



COTA **NEW SOUTH WALES**

MEDIA RELEASE

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SOCIAL HOUSING REVAMP WELCOME, BUT WHAT'S THE LONG TERM VISION FOR OLDER PEOPLE?

"We welcome the Baird Government's announcement it will privatise public housing in NSW," says CEO of Council on the Ageing (COTA NSW) Ian Day.

"The Government's new approach to social housing, as set out in 'Future Directions in NSW Social Housing,' should be commended. Under this plan, we'll see ageing public housing estates sold to developers who'll bear the cost of building new and improved housing. We understand this will see the delivery of 23,500 new dwellings, made up of social and affordable properties. According to the plan, these renewed sites will be more diverse, as 70% of residents in these developments will be private tenants or home-owners, and 30% public tenants."

However, while welcoming the Government's reforms, COTA NSW notes that a relatively small number of new dwellings will be created under the scheme.

"By the Government's own estimation, there are 150,000 people in the queue for public housing right now. Unfortunately, the forces that push people into this queue – the extremely high cost of private housing in NSW, along with ill health, trauma, unemployment, etcetera – are not going to disappear any time soon."

Likewise, Mr Day queried whether the plan's objective to see significant numbers of current public housing tenants 'transitioned' into the private housing market was likely to reduce demand for social housing in any meaningful way.

While pleased that the plan accepts there will always be some people who will need Government assistance with housing – those referred to as 'the safety net group' – Mr Day questioned whether the Government has come to terms with the difficulties a growing number of older people now face in accessing and retaining adequate housing, and will face in the future.

"The plan notes that some 'frail aged' individuals will continue to need access to social housing. We assume this term refers to the very old – people in their 80s and above. What seems poorly understood is that age and ageism start impacting on a person's ability to secure satisfactory housing much earlier. People in their 50s are experiencing some of the highest levels of unemployment in the country and can find themselves subsisting on Newstart for over a decade. They're in no position to rent in the private market as it stands, and the level of affordable housing likely to arise as a result of the Government's plan is unlikely to impact people in this group."

"The fate of vulnerable older people who will be displaced while their current social housing is redeveloped is also a concern. We need to hear more about how their interests will be protected as a matter of urgency."

END

CEO, Ian Day, is available for interview: 0417 210 234