

2nd October 2007

The Hon. Mal Brough, MP
Minister for Families, Community Services
and Indigenous Affairs
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Minister

Reform of Social Housing Provision

The NSW Urban Taskforce is an industry organisation representing the development sector. Founded in 1999, the NSW Urban Taskforce represents companies involved in planning and development of the urban environment. Current members of the NSW Urban Taskforce include some of Australia's most prominent developers, construction companies, major infrastructure providers, planners, architects, financiers and lawyers involved in urban development.

We were most interested in your request for further information regarding ways of increasing the supply of social housing.

Quite frankly, generally speaking the current stock of social housing in NSW is poorly maintained, run down, underutilised and desperately in need of renewal. It's the view of our organisation that such renewal can be best achieved when government harnesses the skills, expertise and entrepreneurial abilities of the private sector. As long as any renewal program is solely in the hands of government progress will be slow, costly and relatively unproductive.

We recognise that there has been a significant move by the NSW Government to change the status-quo in the provision of social housing, through its Bonnyrigg redevelopment. Nonetheless, the Bonnyrigg project was under public discussion since 2004 and went to request for information in 2005, before contracts were finally executed earlier this year. And that is only one single housing estate.

At this pace, the vast problem of the current state of public housing in NSW will be unaddressed for many decades to come.

We urge the Federal Government to work co-operatively with the NSW Government for fast-tracking of public-private-partnerships for the re-development of social housing on a large scale basis.

Re-development of social housing should have at its heart the objectives of:

- renewing and refreshing existing public housing; and
- achieving a better social mix by spreading social housing more evenly throughout the community.

By unlocking the value tied up in underutilised social housing land, funds can be raised for re-investment into new social housing.

We support any constructive efforts that move things in the direction we have outlined in this letter – and so we congratulate you on the open mind you have shown towards social housing provision.

We are ready and willing to discuss our views with you or your officials, should the need arise.

Yours sincerely

NSW Urban Taskforce

Aaron Gadiel

Chief Executive Officer