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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Careful calibration of social housing rent settings necessary

The efficient operation of social housing is critical in ensuring all Queenslanders have access to stable, appropriate and affordable homes.

'We know that regular rent reviews are essential to a healthy housing system. Through rent reviews, rents may increase if incomes have increased or decrease if household circumstances have changed.

Q Shelter understands that rent reviews were frozen during 2020 when COVID-19 hit our communities.

Ms Caniglia stated: 'In 2020, this was an appropriate response against a backdrop of so much uncertainty. At that time, our combined focus as community services and government was to ensure people were not sleeping rough, at higher risk of COVID or indeed causing higher risk because they had nowhere to isolate.

'The costs of developing and delivering a social housing portfolio are rising at a time when we need as many homes available to eligible households as possible. The receipt of rents by social housing providers is one revenue stream that helps to make the delivery of social housing possible.'

The operation of the social housing portfolio came under scrutiny in the Queensland Audit Office's report in July 2022, suggesting that greater management of the wait list and reviewing approaches to tenancy management were warranted.

'Q Shelter understands that responses to the report to improve efficiencies and service delivery have been underway for some time.'

'Q Shelter supports the proposed staged approach to implementing rent increases where they are required. We urge the Government to prevent any current social housing tenants from being pushed into housing insecurity or the risk of homelessness by the review of rents. A holistic approach to assessing household needs should be undertaken. Consideration of the lack of housing supply in the private rental market should also shape the implementation process.

'It is important to keep in mind that social housing income eligibility limits have not been reviewed for more than 15 years, which means that more households may need subsidised housing based on rising rents and lower availability. Advocates from housing and homelessness organisations highlight that more households should be eligible for social housing because their needs are high against the backdrop of such a challenging housing market.

'We are understandably concerned that the review may push some existing public housing tenants into an extremely tight and unaffordable rental market, which may in turn cause them to seek help from the funded system at other access points.

'The system needs adequate resourcing to ensure that tenancies and the wait list are actively managed to understand needs and changing eligibility. We support practices that regularly engage with current and prospective tenants to calibrate the housing response in real time without long delays.

In response to the Queensland Government's decision to annually review rents paid by social housing tenants, Q Shelter urges careful and considered calibration of all settings that will contribute to an efficient and effective social housing system.

Q Shelter CEO, Fiona Caniglia said: 'We are dealing with the consequence of decades of under-investment in social and affordable housing, not just in Queensland but throughout Australia. Rent reviews are only one part of how the system can deliver housing solutions to as many people as possible.'

'We hope the Queensland State Budget includes new measures, including investment to increase the supply of social and affordable housing, reforms to strengthen community housing providers, and funding certainty for specialist homelessness services working at the front line.'

All quotes can be attributed to Fiona Caniglia: Chief Executive Officer, Q Shelter.

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About Q Shelter

[Q Shelter](#) (Queensland Shelter) is the peak body for housing and homelessness in Queensland. For more than 35 years, Q Shelter has worked to improve housing outcomes for Queenslanders. Over this time, we have remained an unwavering voice for solutions through advocacy, strategic engagement and capacity building.

In addition to influencing solutions and policy, Q Shelter provides professional development and shares resources to assist other organisations to be effective, so that our combined capacity to respond to housing need is strengthened