

Q&A: Social Housing with Mark Cridland

IAQ was given the opportunity to ask the Director-General of the Department of Housing five questions about social housing. The dialogue has been copied below.

1. There seems to be a bit of confusion about the funding models for new social housing infrastructure. Would you be able to provide an insight into the funding models?

The Queensland Government is investing \$5 billion in social and affordable housing and homelessness support – the largest concentrated investment in our state’s history.

The Department of Housing undertakes a number of approaches and funding models to ensure this record investment delivers for Queenslanders in need.

This includes direct procurement of new builds through our partner QBuild, and partnering with the community housing sector and private sector, including through capital and other funding arrangements, the redevelopments of existing sites and State land developments. These opportunities ensure a diverse supply model, supporting value for money through partnership arrangements.

This includes the Queensland Housing Investment Growth Initiative (QHIGI), through which we’re delivering QuickStarts Queensland.

QuickStarts Queensland is a whole of Queensland social housing capital program delivered through department-led projects, and in partnership with registered community housing providers (RCHP), community organisations and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander councils.

QuickStarts Queensland will see us commence 3,265 new social homes by 30 June 2025. The program was recently boosted by \$322.2 million in the 2023-24 State Budget.

Our record investment also includes our signature \$2 billion Housing Investment Fund, which will provide \$130 million each year to support the commencement of 5,600 new social and affordable homes by 30 June 2027.

More than 1,500 homes have already been approved under the Housing Investment Fund and the department is currently working through 71 proposals shortlisted for the detailed proposal stage from the second round of the Housing Investment Fund.

The Housing Investment Fund includes capital grants, operational subsidies and other funding support for proponents, including community housing providers and the private sector to deliver new, innovative housing projects.

In addition to new builds, we're also investing in the purchase of existing properties where this is the most appropriate option in a community.

Purchasing existing properties, including vacant former retirement villages and aged care facilities, allows us to deliver more immediate housing solutions for people in need while we continue to build more social and affordable housing.

2. Who/what departments are 'in charge' of social housing and its subsets (i.e., First Nations housing and domestic violence protection housing)? There are also different levels of government involved. Would you also be able to outline the roles of the different levels of government?

The State's public housing portfolio comprises department-owned and leased properties. There are 75,111 homes in Queensland as of 30 June 2023. Of these, 55,000 properties are managed by the Department of Housing, with the balance managed by community housing providers and Specialist Homelessness Services providers. Some housing for people impacted by domestic and family violence is managed by specialist service providers on behalf of the Department of Justice Attorney General.

The delivery of services for social housing tenants is undertaken by a mix of frontline Department of Housing staff and community housing providers. This support is provided to a range of clients, including dedicated housing for people experiencing or at risk of domestic and family violence, First Nations people, people with disabilities, seniors, women, young people and other vulnerable Queenslanders.

3. What constitutes social housing? There are quite a lot of terms used (i.e., affordable housing, subsidised housing, key worker housing, First Nations housing etc.). What is the barrier between social housing and these other terms, and if there is an intersection between them, could you please outline it?

The national definition of social housing, according to the Report on Government Services (RoGS) is:

"subsidised rental housing provided by not-for-profit, non-government or government organisations to assist people who are unable to access suitable accommodation in the private rental market."

There are four forms of social housing reported in the RoGs:

Public housing: dwellings owned (or leased) and managed by State and Territory housing authorities. Public housing is generally accessed by people on low incomes and/or those in

selected equity groups, and aims to provide a choice of housing location, physical type and management arrangements.

State owned and managed Indigenous housing (SOMIH): dwellings owned and managed by State and Territory housing authorities that are allocated only to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tenants, including dwellings managed by government Indigenous housing agencies.

Community housing: rental housing provided to low-to-moderate income households and/or those in selected equity groups, managed by community-based organisations that lease properties from government or have received a capital or recurrent subsidy from government. Community housing organisations typically receive some form of government assistance, such as direct funding for the provision of land and property, but a number of community housing organisations are entirely self-funded.

Indigenous community housing (ICH): dwellings owned or leased and managed by ICH organisations and community councils. ICH models vary across jurisdictions and can also include dwellings funded, managed or registered by government. ICH organisations include community organisations such as resource agencies and land councils.

The key difference between social housing and these other terms (or forms of housing) is that there are set eligibility criteria for access to social housing, which is allocated to very low and low-income households based on assessed need.

4. Queensland's regions will require a significant number of workers for the clean energy transition, as well as increasing agricultural supply. How do current/proposed social/affordable housing programs support regional workers?

The Department of Housing is working to strengthen housing supply and improve housing affordability, including social and affordable housing. The 2023–24 Budget provided increased funding of \$1.1 billion for the delivery and supply of social housing across Queensland through the *Housing and Homelessness Action Plan 2021–2025*, including to meet higher construction costs and to boost the QuickStarts Queensland program target by 500 homes, bringing it to 3,265 social housing commencements by 30 June 2025.

The Queensland Government's record investment in social and affordable housing also includes contracting prefabricated home builders, like Volo Modular on the Gold Coast, to help deliver more homes quickly for Queenslanders.

A first-of-its-kind partnership with modular homes manufacturers is accelerating the rollout ensuring delivery of as many new homes as possible, as quickly as possible – with builds taking a quarter of the time of a traditional build.

The modern homes initiative is on track to deliver over 100 homes by the end of the year. This includes 53 new homes to accommodate Queensland's most vulnerable and an additional 64 for frontline workers in regional communities.

These homes are built in South East Queensland and trucked out to regional areas, allowing us to deliver new homes, faster and cheaper than traditional builds.

Right across the government there are several other initiatives to support increased housing supply, including in regional Queensland.

For example, Queensland's 2023-24 State Budget is delivering the state's largest-ever investment in government employee housing to take pressure off regional housing markets and bring down the cost of renting.

This year a \$118.2 million commitment is the next instalment of a \$519 million, four-year program to build more than 400 homes and maintain an existing portfolio of around 3,000 homes for frontline workers in regional communities, helping to ease pressure on rental markets. This program is funded and delivered through the Department of Energy and Public Works - <https://statements.qld.gov.au/statements/97927>.

5. In the recent Shaping SEQ update, a lot of emphasis was placed on ensuring housing supply and diversity meet the needs of changing demographics. Would you be able to expand on the diversity aspect of this? How do you envision housing diversity changing in the next couple of decades, and how do these changes differ in the cities compared with the regions?

We know that Queensland's population is growing, but it is also changing. More people are living alone.

Over the next 25 years, the number of older people aged 65 years or older will increase.

The number of one-person households will increase substantially from 23.4 per cent in 2021 to 40.5 per cent in 2046.

These changes mean we need more smaller homes in the mix, to deliver more housing options – such as through building more units, townhouses and terraces.

The Deputy Premier recently released the State Government's updated draft SEQ Regional Plan – Shaping SEQ.

Shaping SEQ update is focussed on a region that is undergoing significant and continuing population growth.

Overall, state population trends are towards an older population, living in smaller households.

This, however, needs to be considered on a regional basis. Smaller or remote regions of the State, including rural townships have some particular population demographics that are important for understanding the demand for housing and other services on a local basis.