

Open Letter to Hon Mike Baird MP, Premier of NSW

The following is an open letter signed by the attached Australian community and faith-based organisations, academics and unions listed below, for your and your Government's attention.

November 2016

Dear Premier,

Please ensure adequate inclusionary housing quotas to make Sydney housing fair and affordable

We write to applaud and encourage your government's initiative in tackling the worsening problem of unaffordable housing in our major cities.

We welcome the announcement reported on October 28, that your government will move to change the city's planning laws to require under the Greater Sydney Commission's District Plans a minimum level of accommodation at rents accessible to lower incomes.

We now urge you to ensure that this initiative achieves its desired outcome of adding significant new opportunities for affordable housing by:

1. setting the level of affordable housing in rezoned developments at between 15% and 30% - the latter in developments on government land; and
2. ensuring that these levels apply to the whole development, not merely the "uplift" of added units.

In just a decade, median rents in the Greater Sydney Area have increased by more than 73%. Nearly all of us are affected in some way by the spiralling housing market.

Childcare workers, nurses, baristas and others on low and middle incomes increasingly struggle to find affordable accommodation close to work. Commutes are more expensive and longer – bringing added stress, fatigue, less time with children, less opportunity for accessible grand parenting.

For the most vulnerable members of our community, not being able to find affordable housing means living in inadequate or overcrowded apartments, temporarily staying with friends, or sleeping in a car or out on the street. There were over 28,000 people experiencing homelessness in New South Wales at the date of the latest Census (2011). With the rental market left unchecked, there are few opportunities to move out of crisis accommodation. Family life and educational opportunities suffer badly.

New South Wales can and should do better to ensure affordable housing for all. This state has the strongest economy and the budget position of any in Australia. Thousands of new units are being built in areas close to transport and jobs, but none will end up affordable for lower income earners unless we establish clear and adequate inclusionary rezoning quotas.

South Australia has mandated a 15% minimum inclusionary rezoning level for over a decade; cities around the world - London, Rotterdam, Galway, New York and more - have adopted substantial quotas and successfully delivered more affordable housing for residents – without adverse impact on supply or prices.

The Government plans major urban redevelopments that could substantially boost the supply of affordable housing. The Bays Precinct and the Central to Eveleigh Urban Transformation

programmes, for instance, could also deliver hundreds of affordable housing units close to transport, jobs and services – they will only do so with political will and clear, adequate targets.

Our organisations all agree that a minimum of 15% is required for meaningful impact on Sydney's housing affordability. A much higher proportion, around 30%, should be achieved on government-owned land.

The housing affordability crisis can be fixed. Expert evidence has shown that effective planning reforms can deliver housing for all. Now is the time for NSW to show leadership and make it happen.

This letter is endorsed by:



Academics

Dr Louise Crabtree, Western Sydney University

Associate Professor Michael Darcy, Western Sydney University

Associate Professor Kurt Iveson, University of Sydney

Professor Hal Pawson, UNSW Australia

Professor Peter Phibbs, University of Sydney

Dr Emma Power, Western Sydney University

Dr Dallas Rogers, Western Sydney University

Dr Laurence Troy, UNSW Australia

Organisations

Anglicare

Baptist Churches NSW & ACT

BaptistCare

Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney

Catholic Diocese of Parramatta

CatholicCare Sydney

Churches Housing

Inner South West Community Development Organisation

Jewish House

Marist 180

Mission Australia

National Tertiary Education Union, NSW Branch

National Zakat Foundation

Rail, Tram and Bus Union, NSW Branch

Settlement Services International

Shelter NSW

St Vincent De Paul's Society

Sydney Alliance

Tenants Union

United Muslim Women's Association

United Voice, NSW Branch

Uniting

Uniting Church Synod NSW & ACT

Y-Foundations

Youth Action