



# Housing PEOPLE

[www.housinginstitute.org](http://www.housinginstitute.org)



## Housing affordability – the election build-up

Housing affordability has been bumped up on the Australian Federal election issues agenda with the news that Labor will convene a national summit in Parliament House this Thursday (26 July) to discuss the problem.

Opposition Leader, Kevin Rudd, said housing affordability was a critical concern for working families struggling to meet their mortgage repayments, as well as first home buyers.

"Right now, first home buyers are being strangled by the rental crisis, strangled by the amount of money they're having to put out on rent and unable to save the money to put on a deposit because housing prices have gone through the roof," he said.

At the summit, Labor plans to put forward a New Directions statement on housing affordability, including a range of specific proposals designed to tackle the issue.

"One of the specific proposals we've put forward is when it comes to first home buyers putting money aside for a deposit, whether in fact the deposit can be treated like a superannuation account and attract concessional taxation treatment, in order to encourage first home buyers to save the money necessary to put on a deposit," Mr Rudd said.

"One of the other things we'll be considering is the impact of local government infrastructure charging on developers and the flow-through affect that has for first home buyers, in new estates in particular."

Labor's National Housing Affordability Summit is expected to attract participants from the housing

industry, the finance sector, state and territory governments, as well as local government.

Members of the Australasian Housing Institute will be attending the summit and covering the event on behalf of AHI publications, including *Housing People*.

(Information reprinted from the Australian Labor Party website: [www.alp.org.au](http://www.alp.org.au))

### On the agenda



AHI Director, Garry Mallard, discusses the affordable housing crisis with Prime Minister John Howard, while presenting Mr Howard with the May 2007 issue of the Institute's journal, *HousingWORKS*.

## YOUR OPINIONS

***Housing People* continues to air the thoughts and opinions of AHI members regarding the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement (CSHA) negotiations – in particular, the issues surrounding the Affordable Housing Agreement.**



Jan Berriman is the CEO of Melbourne Affordable Housing, a community housing organisation which currently develops, owns and manages a total of 253 properties in the Melbourne metropolitan region and in Geelong. Jan is a leading spokesperson on social housing in Victoria.

"Many people in housing think it is time for the federal government to assume a leadership role in the

development and negotiation of the next CSHA and become the instigator for change – not just provide us with more of the same.

Money can be seen as the panacea for all ills, but while improved funding remains a fundamental issue, it is not enough. With a federal election approaching, it is an opportune time to pull a few more levers and get governments at all levels thinking at a higher level – instead of navel gazing.

The role of the CSHA needs to be viewed in broader terms. We have to see social housing as part of the broader housing sector and economic development of the community.

This means government, treasury and policy makers have to start thinking in a broader sense about what they want to achieve through the CSHA. A broader policy framework to encompass the economic, social and environmental aspects of a good on-ground response to housing must be developed.

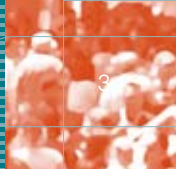
The CSHA should seek a more diverse range of housing outcomes. The government could look at shared equity arrangements, land leasing, rental arrangements, First Home Owners grants and other mechanisms to broaden housing affordability options. Private investment should also be encouraged to swing into action and support affordable and social housing.

The provision of affordable housing could be a vote-winner. While it has been a long-standing issue for people on low incomes, it is fast becoming an issue affecting middle-income families, who have young adults unable to leave home until they are 30, because

they can't afford to buy their own homes or indeed rent in the private market.

As a community housing provider, I would like the new CSHA agreement to:

- ◆ Improve funding to housing providers in the government and not-for-profit sector. This should also include the innovative use of tax levers and subsidies to assist these organisations. They should consider that funding be identified as current operational funding and capital grants to achieve agreed targets.
- ◆ Set housing outcome targets at the national level to ensure funding recipients know what outcomes are expected from the money they receive. At the moment, governments are muddling around and no one has a clear idea of what they are trying to achieve.
- ◆ Strengthen regional development and planning mechanisms to assist the development of affordable and social housing. This will require co-operation at the federal, state and local government levels.
- ◆ Improve the outcome currently provided in direct subsidies such as the First Home Owners Grant, Commonwealth Rent Assistance etc. By tweaking these subsidies through means testing, for example, it may be a net cost result to the commonwealth.
- ◆ Introduce new funding and targeted incentives to encourage private investors to build more housing stock. (For example, super funds are the golden eggs we just can't crack as expected returns can't be met – the government needs to be giving incentives to pour money into affordable and social housing stock.)
- ◆ Allow community housing organisations to borrow through government funding mechanisms. Affordable housing associations currently undertake and service debt through the private finance sector, however access to consistent levels of finance would support additional growth.
- ◆ Provide access to Crown land, state and local government-owned land, without demanding a premium market price. Governments hold a lot of land on premium sites such as space around train stations. Access to this land would provide housing associations with the opportunity to build diverse and sustainable communities, through the provision of affordable housing that is close to public transport and services."



# Career Profile: Annette Kirby

**Annette Kirby's plans to become a teacher were first frustrated by drought, and then challenged by motherhood and geographical isolation. Now a senior public servant and college dean, she is passionate about promoting access to flexible and supportive learning programs.**

And she doesn't mind commuting by plane to do it.

Every Monday, Annette bids farewell to her husband, John, a semi-retired engineer, in their hometown, Whyalla, and flies to Adelaide, where she spends the week fulfilling her role as dean of the new College for Learning and Development, within the South Australian Department for Families and Communities (DFC), which includes Housing SA. She flies home on Friday.

"It's the best job I've ever had," said Annette, who was recruited in November 2005 to oversee the introduction of the DFC's ambitious new workplace learning model, designed to create a "culture of learning" which will actively engage every one of the more than 5,000 staff in the department through individually tailored learning plans.

In September 2006, the College for Learning and Development, which boasts a staff of 60 (including 38 learning facilitators) became a Registered Training Organisation (RTO), with the capacity to equip staff with nationally accredited qualifications.

The college currently offers a range of accredited programs including qualifications in Government and Community Services (Disability, Child Protection, Youth Work and Community Work) with the promise of additional qualifications to meet departmental needs.

"The advantage is that we are able to design learning programs that are contextualised to the business," Annette said. "Staff gain skills that enhance our service to clients – and improve their own career opportunities."

Annette frankly admits that one of the college's primary aims is to help the DFC maintain workforce numbers. "It's really quite hard to attract and retain people, because of the nature of the work," she said. "The department hopes to encourage people to stay by actively supporting their learning and career aspirations."

The dean believes the college is already chalking up some promising results, with some 3,000 DFC staff currently engaged in learning – including more than 250 managers across the department.

"We have a partnership model that looks at the relationship between the learner, the line manager

and the facilitator of learning," Annette explained. "It is a strategic priority to get management engaged in the learning program, so they understand it and can then support their staff in learning."

Annette herself is a dedicated educator with a passion for learning and "doing it in a flexible way that meets the learner's needs".

Her own educational aspirations faced a number of early obstacles – experiences she now draws upon to motivate others. "I do a wonderful speech at 'women in leadership' gatherings called 'From Farm to Dean'," Annette chuckles.

Born and raised on a mixed farm in the Flinders Ranges, she faced a long dusty bus trip to primary school every day and was forced to board four days a week to complete her high school education. Financial hardships inflicted on the family farm by severe drought in the late 1960s prompted Annette, then aged 16, to decline a teaching scholarship, in favour of finding a job that would enable her to support herself right away.

She quickly found a position with BHP in Whyalla (two hours from home). "Then I met my future husband, who was travelling around Australia," she recalled. "Whyalla was his first stopover.

"He was going to make a lot of money, then leave – and I was going to stay for a little while, and then go to Adelaide for my teaching degree. We both ended up stopping there."

Marriage and two children later, Annette finally embarked upon an Early Childhood degree, studying externally through the former Hartley College and local TAFE in Whyalla. "Fifty women started the program and six years later, six of us graduated," she said.

After a seven-year stint as an early childhood teacher and educational consultant, she began lecturing at the Whyalla campus of the Spencer Institute of TAFE. Within three years, she had become the first female manager at the campus.



*continued page 4*

*from page 3*

During the years that followed, Annette continued her studies, climbed the managerial ladder and clocked up thousands of kilometres in travel visiting staff in remote and rural locations. "We were determined to deliver learning regardless of where students lived," she said.

By the time the Department for Families and Communities came knocking, she had spent time as acting director of the Spencer Institute of TAFE.

After so many years involved in pursuing an education, teaching and managing educational facilities, Annette respects learning as both a tool to empower the individual and a way to unite staff.

A full week is dedicated to the induction course for new staff. "It's important to connect people up front with the big picture of why they're doing their work, where it sits in the department and what other areas in the department are doing," Annette said.

The Certificate III in Government was introduced as a foundation course to equip workers with core competencies – a priority for the Department of Families

and Communities, where "80 percent of our new workers have never worked in government".

Staff have been grouped into eight "job families" which broadly describe similar job functions across all agencies within the department. These job families will eventually be reflected in all DFC job descriptions and will function as learning networks through which staff can share skills, knowledge and best practice, as well as provide professional support.

"Linking staff across DFC through job families will also encourage staff to explore other job opportunities within the department, rather than outside it," Annette observed. "Each family will also have a tailored career pathway learning program."

Nine months on, departmental surveys indicate more staff are envisaging a long-term future with the department and "to have 3,000 learners already engaged is pretty outstanding really," the dean added with pride.

This farmer's daughter will continue to cultivate learning.

## AHI NZ committee member Andrew Wilson seeks concrete solutions

**It's just as well that Andrew Wilson enjoys his job, because it certainly isn't getting any easier.**

As property manager for IHC New Zealand Inc., the country's largest provider of community housing outside the government sector, Andrew has spent the past six years battling to hold the line against soaring housing prices and rental costs.

Based in Wellington, IHC runs housing and other services for people with intellectual disabilities throughout New Zealand. It currently has some 870 housing units which provide accommodation for about 3,000 people. IHC owns about three-quarters of these properties and rents the rest, mainly through the private sector. It also helps about 500 people to live in their own homes.

"There has been a 90 percent increase in housing prices over the past six years, as well as a 40 percent increase in housing construction and maintenance costs, and we have experienced a 33 percent increase in rental costs," Andrew observed.

"There has been nothing like the same increases in the accommodation supplement component of welfare benefits and nothing like the same increase in our contract funding, which has risen around 18 percent in line with the CPI."

Andrew has both a personal and professional interest

in these statistics. His 21-year-old son, Jeremy, has an intellectual disability and currently lives at home.

As a concerned parent, Andrew is a long-term supporter of IHC. The former consulting engineer and general manager of Standards New Zealand jumped at the opportunity to begin managing the organisation's housing portfolio six years ago.

"You can relate to what you are doing, which is wonderful," he said. "It is very satisfying work, because the outcomes are tangible – and you can make a difference to people's lives."

Andrew is hoping the New Zealand Commerce Select Committee on Housing Affordability in New Zealand is going to make a difference as well, particularly for people at "the lower end of the income spectrum".

A member of the AHI New Zealand committee, he recently helped to assemble the institute's submission to the Select Committee.



*continued page 5*

# Social Housing Overseas:

The Southern African Foundation  
International Conference, Exhibition &  
Housing Awards

“Housing Delivery and Building  
Technologies”

7-10 October 2007, Cape Town

(Information reprinted from the Southern African Foundation website: [www.sahousingfoundation.co.za](http://www.sahousingfoundation.co.za))



The Southern African Foundation supports the development of sustainable communities through networking, conferencing and workshops which draw together housing professionals from both the public and private sectors.

SAHF members include representatives from provincial and local government, developers, financial institutions, academics and manufacturers in the building and construction industries. The SAHF is in regular contact with more than 3500 organisations, both locally and internationally, through its free monthly electronic publications.

The three-day SAHF International Conference will explore the theme, “Housing Delivery & Building Technologies” through a showcase encompassing 50 exhibits and a comprehensive lecture program featuring 50 guest speakers from South Africa and neighbouring countries, as well as Europe, the United States and Britain.

Among the guest speakers will be the Premier of Western Cape Province, Ebrahim Rasool, who observes: “South Africa and its various provinces are today still plagued by the legacy of apartheid and its distorted housing system. A strategic, integrated and multi-

faceted configuration of human settlements will be critical to deal effectively with the diversity of housing needs in our country.

“It is imperative to note that the backlog in housing delivery is still adversely affecting those who live in informal settlements, putting the lives of children and adults at risk due to frequent fires, the spread of disease and other ill consequences of inadequate housing and homelessness.

“Proper housing must therefore be a catalyst, through which we can render a comprehensive package of services, in order to improve the quality of life of the poor. Issues pertaining to health, access to services, access to employment, social integration, disaster management and others, must be included in discussions on a broad spectrum of issues related to the provision of adequate housing for the indigent.”

The Executive Mayor of Cape Town, Helen Zille, who will deliver the welcome address, said: “I hope that this conference will give delegates the chance to learn, exchange ideas and find new strategies that they can take back to their organisations for further development and implementation.”

*from page 4*

“I would like to see some good practical solutions come out of this inquiry,” Andrew said. “One would be to ensure government welfare benefits and accommodation supplements are realistically paced to keep up with the increase in rental prices.”

Andrew would also like to see an increase in New Zealand’s social housing supply from a “relatively small” four percent of the total housing stock (about 85,000 housing units out of 1.37 million households) to around eight percent.

“I’d like to see government housing providers receive capital to increase social housing stock and the community housing sector offered assistance on a much larger scale than present to provide additional housing in partnership with government,” he said.

On 31 August, the AHI will stage the Auckland Housing Affordability Forum, the first in a series of four major workshops designed to explore practical solutions to the affordable housing crisis at a regional level and local level. The other workshops will be held in Wellington, Christchurch and Tauranga.

“We thought we would start with Auckland, because it is a high-stress housing area in New Zealand,” Andrew observed. “The city is choked for land supply and that has pushed up the cost of new developments – which has had a flow-on affect to the whole market.”

He anticipates all the workshops will generate a high level of interest and participation. “Hopefully they will lead to some tangible outcomes for those who are already feeling the social impacts of this problem.”

## Diary dates: Upcoming Events

Following are details of a range of upcoming events. For individual event details, check out the website at [www.housinginstitute.org](http://www.housinginstitute.org) or contact our office at [admin@housinginstitute.org](mailto:admin@housinginstitute.org).

| Event   | Location                | Date          |
|---|-------------------------|---------------|
| Working with complex and demanding clients (1 day)  | Adelaide                | 1/08/2007     |
| Working with complex and demanding clients (1 day)  | Perth                   | 2/08/2007     |
| Working with complex and demanding clients (1 day)  | Perth                   | 3/08/2007     |
| Common Housing Registers (1 day)  | Sydney                  | 3/08/2007     |
| NSW Branch Event:<br>Breakfast with the NSW Leaders of Social Housing   | Parramatta              | 8/08/2007     |
| Working with complex and demanding clients (1 day)  | Townsville              | 15/08/2007    |
| Working with complex and demanding clients (1 day)  | Cairns                  | 16/08/2007    |
| Housing Affordability Forum (1 day)   | Auckland                | 31/08/2007    |
| <i>HOUSING WEEK EVENTS (Victoria)</i>   |                         |               |
| Energy Efficiency Seminar (1/2 day)   | Melbourne               | 11/09/2007    |
| Great Debate #1 (evening)   | Melbourne               | 11/09/2007    |
| Shaping a Modern Housing Policy conference (1 day)  | Melbourne               | 13/09/2007    |
| Great Debate #2 (lunch)   | Melbourne               | 14/09/2007    |
| Working with complex and demanding clients (1 day)  | Mackay                  | 16/10/2007    |
| Working with complex and demanding clients (1 day)  | Gold Coast              | 17/10/2007    |
| Working with complex and demanding clients (1 day)  | Rockhampton             | 18/10/2007    |
| <b>Other non-AHI Events</b>   |                         |               |
| Urban 45: national summit on urban policy issues - organised by RMIT/UTAS<br><a href="http://www.ahuri.edu.au/calendar/event.asp?ContentID=Urban45_20070816">www.ahuri.edu.au/calendar/event.asp?ContentID=Urban45_20070816</a> | Melbourne               | 16/08/2007    |
| The Southern African Foundation International Conference, Exhibition & Housing Awards<br>"Housing Delivery and Building Technologies"   | Cape Town, South Africa | 7-10/10/2007  |
| National Housing Conference<br><a href="http://www.iceaustralia.com/housing2008">www.iceaustralia.com/housing2008</a>   | Sydney                  | 20-22/02/2008 |

### Interested in in-house delivery of one of our workshops?

The AHI delivers in-house training of our regularly scheduled workshops, as well as customised programs to meet specific workplace needs. Recent delivery has included:

**Working with Complex and Demanding Clients** - delivered for the Department of Housing, NSW. Locations include: Orange, Wollongong, Wagga Wagga, Parramatta, central Sydney, Coffs Harbour and Newcastle.

**Mental Health First Aid** - delivered in-house for the Department of Human Services, Victoria in Melbourne, and the Department of Housing NSW in central Sydney

**If you are interested in having one of these events delivered in your workplace, or a customised program for your staff, please contact our Professional Development Coordinator, Judith Wootton, to discuss your needs. Ph: +61 2 6494 7566 or send us an email.**