



Thursday 27th of January 2022

Pre-Budget Submission to the NSW Government

To Whom it May Concern,

Yes Unlimited is based in Albury and services the wider Southern Murrumbidgee district, through our Specialist Homelessness Services, Betty's Place Women's Refuge, and Broughton House Youth Refuge, and through a number of other programs including Sustaining Tenancies in Social Housing, Staying Home- Leaving Violence, The Hive Youth Resource Centre (Targeted Early Intervention), Together Home and The Albury Project (Universal Screening and Supports). We welcome the opportunity to provide a Pre-Budget Submission based on our deep expertise regarding homelessness and our local experience of the worsening housing crisis in our region.

Each of us has the right to live with dignity, and that includes access to appropriate housing. We all need a home, in good times and in hard times. But in the past year at Yes Unlimited, where our goal is 'future generations without homelessness by 2050', we saw over 1200 clients who were experiencing or at risk of homelessness. We see first-hand how the lack of social and affordable housing in NSW decimates our chances of ending homelessness for many of those we work with.

Our services are essential services. We work with people when the pressure has built up and pushed them into homelessness or to the brink of homelessness. During COVID-19, when many other services were forced to close, we stayed open due to the very essential nature of the work we do. As a border community the pressure of the pandemic has been particularly acute, with border closures, differing state restrictions, consecutive state lockdowns and an escalating crisis in the availability of local affordable housing. In Albury rental vacancy rates are at an all-time low, rental prices have soared and we are now seeing many clients accessing our service who have no other needs or issues other than just not being able to get a house.

Even though we worked with 1214 clients in our SHS in 2020-21, we are only funded to support 960 clients. It's not just our service. Across the homelessness sector, successive years of underfunding and a series of back-to-back crises means the majority of services are stretched at the seams. Services support roughly 27% more clients than funded for, have received minimal funding to dramatically adapt service delivery during the pandemic, bushfires, floods and droughts, and demand continues to increase. Since 2011 there has



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Betty's Place
Women's Refuge



BroughtonHouse
Youth Refuge



been a 42% rise in demand for Specialist Homelessness Services. Last year alone, 8,507 requests for help went unassisted, and 51% of clients did not receive crisis accommodation despite requesting it.

While these statistics tell part of the story, each of these numbers has a face behind it, as the following account from one of the families we work with demonstrates:

Jack, Helen and their three children presented to Yes Unlimited in October 2021. They had been living in a private rental for the last few years and were issued a 'no grounds' lease termination as the landlord had decided to sell the property after a significant rise in the value of local properties. Both parents have an excellent rental history, and are employed with a combined income of just under \$3000 per fortnight. They have been actively viewing and applying for properties with no success. Local rental viewings are regularly attracting 40+ people looking to apply for a single property. Jack and Helen are now couch surfing with Helen's sister in an overcrowded small apartment. They both report significant impacts on their mental health, feeling despondent and guilty about the burden they are putting on the sister and the experience of homelessness their children are now experiencing.

Without an affordable housing option this family has been stuck in our case management service for over five months, when all they need is somewhere to live. They do not need case management; they need a house. We see stories like these every day. Homelessness and housing affordability are not niche issues and are beginning to affect more and more people.

We cannot stress enough the importance of building more social housing and having a plan to improve housing affordability. Increasing the availability of safe, secure and affordable housing is critical to solving homelessness, and social housing is a key component. The ongoing state of homelessness for many of our clients is by and large because there are no exit options from homelessness services – Housing that is affordable and suitable for everyone in NSW does not exist. There is a shortfall of 70,000 housing units in NSW, by OECD average, and yet others would say the real shortage is 135,000. If only to account for population growth, recent analysis shows that 300,000 properties will need to be delivered by 2050, and this gap can be bridged by building an additional 5000 properties per year.



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We also take this opportunity to endorse the Pre—Budget Submission of Homelessness NSW. As such, we urge the Perrottet Government to:

1. Invest 2.6 billion¹ per year for the next 10 years to grow social housing by 5,000 properties per year.
2. Commit an additional \$500 million to repair existing social housing stock
3. Acquire existing stock to meet immediate need
4. Sufficiently fund the Specialist Homelessness Sector to meet demand with a minimum 20% increase in recurrent baseline funding
5. Boost the recurrent baseline funding for existing Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) over 3 years
6. Directly contract currently subcontracted ACCOs and increased recurrent baseline funding,
7. Increase the number of ACCOs to meet demand across districts and regions

Should you have questions or if we can be of further assistance, please contact Di Glover, CEO, 0260586200 or di.glover@yesunlimited.com.au

¹ *Equity Economics, 'Rebuilding for Women's Economic Security: Investing in Social Housing in New South Wales', October 2021, Sydney: New South Wales Council of Social Service (NCOSS), with support from Community Housing Industry Association NSW; Domestic Violence NSW; and Homelessness NSW*



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