



Counterpoint Community Services INC
67 Raglan Street Waterloo NSW 2017

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02-9698-9569

13 April 2023

Dear The Hon. Rose Jackson, MLC

Minister for Water, Minister for Housing, Minister for Homelessness, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Youth, Minister for the North Coast

First, we congratulate you and your party on the recent election. We want to express our keenness to work with the incoming Government to develop better outcomes for the social housing communities we serve in the Inner City and South-East Sydney LGAs. Counterpoint has worked with social housing tenants and the diverse communities around these areas since its inception in 1977. We operate a Community Centre in Waterloo, a Multicultural Centre in Alexandria, and Poet's Corner Pre-School in Redfern. We also have outreach projects in other social housing estates where we help individual tenants access various non-profit and Government services and supports.

Counterpoint is also the lead community development provider in social housing estates in these areas, working in collaboration with local grassroots groups and managing independent community support services. We have hosted independent community development workers, along with bilingual educators, who have been funded by (what was then) the Department of Family and Community Services), and the Land and Housing Corporation (LAHC). These workers supported the community during the consultation processes of the proposed Waterloo Estate redevelopment, helping with a successful tenant participation program. Our workers were funded under the Housing Communities Program (HCP), but unfortunately, that funding was lost under the previous Government here in NSW.

Thankfully, the City of Sydney and fundraising initiatives have provided temporary support to help our community development initiatives here at Counterpoint. These initiatives focus on community-building, grassroots engagement, and advocacy, ultimately promoting community well-being in these inner-city areas.

Our service and team endeavours to work proactively and positively with all local elected officials, relevant Ministers and Government departments and look forward to continuing this with your office going forward, building a collaborative working relationship. The issues that come into our office range from individual tenancy issues to improvement on a broader-scale, systemic level in the form of substantive policy and practice reform. We are optimistic of improvement in this area under the new Government.

We would appreciate it if, when time permits, you could take the time with us to be briefed on the current plans for social housing reform in the Inner Sydney suburbs we service, so we can understand and prepare for changes on the horizon. Meanwhile, we thought it be helpful to highlight some of our current concerns so that you and

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67 Raglan St Waterloo NSW 2017

 Counterpoint Multicultural Centre
73 Garden St Alexandria NSW 2015

 Counterpoint Poet's Corner Pre-school
55 Morehead St Redfern NSW 2016

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your team can have these issues on the horizon whilst you workshop the final decision on the upcoming plans.

The issues we wish to speak about relating to the following:

1. **The proposed creation of a 'Homes' entity:** As supporters of safe, public, and affordable housing, we are thrilled to hear about the plans for the new entity of Homes. We believe this is a step in the right direction towards creating more robust and more vibrant communities. However, we urge the new Government to remember the importance of the historic alignment with the Department of Communities and would argue that this should be retained.
2. **The Waterloo Human Services Plan:** We are confident that with the Government's continued support and resources, the Waterloo Human Services Plan will flourish and be a shining example of successful collaboration. We also believe there is much potential for this approach to be adopted in other districts, and we encourage the Government to explore these possibilities.
3. **Funding social infrastructure and community support:** we strongly urge the new Government to prioritize social infrastructure, community centres, and independent community support regarding social housing estates. These amenities provide essential services to residents but also help foster a strong sense of community and belonging. We believe this investment will pay off in countless ways and make a real difference in the lives of those who need it most. At our own hubs, for example, we help a broad range of people access everything from computers and phones to health, and disability services, to food relief and getting involved in events with others from their neighbourhood.
4. **Redevelopment of Social Housing Estates:** We welcome Labor's commitment to halting any new development proposals until the base policy is reviewed and rewritten. Our team has invested many years of experience and expertise into the many consultations and plans for Waterloo. Whilst being aware that not all of the community support this view, many do. Therefore, at this stage, we believe the Waterloo South plans should push forward under the current planning controls. We stand ready to support further refining these plans. However, given the historical and needless lengthy turmoil our community has been subjected to, we urge any review not to cause any undue delay for existing tenants or waste any additional valuable resources on repetitive and circular debates. We encourage you to look closer at our community-driven historic submission, which past governmental

administrations and their departments have regrettably overlooked, highlighting the improvements the community would like to see to existing plans. (attached)

5. **Re-instating LAHC-funded independent community support:** previously, LAHC funding for community development work and other case management support was vital in communities being active voices in fine-tuning housing and redevelopment policies. We urge this funding to remain in place for the entirety of the project. Hopefully, this will ensure that resident's needs and concerns are heard and addressed when they arise. Our team is confident that the Waterloo South plans if done aptly, can and will become a cornerstone of the community for generations to come. It is the proper attention and resources to community services we wish to draw attention to, which should be present throughout the entire redevelopment process and, we believe, will be critical to its success.
6. **Centring Tenant Participation:** The chosen model of tenant participation is fundamental to the success of Labor's future social housing policy. The policies ought to be locally driven and suitable to different communities' needs. From our perspective, the current tenant participation model (TCPE) decimated the historically robust local-based tenant participation model (HCP/TPRS). We, like you, are concerned about the disempowerment of tenants and their local tenant advocacy groups across the state. The principle of tenant participation should be at the centre of the new tenant participation model, with the dignity and respect of the tenants foregrounded. We share Labor's hopes for a brighter future for social housing where tenants can help shape their communities and ensure everyone, social and private housing residents alike, can benefit from safe, affordable, and sustainable housing.
7. **Maintenance:** Additionally, we urge Government to revamp the current maintenance system for housing stock, which is inadequate. We welcome the chance to have input into any review of the process, as we understand the importance of maintaining safe and healthy living conditions for community members.

We thank you very much for considering these points and are more than happy to meet to discuss them in further detail in future. Again, we congratulate you on your appointment as Housing Minister and your party's election to the Government. We proudly look forward to meeting you and working with you soon.

Yours Sincerely



Michael M Shreenan
Executive Officer