



MEDIA RELEASE

20/8/13

Call for political will to alleviate crippling Tasmanian Housing Debt

Shelter Tasmania, as the peak body representing housing and homelessness in Tasmania, calls on all political parties to commit to paying off the State's public housing debt, to free up funds to build more much needed affordable housing.

In the light of the recent decision by the Federal Government to write-off the \$320 million Housing Debt owed by the South Australian Government to the Commonwealth, Shelter Tasmania has renewed the campaign for the alleviation of Tasmania's long-standing and debilitating debt owed to the Commonwealth.

"If South Australian can have its debt paid by the Commonwealth this is great news, and sets a precedent so it is Tasmania's turn now," said Pattie Chugg, EO of Shelter Tasmania.

Shelter Tas has written to all candidates of the main parties canvassing their support, noting that the community sector has lobbied State and Federal Governments for many years to have this debt waived or reduced but with no success to date.

Tasmania's historical Housing debt (from the 1980s) stands at \$202.8 million and has for a long time restricted state efforts to construct new housing stock. Tasmania currently pays \$9 million in interest annually, and \$7 million off the principal, representing half of our total federal housing budget (\$32 million).

"This long lasting debt is so frustrating, as our much needed housing money is going back to the Commonwealth in millions each year just in interest payment alone," noted Pattie Chugg.

If the debt was waived it would enable funds to be allocated into increasing the capacity, quality and diversity of social housing, which is much needed to decrease the current waiting list of 2163 applicants, and to address proportionately high numbers of homeless persons in the State.

In addition, new major national strategies in mental health, disability reform and housing for our aging population depend on increasing the supply of affordable and suitable housing.

"We have a chronic shortage of affordable housing now. If we are still spending housing dollars on paying off debts we certainly won't have enough housing to support importance schemes like the NDIS," Pattie Chugg added. "If we do not free up the money available for housing then we face the potential dilemma of having to choose between housing people with disabilities or housing those who are homeless: not a choice we should be made to make!"

For further information contact Pattie Chugg

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Peak Body for Housing and Homelessness

Shelter Tasmania is the Peak Body for the Affordable Housing and Homelessness Sectors in Tasmania. We support the right for ensure safe, secure housing for all Tasmanians.



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