



# Action for More Independence & Dignity in Accommodation

1<sup>st</sup> Floor, Ross House, 247 Flinders Lane, Melbourne Vic 3000  
Phone: 9650 2722 Fax: 9654 8575  
Email: [amida@amida.org.au](mailto:amida@amida.org.au) Website: [www.amida.org.au](http://www.amida.org.au)  
Inc No: A001608SV ABN: 32 993 870 380

*Advocacy, Self Advocacy, Rights, Accessibility, & Community Living for People with a Disability*

**9 Apr 2021**

**Department of Families, Fairness and Housing  
10 Year Social and Affordable Housing Strategy for Victoria**

Via email -[housingstrategy@homes.vic.gov.au](mailto:housingstrategy@homes.vic.gov.au)

To the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing,

Action for More Independence and Dignity in Accommodation (AMIDA) supports people with disability as valued members of our community. AMIDA recognises that people with disability contribute to and develop our community.

AMIDA acknowledges that people with disability have a right to a choice of who they live with and where they live. Further, people with disability have a right to good quality housing which is accessible, affordable and non-institutional. People with disability have a right to live in the community with access to support to participate and have a good quality of life.

AMIDA is an independent advocacy organisation which advocates for good housing for people with disability. We provide advocacy to individuals, with priority given to people with an intellectual disability, and advocate for change in systems which prevent people from achieving good housing.

AMIDA strongly supports the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with a Disability (CRPD) and works to assert these rights and community inclusion for people with a disability.

AMIDA endorses the key initiatives listed in the discussion paper released on 9 Feb 2021.

## Questions:-

**Q –** What actions will enable people to access social housing, sustain their tenancies and move between different housing options as their needs change?

Fund existing services to implement a Housing First Model. This model has been proven to succeed in other Countries including the Housing First Europe Hub and also in Australia. Make this National Housing Policy for Australia. As seen in previous years, if it is only aspirational or voluntary, it will fall short of meeting the needs of individuals in the community. The investment being made by the State Government in the Big Housing Build needs to be repeated every year for 10 years if the current need is to be met let alone future need.

Build more social housing for existing services to manage and make all new builds and renovations accessible to Gold Standard under the Universal Design Standard known as the Livable Housing Design:-

A step- free entrance to the home

Wider internal corridor and doors

An accessible toilet or bathroom on the ground floor or entrance level

A bathroom and shower that is easier to access

Grabrails installed in bathroom and toilet (or capacity to do so)

A ramp or safe pathway to the front door or other entrance

Safer internal stairways and paths

More space in and around the kitchen, capable of being adapted

Ground (or entry) level bedroom

Easy to reach light switches

Doors that are easier to open and close

This will require less people to move due to accessibility problems within a dwelling and allow people to age in place. Provide supports like Tenancy Plus on a broad scale.

Make sure that all housing services and Housing officers in Office of Housing have had training in working with people with a disability. This training should be done by people with a disability, especially those with intellectual disability, brain injury and psycho social disabilities. This is lacking in all current housing services and DHHS office of housing staff.

**Q –** What are the most important features of affordable housing (e.g. price, location, security of tenure, access to transport or daily amenities, connection to support services etc)?

Price, accessibility, quality stock, access to transport and services are all important. Housing needs to be affordable to those on the Jobseeker Allowance and the Disability Support Pension.

**Q –** What actions will help people to find an obtain an affordable home?

Build and make available much more available housing stock that is affordable and accessible, across Victoria. The Big Housing Build needs to create more accessible affordable housing and while doing

so continue to maintain the current housing stock to suit people's needs over time of tenure. Because much of the housing built for the Big Build will be managed by Community Housing, a large proportion will not be available to lower income earners. The business model Community Housing relies on renting to people on middle and higher incomes to fund the maintenance and other management costs of housing provision. If all this housing were public housing, all the stock built would be available to lower income earners. Given taxpayers money is paying for the Big Housing Build, it is unfair that middle and higher income people will get to rent this stock while lower income people remain homeless. All stock funded by the Big Housing Build must be made available to lower income people.

**Q** – What action will strengthen social and affordable housing communities?

Rather than building large high density towers of public housing which are a hazard in a situation such as a pandemic, build scattered public housing that is of good quality and cannot easily be distinguished between homes owned by individuals and those renting through social housing. This also addressed the social stigma associated with the label of public housing occupants.

There needs to be 'spot purchase housing' (which was done years ago by Office of Housing) to ensure that people have choice about where they live, people with a disability should be able to continue to live in their local neighborhood's where they have support networks and they are familiar.

**Q** – What actions will enable and deliver growth in social housing?

Again funding for more affordable and accessible housing stock to address the high number of households on the public housing waiting list and the amount of years that people have been forced to wait for appropriate housing.

The Big Housing Build will only reduce the waiting list a little, as there are 80,000 people waiting for Housing, transfer, emergency and transitional housing, while \$ billion is a wonderful investment, previous governments have not seen the need to maintain existing stock or build new affordable accessible housing.

The investment being made by the State Government in the Big Housing Build needs to be repeated every year for 10 years if the current need is to be met let alone future need.

**Q** – What do we need to do to ensure housing supply meets the needs of people with specific support and housing needs?

Provide Gold Standard (as mentioned above) accessible housing, scattered in the community, that is located near accessible public transport, close to facilities such as hospitals and care services.

Assign housing assistance to people with disability or specific needs in order to smooth the process of moving into accessible housing.

**Q** – What do we need to do to enable a well-functioning affordable housing system that provides rental and home ownership opportunities for those that need them?

Lobby federal governments to abolish Negative gearing. It makes housing prices go up and further reduces the chances for low income first home buyers. Permanently remove stamp duty on houses under \$600,000. Regulate for accessibility so that developers must build accessible homes across all markets. Spot purchase housing and allow people over time to purchase the houses they are living in with special home loans, but do not recreate the 'rent buy loans' that meant that people would never own their homes.

**Q** – How do we strengthen our partnership approach to build a stronger and more effective social and affordable housing system?

Be encouraged by the strong positive response to the Big Housing Build. Victorians want to seek homelessness ended and will support governments who make this an ongoing yearly commitment to fund more public housing. We can end homelessness and government has to keep leading us in this direction. Grow the Big Housing Build so that this commitment is made again and again until the job is done. In 10 years it can be done.

**Q** – How can we engage with you as we develop new initiatives over the course of this strategy?

Publish the consultation and ask for feedback on new proposals again until finalized. Meet with organisations that have expertise in the needs of people who are waiting for housing. Collaborate regularly with VCOSS who are also facilitating education around the changes to the RTA.

**Additionally taken into consideration the feedback from Australia's report and subsequent feedback from the United Nations on the CRPD in Sep 2019:-**

**Living independently and being included in the community (art. 19)**

37. The Committee is concerned about:

- a) The fact that the specialist disability accommodation (SDA) framework facilitates and encourages the establishment of residential institutions and will result in persons with disabilities having to live in particular living arrangements to access NDIS supports;
- b) The lack of appropriate, affordable, and accessible social housing, which severely limits the capacity of persons with disabilities to choose their place of residence;
- c) The Younger People in Residential Aged Care—Action Plan only outlines plans to reduce the number of persons, including persons with disabilities, under the age of 65 years living in aged care facilities, but does not end the practice.

**38. The Committee recommends that the State party:**

- a) Develop a national framework for the closure of all disability-specific residential institutions, and the prevention of trans-institutionalisation including addressing how persons with disabilities not eligible for the NDIS can be supported to transition to live independently in the community;

b) Increase the range, affordability and accessibility of public and social housing for persons with disabilities, including by implementing a quota for accessible social housing and by developing regulations and standards to guarantee the progressive application of universal design principles in accessible housing; c) Revise the Younger People in Residential Aged Care—Action Plan to ensure that no person aged under 65 years should enter or live in residential aged care

**Adequate standard of living and social protection (art. 28)**

51. The Committee is concerned about:

- a) A significant proportion of persons with disabilities living either near or below the poverty line;
- b) The eligibility restrictions for the Disability Support Pension and the inadequate income support payments to persons with disabilities, such as the Newstart unemployment payment;
- c) The limited consideration of persons with disabilities, particularly Indigenous persons with disabilities, in poverty and homelessness reduction strategies including the National Affordable Housing Agreement and National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness.

**52. The Committee recommends that the State party:**

- a) Develop a national poverty reduction plan that is inclusive and accessible to all persons with disabilities and prioritize the realisation of the right to an adequate standard of living and social protection for Indigenous persons with disabilities;
- b) End the eligibility restrictions for the Disability Support Pension, increase the rate of Newstart unemployment payment and other income support payments to ensure persons with disabilities have access to an adequate standard of living;
- c) Ensure that persons with disabilities are included as a priority cohort in the implementation of poverty and homelessness reduction programmes, including the National Affordable Housing Agreement and the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness