

Greens NSW

Housing and Homelessness Policy



Revised December 2014

Principles

The Greens NSW believe

1. Every person has the right to access affordable, safe, secure, healthy, community-oriented housing that is appropriately designed, constructed and located, and environmentally responsible;
2. Access to secure, appropriately designed, constructed and located, affordable housing is a crucial determinant of health and wellbeing and is an important precondition for social participation and gaining access to other social services;
3. Social and affordable housing not only delivers shelter for those in need but is essential in providing the stability that underpins engagement in work, education, recreation and community life and should be considered as critical infrastructure;
4. It is the responsibility of all levels of government to guarantee access to adequate, affordable and appropriate housing to meet current need and projected demand, thus stemming the growing social inequality in Australia;
5. Access to housing should be free from discrimination. People with special housing needs should be housed with adequate support;
6. Preventing homelessness requires action to address the lack of appropriate and affordable housing and to provide appropriate support services for the most vulnerable in society;
7. Security of tenure is essential to people's health, educational opportunities, employment prospects, quality of life and economic wellbeing. Appropriate regulation

- of the private rental market is essential if this outcome is to be achieved;
8. Democratic tenant participation in decisions about social and emergency housing services is necessary for improved quality of tenant services;
 9. Housing should be constructed in accordance with Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD) principles;
 10. Housing should be constructed in accordance with accessibility standards and principles of universal design to ensure the availability of a diverse range of housing options for all people, including older people and people with disabilities;
 11. New urban and rural developments should be environmentally sound, close to transport, employment and social services and should facilitate community interaction, and requires public participation in the planning and assessment process;
 12. Increases in the values of land and housing should be in line with increases in the general cost of living with legislative measures to eliminate profit-driven speculative investment in the housing sector and to limit rises in housing costs;
 13. Housing should be located in areas that provide access to employment, health-care, public transport, schools and other social facilities;
 14. Governments should ensure housing and support services are available to meet the needs of those who are most vulnerable and likely to face difficulties with access to housing, including women with children, young people, people with disability or mental illness, veterans, Aboriginal people, older people, victims of domestic or family violence, key/essential workers, asylum seekers, refugees, and migrants;
 15. Government taxation policies and incentives relating to housing investment should be directed toward deliverable outcomes in the provision of affordable and appropriate housing, including the construction of new housing and the increase in affordable rental properties.

Aims

The Greens NSW will work towards:

16. Comprehensive housing strategies for state and local governments that support affordable, well planned, professionally designed and robustly built, socially and ecologically sustainable housing stock and therefore will advocate for:

16.1 New social housing and, where a need is identified, the implementation of housing targets for state and local government;

16.2 Increased security of housing tenure;

16.3 Housing that caters for priority needs including crisis and supported accommodation, along with advocacy and independent complaints processes to assist those in need;

16.4 New forms of affordable housing such as co-operative housing and Community Land Trusts;

16.5 Innovative and experimental housing that delivers sustainable and cost-effective long-term maintenance and utility costs;

17. The provision of appropriate support services for public and social housing tenants and homeless people;

18. An end to homelessness and housing-related poverty.

Social and Affordable Housing

The Greens NSW will work towards:

19. Ensuring high budget priority is given to social and affordable housing, and ensuring that the maintenance and upgrade requirements for social housing are met without reducing or delaying maintenance or selling properties to fund maintenance costs;

20. Ensuring that any relocation of tenants from existing estates or localities is undertaken within a public strategy that prioritises the health and wellbeing of tenants and their ability to access necessary services as well as promoting tenants' informed consent and choice;

21. Acquiring additional social housing stock to meet current need and future population growth, and improving the eligibility and allocation processes as stock expands;

22. Ensuring additional new housing stock provides a social mix, including transitional housing, and ensures the delivery of open space and recreational, cultural and social amenities that promote healthy lifestyles;
23. Requiring ongoing funding for the purchase or construction of further public housing to ensure that the Government owns adequate, appropriately designed, constructed and located public housing stock, with a view to minimising Housing NSW headlease arrangements in the private rental market;
24. Promoting investment in innovative, fast-build or pre-fabricated construction processes to ensure social housing supply is increased rapidly to address the severe shortage of supply;
25. Promoting innovative options for affordable smaller housing, including the provision of secondary dwellings;
26. A review of the maintenance of public housing properties and a commitment to timely and effective service delivery and complaints management;
27. Increasing the quantity and quality of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing in consultation with members of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities;
28. A significant increase in units of subsidised housing stock, including making affordable housing more widely available to people on low to moderate incomes;
29. Minimising waiting times on social housing waiting lists by ensuring the adequate supply of appropriately designed, constructed and located social housing stock;
30. Increasing crisis and emergency accommodation and services to support the vulnerable to avoid exposure to ongoing risks;
31. Ensuring the provision of housing services, both crisis and long-term, that specifically support people on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex status, with a particular focus on rural, regional and remote areas;
32. Increasing tenant participation in decisions about their own housing;
33. Ensuring that the criteria for ongoing social housing eligibility and social housing rent calculation policies do not create a disincentive for tenants to pursue

opportunities for education, employment or increased income, due to their fear of eviction or that their additional income will to a large extent be consumed in increased rent;

34. Expanding the community housing sector;

35. Expanding the housing co-operative sector;

36. Ensuring that registers for Residential Communities (caravan parks and mobile home parks) and boarding houses are audited and updated, and that residential park home owners and residents and boarding house residents have adequate legislative safeguards to secure their rights and wellbeing;

37. Opposing the use of Public Private Partnerships in social housing redevelopment that results in public land being privatised;

38. Encouraging, in conjunction with the Commonwealth Government, institutional investment in subsidised housing, which may include:

38.1. Issuing of government housing bonds to raise capital for investment in social and affordable housing; and

38.2. Grants, lending and long-term leases to assist not-for-profit housing agencies such as community housing organisations and co-operatives;

39. Allowing local government to apply a mandatory levy on commercial property developments to facilitate the delivery of affordable housing in high-cost housing areas and permitting local government to include affordable housing provisions in planning instruments;

40. Requiring developer contributions to assist in the funding of affordable, local, public rental housing.

Homelessness

The Greens NSW will work towards:

41. Increasing the provision of early intervention and support services and programs for people at risk of homelessness, and services and programs for people to exit homeless and secure ongoing housing;

42. Ensuring restoration of funding for secular women's-only services, refuges and shelters that specifically included trans women;
43. Addressing the housing affordability pressures that contribute to the risk of homelessness, in order to provide structural and lasting solutions to the problem of homelessness;
44. The provision of supported permanent housing for homelessness that focuses on long-term independent housing solutions in preference to temporary and emergency services;
45. Increasing the collection of data to inform understanding of homelessness and service needs, such as street counts of rough sleepers;
46. Encouraging all councils to develop a Homelessness policy and protocol;
47. Supporting community organisations providing services for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Private Rental Market

The Greens NSW will work towards:

48. Legislatively strengthening tenants' rights and security of tenure to ensure that there are appropriate safeguards for the rights of individuals and families who rent, and that long-term rental is seen as a genuine alternative to home ownership;
49. Ongoing investment by and support from all levels of government to increase the stock of affordable housing for essential workers and students;
50. Establishing tenancy rights in law for boarders, lodgers and students living in university or college accommodation;
51. Preserving the existing rights of people who continue to live under protected tenancies legislation such as the Landlord and Tenant (Amendment) Act 1948;
52. Ensuring that rent increases are in line with the Consumer Price Index except in cases where the landlord can justify additional increases (eg, by improvements made to the dwelling), and that affordability is a criterion for Tribunal reviews of complaints regarding rent increases;

53. Providing assistance to deal with high rental costs by supporting initiatives that reduce housing-related living costs, such as improved energy efficiency and renewable energy;

54. In residential areas, restricting the use of approved dwellings for visitor accommodation in tourism localities to ensure the availability and affordability of housing stock for permanent residents.

Sustainable Urban Design

The Greens NSW will encourage:

55. The development of genuinely environmentally sustainable communities that incorporate:

55.1. Onsite power generation using renewable energy;

55.2. Food production (and protection of arable land);

55.3. Reducing waste by encouraging recycling, composting and onsite treatment for renewable energy;

55.4. Higher BASIX and NABERS standards;

55.5. Measures to reduce heat sinks (eg, pale-coloured rooves, paving and roads);

55.6. Recycling of black and grey water, installation of rainwater tanks, water efficient fittings, waterless urinals and composting toilets;

55.7. The promotion and preservation of biodiversity and natural habitats;

55.8. Measures to build communities that encourage interaction and support among residents and businesses;

55.9. Transport strategies and infrastructure that encourage use of public transport, bicycles, and increased opportunities for physical fitness;

55.10. Energy efficient lighting and appliances;

55.11. Environment-friendly designs and appropriate building materials, with an emphasis on thermal mass, recycling, and reduction of energy costs.

56. The expansion of the limited equity co-operative sector;

57. The use of the planning process to develop clustered, mixed-use communities that encourage walking, cycling, public transport use and lessen dependence upon private motor vehicle usage;
58. Decentralised renewable energy generation, rain water capture and water re-use in all residences, where practicable, particularly for low-income households;
59. The removal of toxic materials such as asbestos from buildings where possible or, in extreme cases, dismantling and replacing highly toxic buildings.

Home Ownership and Access to housing

The Greens NSW will support:

60. Promoting the interests of first-home buyers, including people who are buying their first property but do not intend to live in it, rather than speculative investors;
61. Expansion of self-build schemes for low-income households;
62. Shared-equity home ownership provided by not-for-profit housing organisations;
63. Resident-run multiple occupancies such as land-sharing communities, residential parks, etc.

To this end The Greens will:

64. Not advocate a First Home Owners Grant as it results in inflationary impacts on housing prices;
65. Advocate lending for owner-occupied housing where the security for the loan will be solely the property purchased and the lender will have no claim on other assets of the borrower;
66. Support affordable alternatives to private home ownership;
67. Assist groups to purchase sites or buildings for low-cost housing via Community Land Trusts;
68. Assist groups to structure legal entities such as limited or mixed-equity housing co-operatives to provide and manage affordable housing.
69. Advocate changes in housing-related taxation policy to:

69.1 Promote the delivery of appropriately configured and located housing supply to support affordable home ownership or rental;

69.2 Remove barriers to people moving to different housing to suit their changing needs, rather than providing incentives for speculative investment in the housing market; and

69.3 Provide adequate and equitable funding by reviewing tax concessions for wealthy households and organisations.