

Housing and Homelessness Ministers' Meeting

4 November 2016

Communiqué

Housing and Homelessness Ministers met in Sydney on 4 November 2016 to consider key housing and homelessness issues.

Ministers last met in March 2016.

Future homelessness reforms and funding options

At their last meeting, Ministers' commissioned a report on future funding options for homelessness beyond June 2017.

The Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI) presented the outcomes of their investigations to Ministers who discussed the research findings.

Ministers agreed that funding certainty for homelessness beyond 30 June 2017 was critical, and noted the importance of an early decision on funding arrangements to ensure the continuity of homelessness services.

Ministers agreed to propose a reform process to the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) later in 2016 to guide long-term housing and homelessness funding.

States and Territories are seeking funding certainty by mid-2017 from the Commonwealth for homelessness for the forward estimates and beyond with indexation including Equal Remuneration Order (ERO). As a minimum, funding should be provided for at least 5 years, in the event that agreement on a broader reform cannot be agreed within the initial year.

New South Wales (NSW) circulated a discussion paper, titled *Foundations for change – Homelessness in NSW*, to inform the development of their new homelessness prevention strategy.

Returned veterans homelessness

Ministers noted the progress made towards research and data collection to better understand the scope of homelessness issues for returned veterans.

Rent Deduction Scheme

State and Territory Ministers (with the exception of the Australian Capital Territory and Victoria) will work with the Commonwealth to pursue the development of a sustainable rental deduction scheme with the intention to reduce homelessness, ensure financial sustainability of the system and support greater investment in social housing.

Disability and housing

Representatives from the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) presented on the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

Ministers discussed the impacts of the anticipated significant increase in demand for accessible, affordable and social housing arising from the full implementation of the NDIS. Ministers considered options for ensuring the social and affordable housing sector was well positioned to respond to these impacts and agreed to maintain close contact with the NDIA to monitor demand as the NDIS moves into the full scheme from July 2019.

Ministers noted changes to the funding and delivery of home modifications for social housing providers following the introduction of NDIS.

COAG reforms and affordable housing

Ministers noted the draft 2016 *COAG Progress Report on Housing and Homelessness*. The report discusses the importance of housing, the role of government in housing, key joint Commonwealth, State and Territory initiatives on housing affordability and reforms for housing and homelessness, and jurisdictional initiatives and reforms.

Ministers also noted the Commonwealth's update on the Affordable Housing Working Group.

State and Territory Ministers agreed to continue support for the National Housing Research Program conducted by the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute and discussed its role in supporting housing and homelessness policy development.

IPART review of social housing rents

Ministers noted that NSW has engaged the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) to undertake a review on rent models for social and affordable housing in NSW.

Other business

The issue of underage forced marriage was raised and considered by Ministers, noting that housing insecurity may be an issue for victims.

Ministers noted the current inadequacy of data, the need for a consistent definition of underage forced marriage, and that further discussions by Community Services Ministers will take place on these matters.

Housing Ministers will hold further discussions with the Commonwealth on the housing implications of addressing underage forced marriage.

Way Forward

Ministers agreed they would report further progress on housing and homelessness services and housing affordability later in 2016 through the COAG process.