile to establish a working group to examine opportunities to develop greater low cost and social housing in inner city areas or in regional centres. Initiatives such as these should be supported by government, along with the other actions to improve the sustainability of the NSW social housing system outlined in the discussion paper.

During the consultations with our communities and service providers it was also agreed that looking at successful shared or co-operative housing models established in other jurisdictions by or for LGBT people would help in the development of innovative models that could be adapted for use in NSW. These proposals were endorsed recently by participants at an LGBTI Ageing Roundtable organised by ACON on behalf of FACS, which brought together 40 service providers, community members and policy makers.

PLHIV also have specific needs in terms of location, especially access to GPs and hospitals with specialist knowledge of HIV. The location of s100 prescribers, doctors who can prescribe HIV medication, is concentrated in inner city areas and key regional centres, with the largest concentration in and around the 2010 postcode. Dislocation from social and affordable housing in these areas has the potential for negative health outcomes for some PLHIV.

Discrimination was identified as a key concern during our consultations. Stock and tenancy management transfer away from government has the potential to exacerbate this fear, as the protections from discrimination contained in the Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 (NSW) do not apply to faith based service providers. The existence of these exemptions for faith based providers is well known amongst older LGBTI people.

If Government social and affordable housing policy continues to dislocate LGBTI people and PLHIV from the central Sydney area, then Government must ensure that appropriate supports are put in place. These supports will need to assist in the relocation of people, as well as ensuring that people are connected to support networks and services in these new areas.

We appreciate this opportunity to have input into this important discussion on possible social housing reforms. Should you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact me on (02) 9206 2122 or at [nparkhill@acon.org.au](mailto:nparkhill@acon.org.au).

Kind regards



Mr Nicolas Parkhill  
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