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Housing need and homelessness in the Queensland Budget

Dear colleagues,

The policy context

The current budget measures are in a context where there are many simultaneous initiatives occurring across State Government to achieve a healthy housing system. Q Shelter acknowledges progress on planning system reform, land audits, local government housing action planning and inter-agency reforms to prevent people from emerging into homelessness.

Our annual policy and investment statement highlights many areas of progress because of the Queensland Housing Summit. You can read '[Better Together](#)' to understand more fully where Q Shelter sees progress and further reform.

Housing supply and support measures in the budget

The Queensland State Budget has been delivered with mixed results for responses to housing need and homelessness.

The Treasurer highlighted the significant revenue and relatively low debt levels in Queensland compared to other eastern seaboard states. This was our opportunity to scale up housing and support measures.

An extra \$322.2 million for fast-tracked capital funding for 500 social homes in the Queensland Budget is welcome. The increase in capital investment is important, however we consider there was also an opportunity to increase the Housing Investment Fund given the government's strong revenue based.

Q Shelter welcomes incentivising Build-to-Rent initiatives, however we want to see more policy certainty about the role of community housing providers in delivering affordable rental homes. They are the only mechanism to ensure the

delivery of funds in perpetuity for the purposes of social and affordable housing.

Q Shelter also notes that there is some increase in funding for support and an apparent focus on the acquisition and delivery of emergency crisis housing responses.

We know we are in a crisis, but we also need to chart a course from crisis management to long-term wellbeing for people. We need to embrace prevention and ensure we are on a trajectory towards solving the housing supply crisis in sustainable ways.

As such, we are working with Government to understand the forward investment in more tenancy sustainment services throughout Queensland. We need an injection of support workers to help people exit homelessness and sustain a safe and affordable home for as long as they need. We believe tenancy sustainment resources are critical to ending homelessness.

It should be noted that \$452 million is allocated in new funding to absorb increased construction costs. This is needed to ensure the delivery of homes already in the pipeline and reflects the tough operating environment to achieve any housing supply in the current system.

Another important inclusion is \$7.5 million to support Economic Development Queensland (EDQ) to undertake detailed site investigations of mixed tenure residential and housing developments, including social and affordable housing opportunities across identified locations identified via the recent land audit.

An important highlight is the allocation of \$128 million to develop a second First Nations Housing and Homelessness Action Plan. Of critical importance is additional funding to supply housing in 17 remote and discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

In a strong economy we have an opportunity for even more investment in social and affordable housing as well as upstream prevention through support. These, in combination, will reduce the cost of crisis to government and the community and most importantly, to people desperately in search of a home.

Cost of living: from welfare to systemic poverty reduction

The budget focuses on cost-of-living measures which are very welcome. There are many households in severe hardship and rebates on the essential cost of living items will be a welcome relief.

Cost of living pressures are hitting people on the lowest 40% of the income spectrum the hardest and we have an opportunity to really lift our approach to a strategy intended to reduce poverty significantly over a generation.

While this also needs national leadership, state governments in other jurisdictions overseas have played a critical role in poverty reduction. Leadership to unite all levels of government, the community services sector, private sector and broader community could embed prevention from birth, and strengthen families, reduce exposure to adverse events, strengthen school participation and guarantee housing.

This puts people on a pathway to sustainable housing and the prevention of complex homelessness requiring high-cost solutions with associated high costs to wellbeing. You can read more about Q Shelter's proposed solutions in [Better Together](#) and in our response to [the needs of young people in the youth justice system](#).

Cost of living relief is welcome, but Queensland could be leading within Australia to unite all levels of government and other sectors to achieve systemic change that reduces poverty. We could learn from leading jurisdictions about international successes where integrated poverty reduction strategies have achieved measurable success.

Kindergarten initiative a game changer

Any investment in early life support can completely change the trajectory for a child. Where children are living in poverty or experiencing other hardships, high-quality kindergarten can make a world of difference.

High-quality caring environments support children's social and cognitive development. Kindergarten supports parents and is a key line of defence in preventing children from missing out on education. Spending time in environments that are supportive can stimulate a child's abilities on their pathway to employment, housing and social inclusion in later life.

High-quality early education is an opportunity to also identify vulnerability and coordinate responses from the broader service system.

This is the type of initiative that would be well-located within a broader approach to intensively supporting families with the goal of preventing

childhood exposure to adversity with longer term positive impacts on mental health, and social and economic participation that prevents poverty and homelessness.

Access to kindergarten is a key feature of leading approaches to child safety and development. This is a game changer for Queensland, with far-reaching consequences for wellbeing and social cohesion.

Food security on the agenda

People in housing stress, homelessness and living in subsidised housing struggle to achieve food security. Australia does not have a food security problem at the population level, but the distribution, affordability and accessibility of food is not equal for everyone.

As cost-of-living pressures rise and housing affordability remains extremely challenging, we know that people are choosing to miss meals or reduce food purchases just to make ends meet.

Expanding school breakfast programs and funding Foodbank are very welcome measures. Q Shelter wrote to the State Government in 2020 to encourage a systemic approach to food security that was embedded at the community level, while also being coordinated more strategically to ensure food security for everyone. In 2021, we hosted a [Skills in Action Session with Danielle Gallegos](#) from QUT reflecting on food security strategies and on how we can deliver food programs with dignity.

It is great to see State Government investment in food security for more people. A state like Queensland could also work to coordinate a food security strategy that ensures access to food through place-based and system-level approaches that are underpinned by the values of dignity, inclusion and human rights.

We will keep you posted as we understand more about the 2023-2024 State Budget.

Please contact us if you have any comments or questions on the budget or related policy measures. We welcome ongoing discussion about current and future policy measures that are needed to help ensure every Queenslanders has a home.

Warmest regards,



Franca Cariglieri

Executive Director



Our mailing address is:

Queensland Shelter
PO Box 214
Spring Hill, QLD 4004
Australia

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