



Community Housing
Nga Wharerau o Aotearoa

Ending homelessness means turning recommendations into action

Community Housing Aotearoa says recommendations from a cross-party inquiry into homelessness are on target, and need to be actioned at pace.

Scott Figenshow, CEO of Community Housing Aotearoa, says the 20 recommendations in the report released today are exactly what the sector has been calling for. CHA represents community housing providers across the emergency, social and affordable housing continuum.

Scott Figenshow says the inquiry has recognised the extent of the homeless issue and that there is insufficient affordable housing available to meet the needs of low-income and vulnerable New Zealanders.

“We’re pleased to see the inquiry recognising that the “housing first” approach is an evidence-based and effective solution to addressing chronic homelessness that is currently being piloted in several areas in New Zealand,” he says.

Other recommendations that need urgent action include:

- a stock transfer process that also grows the number of social and affordable homes,
- the creation of a national housing strategy,
- long term funding for community housing providers to add new affordable supply, and
- making the Kāinga Whenua loan programme work at scale.

“There is a lot in here that Government is already doing but we need to see more of it. All of us have a role to pick up the pace,” Scott Figenshow says.

“We’d like to see all the recommendations actioned, at the scale that matches the magnitude of need.”

For example, he says, Government could expand the new Income Related Rent Subsidy and capital settings that are working in Auckland to include other regions.

“We could see the crown land programme happen faster, and occurring all over New Zealand. Regulatory certainty could be provided for private developers to follow the Government lead by delivering a mandatory percentage of affordable and social housing in all new crown land developments.

“The review of the accommodation supplement could be actioned now. Every solution needs to be implemented and the easiest way to do that quickly is expand on what is already working, as well as adding further strings to the bow,” he says.

Scott Figenshow says it is heartening to see inclusion of a recommendation to expand the number of agencies able to undertake housing needs assessments. “This is a specific recommendation that the Auckland Emergency Housing Providers Network has been requesting and we strongly support it.”

The Government has made some real progress in recent months to address housing need. While there was still no clear plan to address the affordable housing shortfall, CHA says the cross-party inquiry report should give the Government the confidence to rapidly expand its current approach across the entire country, he says.

“Government has proved it can be done and it’s been done before – investing a three year capital fund of \$143 million that community housing providers converted into 890 houses, all within eighteen months. It’s time to do that again- and on an even larger scale – right across New Zealand.

“If we don’t commit now to the long-term fix of additional affordable housing supply, we’ll keep needing to put more money into more ambulances. That’s not sustainable,” Scott Figenshow says.

The entire package of 20 recommendations made sense and were solutions that CHA had been promoting with the development of its Our Place housing action plan. Our Place calls for housing for 50,000 more New Zealanders – 15,000 more social and affordable homes by 2020.

“It’s important with the current focus on increasing emergency housing that we do not lose sight of the real solution, which is more permanent, affordable homes,” he says.

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