



Housing PEOPLE

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Social housing and the 2020 Summit

The Australia 2020 Summit, held over the weekend of 19–20 April, was ‘designed to harness the best ideas from across the nation and apply them to the challenges before us, to create a better future for Australia’. The promptly issued Initial Report says the Summit ‘is not an end in itself, but part of something broader – a public conversation in which all voices are welcome... a stimulus to engage an even larger number of Australians on the questions we have debated.’ So the AHl has reviewed the report to see what issues were highlighted for social housing. There will be many opportunities to talk more about these over the coming months.

To give a quick overview, Summit discussion was focused on ten streams, each with a community and ministerial co-chair and a group of 100 invited participants:

1. **The productivity agenda**
– Warwick Smith and Julia Gillard
2. **The future of the Australian economy**
– David Morgan and Wayne Swan
3. **Population, sustainability, climate change, water**
– Roger Beale and Penny Wong
4. **Future directions for rural industries and rural communities**
– Tim Fischer and Tony Burke
5. **A long-term national health strategy**
– Michael Good and Nicola Roxon
6. **Strengthening communities, supporting families and social inclusion**
– Tim Costello and Tanya Plibersek
7. **Options for the future of Indigenous Australia** – Jackie Huggins and Jenny Macklin
8. **Towards creative Australia**
– Cate Blanchett, Julianne Schultz and Peter Garrett

9. **The future of Australian governance**

– John Hartigan and Maxine McKew

10. **Australia’s future security and prosperity**

– Michael Wesley and Stephen Smith

The Initial Report says the vision expressed by many at the Summit emerged through four strong and repeated themes:

- > **Dealing with climate change** – participants identified climate change as the ‘overarching issue for our generation’ and thought that almost every aspect of policy and practice choice will be affected by the drive toward sustainability. Concern was expressed as to how adapting to climate change will affect the already disadvantaged in our communities.
- > **A national approach** – there was a strong push for a consistent national approach and a seamless national economy, to minimise overlaps and bottlenecks and improve competitiveness. COAG has identified more than 25 areas in which Australia has eight sets of different State and Territory regulations. There are also multiple education and accreditation systems. Change will require thinking about every aspect of government involvement in society.
- > **Developing people** – participants agreed that people find meaning in their lives through expression and that a nation benefits from innovation. Rather than leaving this to chance, education and professional development, community development and government policy need to foster creativity and risk taking.
- > **Strengthening civil society** – Summit participants made the critical observations that in a civil society everyone ‘should be involved, healthy, safe, educated and housed’ and that ‘embracing the range of indigenous and non-indigenous stories which are our culture’ is a prerequisite to Australia’s further

Reasons to be Members, Part 3*

Kerry Nicholls says thanks to all members who have renewed promptly, and a gentle nudge to those of you who haven't yet managed to get around to it.

Unlike most other costs in our lives, membership fees have not gone up this year. You will though find some new options for payment:

- > **Payroll deduction** for those working for Housing New Zealand Corporation, Queensland Department of Housing and the South Australian Department of Families and Communities
- > **Monthly installments and automatic annual payments** in the direct debit deduction scheme from your credit card or any bank or credit union account
- > **Advance payment 20% discount** if you pay 2 years in advance
- > **Free membership for one year...** but we expect you to work for it and to recruit 5 or more members by 30 June 2008.

There are plenty of good reasons to continue to be a member and to entice others to be:

- > more local opportunities to discuss hot policy and practice topics with colleagues over breakfast or afternoon tea

- > the chance to influence the social housing policy and practice agenda through working groups, such as the newly created homelessness group
- > recognition of the achievements of you and your colleagues through the presentation of our Professional Excellence Awards
- > many ways to further your own professional development at our seminars and workshops, and by reading and contributing to a new look, quarterly *HousingWORKS*



Don't forget that (Australia only, sorry New Zealand) your membership fee is tax deductible and you gain National Building and Surveying Alliance membership benefits, including discounts on a variety of financial and leisure services.

Members are why we exist and also, to some extent, how we exist, so thanks to all of you for making your professional association the success story it is.

Online membership renewal is easy at www.housinginstitute.org/mbrship/joining.php

* with apologies to Ian Dury, and to those of you who think you may have missed parts 1 and 2

Tracey Acton joins the AHI team

Hello everyone, my name is Tracey Acton. I am working part time in the role of Professional Development Coordinator while Judith Wootton is on maternity leave. I am excited to have the opportunity to be part of the dedicated AHI team and to work with social housing workers across Australia and New Zealand.



With my eldest child starting school I was looking for a work and lifestyle change from my role as Senior Project Manager with the Health and Community Services Workforce Council in Brisbane. For 8 years I was responsible for the management and implementation of a range of workforce development projects across the community services sector in Queensland, and also a part of the management team. In developing each project we used capacity building principles to establish the most effective and meaningful professional development activities for that locality and that sector. The Workforce Council more than doubled in size in just 18 months and

the challenges of this growth for human resource management, quality assurance and maintaining the essence and qualities of a great workplace proved to be a wonderful learning space. All these experiences give me a good foundation for my new role with the AHI.

In 2008 our professional development calendar continues to offer our high quality series of foundation skills workshops in each jurisdiction: Working with Complex and Demanding Clients, Strategies for Working with Drug/Alcohol and Mental Health First Aid. Further strengthening this core activity, we have commissioned new workshops in Assessment Skills, Customer Engagement and Building Staff Resilience. To complement our workshops we will develop seminars, conferences and breakfast events as opportunities and topics emerge. Branch committee activities will also feature in most jurisdictions.

To see what is coming up in your area, log to our website at www.housinginstitute.org or contact me on 0412 538 140.

Future Proofing social housing

The well-worn environmental slogan **Think Global, Act Local** reflects what is actually happening in social housing across Australasia. Serious action is being taken to increase tenant and staff awareness and to do our bit to take better care of our environment.



The AHI focus throughout April was our seminar series 'Future Proof: thinking differently for a sustainable future', presented by **Emma Synott** in five Australian capital cities. Emma is a committed social housing practitioner now working as an advisor on sustainable development with the international firm ARUP. In the next edition we will report on the outcomes from these seminars, looking in particular at what they generated in terms of enthusiasm for new initiatives and clear directions for our future professional practice.

Housing authorities and community and Aboriginal housing providers have already made great strides in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and water consumption across their portfolios, through a combination of maintenance and information strategies. These steps are increasingly supported by initiatives in other parts of government. For example, in South Australia a new Residential Energy Efficiency Scheme (REES) is being implemented from 1 January 2009. Energy retailers in South Australia will be required to achieve targets for improving energy efficiency in all

households. Planned measures will include ceiling insulation, draught proofing and more efficient appliances. They will also be expected to deliver energy audits to low income households.

Housing authorities are taking an increasingly strategic approach to sustainability. In NSW, Housing NSW's Environmental Sustainability Strategy will be based on four strategic priority areas: innovative building design and maintenance; conservation of natural resources; supporting sustainable communities; and adapting to climate change. In the Forward to their recent Consultation Paper, the Hon Matt Brown, NSW Minister for Housing, says the manager of the state's public housing portfolio 'has responsibility for ensuring that we reduce the burden of our activities on the environment while promoting social justice, fairness and good financial management'. He also hopes that 'through our leadership we can influence and support our tenants, Aboriginal and community housing providers, suppliers and contractors, and other stakeholders to adopt environmentally sustainable practices.'

Environmental awareness and action are priorities shared by all social housing providers. We have the double incentive of playing our part to reduce adverse impacts on the environment and of maximising social, community and health benefits for our low income tenants. Check your housing authority's website to find out what is happening in your area.

Planning and social housing professionals get together on housing affordability

The Victorian Branch of the Australasian Housing Institute and the Victorian Social Planning Chapter of the Planning Institute of Australia have joined forces to hold three events focusing on housing affordability, and more particularly on expanding the supply of affordable housing. A breakfast seminar will be held each month in June, July and August this year:

- > Housing affordability: cyclical problem or structural mess... and what to do about it?
- > Taxation and affordable housing – alternatives to negative gearing: taxation policies to improve housing affordability outcomes.
- > Fringe rezoning only part of the solution: achieving growth in affordable housing through new approaches to planning and infrastructure.

Chairs and speakers for the seminars come from many and varied professional backgrounds: social and urban planners, economists, community housing providers, senior public housing managers, academics and disability service managers. Your attendance and contribution will be important in developing lasting practical solutions to housing affordability. Full details will be posted on our website shortly.

Profiling Marc Slade, Chair of the AHI Homelessness Working Group

Interview by Angela Perez

Homelessness is the hot issue in housing in 2008. Few people are more on to this than Marc Slade, Chair of the new AHI Homelessness Working Group. This group will contribute social housing expertise to the nationwide debate in the lead up to the introduction to parliament of the Australian government's White Paper on homelessness in August.



Marc is based in Wellington and his work with the multi-disciplinary New Zealand Coalition to End Homelessness stands him in good stead to chair the working group. "We're aiming to represent the whole range of AHI members... there are members who work for homelessness agencies, but also those representing state and territory governments and academic interests."

There has been a strong response from AHI members wanting to participate in the group. Marc is optimistic that the group can make an important contribution if it harnesses this widespread enthusiasm and the extensive expertise in homelessness across the AHI membership. He will establish a steering group of six to eight people. The next step is to set up a series of subject based work groups, addressing academic, practical and operational issues. "We want to involve the broadest cross section of our membership to represent the AHI. And importantly

we want to develop links with the Australian Federal Government's Task Force to make sure that we have input to the Green Paper [the discussion paper preceding the development of the White Paper] in May."

Marc has extensive experience in a range of roles addressing homelessness, and a good understanding of tenancy management and stock transfer. In the UK, Marc worked for a local authority on its homelessness team assessing housing needs and providing direct housing assistance. He went on to

manage a staff team of 30 in an emergency hostel and accommodation service. In New Zealand he has worked in the Housing New Zealand Corporation in housing policy and in managing the Housing Innovation Fund (HIF) for local councils. Today he is self employed as a consultant in social housing.

With a new Australian government in power and renewed optimism about Australian housing policy, Marc says a new direction on homelessness can be achieved. He is keen to see the AHI put its best foot forward to assemble ideas the government will be receptive to, based on our knowledge about the reality of homelessness and our experience of what works to prevent and resolve it.

Read more about the New Zealand Coalition to End Homelessness in the May Edition of *HousingWorks*.

Free registration for the UK CIH Conference

The annual Chartered Institute of Housing Conference and Exhibition takes place in Harrogate, Yorkshire in the North of England from 17 to 19 June 2008. **The CIH Head of Corporate Services has once again offered the AHI two free delegate places for the week.** This covers registration only; getting there and expenses are the delegates' own responsibility.

Full details about the conference can be found on the CIH website www.cih.org. International guests are offered an optional package of activities to maximise their experience and to provide opportunities for networking.

Would you like to represent the AHI? In exchange for free registration, you will make a presentation to your local branch committee and write a short article for *HousingPeople* soon after you get back.

Please send a short EOI saying what you would hope to gain from attending the conference to Joan at: joan.ferguson@housinginstitute.org

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development. Achieving this would involve redressing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disadvantage and enriching relationships in communities by encouraging a strong role for non-government organisations and new approaches.

Interestingly, these four themes have enormous resonance for us in social housing, in the broad policy arena, in our practice and in how we approach our own professional development.

Discussion during the 2020 Summit, plus over 8800 public written submissions, have generated an array of ambitions, priorities and ideas. Of particular interest to our sector include:

- > A government-guaranteed program to create securities from prime mortgages (similar to that in Canada), to ensure a relatively low-cost and stable source of financing for housing.
- > A National Sustainable Cities Program to lead a nationally consistent approach to urban and regional planning, and to transform the ecological footprint of the built environment, by minimising waste and reducing water and energy consumption in our homes and neighbourhoods. Early action could include: support for energy efficiency measures in low-income households, consideration of housing affordability implications and the requirement of carbon neutrality for all new buildings after 2020.
- > Enhanced preventative measures in health, including rural and Indigenous strategies, and a greater recognition and better management of mental health issues.
- > A National Action Plan for Social Inclusion to put in place adequate social infrastructure: to encourage social connectedness through urban design; to develop local community capacity through skills development, mentoring, leadership; and to establish more collaborative working with the public and private sectors.

- > A 'one-stop shop' for the delivery of government and community services.
- > A network of 'community hubs' in the most disadvantaged communities with the capacity to respond to local community needs.
- > A comprehensive, long-term national resettlement strategy to reduce the high levels of disadvantage for recently arrived migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.
- > Recognition that to reduce poverty and inequality, housing affordability and homelessness must be addressed.
- > The value of the not-for-profit sector, which comprises more than 700,000 organisations and is responsible for delivering a large proportion of community and social services in Australia
- > The link between volunteering and work-life balance.
- > Belief that grassroots and non-traditional community engagement has the power to achieve a revolution in community and government interaction.
- > The need for a strong and talented public sector workforce to enable these aspirations and ideas by 2020.

The ideas in the initial Summit report have been presented to the Prime Minister for consideration but the report emphasises that 'governments are not the only – or indeed the most important – agents of change'. Many Australians expect business and not-for-profit organisations to play more prominent roles in Australia. The report concludes 'as the Youth Summit asked with such clarity, the question must not be "what is the government going to do about this?" but "what are we going to do about this?". Like-minded individuals have the power to create a better future'.

Thanks to Tacye Bowen for this edition of *HousingPeople*



Community Retrievers Inc.

Community Retrievers Inc is a Gold Coast based not-for-profit organisation with an aim to deliver the voice of the community.

We provide independent research, community engagement and consultation for all levels of government business, independent consultants and other community organisations and specialise in conducting community surveys, interviews, events, focus groups, workshops, speak outs, forums and training.

If you have a project and need to know what residents feel, think, value or simply need to get a message out, Community Retrievers will work with you to determine the how, who, when, where and why.

We welcome any opportunity to submit a proposal or to meet with you to discuss your needs.

For more information visit www.communityretrievers.org.au and register for our e-news.

Community Retrievers won the 2008 AHI Award for a Resident-led Initiative. There's an article on them in the May edition of *HousingWorks*.