St Vincent de Paul Society
NATIONAL COUNCIL of AUSTRALIA Inc.
good works

10 September 2026

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Committee Secretary,

The St Vincent de Paul Society National Council (the Society) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee's inquiry into the Commonwealth Land (Affordable Housing) Bill.

As one of Australia's largest charitable networks, the Society draws on its experience to inform its policy positions. In addition to helping people meet daily expenses, the Society also provides many forms of accommodation. These range from short-term crisis accommodation, transitional housing, medium- to longer-term community housing, accessible housing for people living with disability, and specialist homelessness services.

The Society also holds Tier 1 registration with the National Regulatory System for Community Housing with 1,523 community housing assets of which most are long-term (56 per cent) or medium-short-term community housing options (24 per cent).

The Society fully supports the Commonwealth Land (Affordable Housing) Bill 2026.

This Bill is important because recent research shows that even with significant public investment at the Commonwealth and state and territory levels, Australia is still not building enough to cut the backlog of need. This is because even though around 70,000 new 'social' homes are due to be built during the 2020s, many new social housing projects involve replacing ageing public housing.[i] It is therefore important to explore all avenues available to increasing housing affordability and supply. Further, the wrap-up of programs such as the National Rental Affordability Scheme also heightens the need for more action.

The Society supports National Shelter's view that public assets can and should deliver broader public value. Frequently, government land is disposed of with a focus on short-term financial returns. This Bill ensures that publicly owned land contributes to social housing when it is sold or leased for residential development.[ii]

The Society supports this Bill as it ensures that a proportion of dwellings constructed on Commonwealth land are designated as affordable housing dwellings, managed by registered not-for-profit community housing providers, let to eligible households and rented at affordable rent.[iii]

Passage of this Bill would see a consistent approach to the treatment of Commonwealth land which would ultimately maximise long-term community benefit, rather than short-term revenue.

Such an approach has been effective in New South Wales and Victoria.

In New South Wales, the Government has adopted a minimum target of 30 per cent social and affordable housing on surplus government land.

Victoria's Inclusionary Housing Pilot has tested the use of government-owned land to deliver mixed-tenure developments incorporating social, affordable and market housing.

As noted by National Shelter Australia, the Bill ensures that redevelopment of Commonwealth land delivers both social and financial returns. This is consistent with longstanding approaches to inclusionary zoning, value capture and public-interest planning.[iv]

This Bill should also form part of a public land strategy which would help underpin housing as essential economic infrastructure.

In summary, the Bill enshrines key principles that the Society supports. These include:

- income targeting, with eligibility targeted appropriately to households below the specified threshold, namely those on low to moderate incomes.
- an affordable rent formula which is set at the lower of 75 per cent of market rent or 30 per cent of household income. This approach is fair and captures affordability by referencing both the local rental market and the household income. This is important, especially in high rent markets where a 25% discount to market rent may still be unaffordable.
- supporting registered not-for-profit community housing providers as partners. The Society supports the requirement that affordable housing dwellings be managed by registered not-for-profit community housing providers. As noted in the Statement of Compatibility with Human Rights, management of housing by registered not-for-profit community housing providers supports the ongoing integrity of the arrangement.

  However, the Bill could include state and territory public housing authorities to acquire, develop, own or manage housing delivered through the scheme where this supports housing outcomes.[v]
- setting benchmarks for affordable housing. The shortage of affordable housing and unacceptably long waiting lists for social housing necessitate a benchmark for affordable housing on Commonwealth land. The 30 per cent default requirement for affordable housing is consistent with the approach taken in New South Wales.

  However, of that 30 per cent default, a legislated proportion should be specified for social housing. National Shelter recommends that at least 40 per cent of the affordable housing component should be social housing.[vi]
- requirements enabling long-term affordability. The Society supports clauses that secure affordable housing outcomes after the land has passed out of Commonwealth ownership. This includes the obligation to maintain the recognised housing instrument, including in perpetuity where the applicable local land law permits. This is vital to supporting the Objects of the Bill and helps ensure the integrity of the scheme.

Yours sincerely

Rose Beynon

Rose Beynon
A/g Chief Executive Officer

[i] Pawson., H., 18 February 2026. *Australia is finally building more social housing – but it's still not enough.* Pearls and Irritations. Accessed at: https://johnmenadue.com/post/2026/02/55000-extra-social-housing-homes-are-being-built-but-a-new-study-shows-that-boom-still-falls-short/

[ii] National Shelter is proud to support Senator David Pocock's Commonwealth Land (Affordable Housing) Bill 2026. Accessed at: https://www.linkedin.com/posts/affordablehousing-housingpolicy-communityhousing-share-7478205882120466433-Zt6m/

[iii] The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia. Senate. Commonwealth Land (Affordable Housing) Bill 2026. Explanatory Memorandum. Statement of Compatibility with Human Rights. Accessed at: https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Bills_Legislation/Bills_Search_Results/Result?bId=s1501, p. 14

[iv] National Shelter Australia's submission. Commonwealth Land (Affordable Housing) Bill 2026. p. 5

[v] ibid., p.12

[vi] ibid., p.11