

Dominic Perrottet
NSW Premier
Sent via email

12 October 2021

Dear Premier Perrottet,

Open Letter from Western Sydney organisations urging the extension of 'WestInvest' to social and affordable housing

Congratulations on your appointment as Premier of New South Wales. We look forward to working with you to help to end homelessness.

We represent the organisations in Western Sydney who work with people at risk of and experiencing homelessness, including women and children escaping domestic and family violence, young people and families. During the COVID-19 lockdown we have been overwhelmed with requests for support, and often from individuals and families who have never sought help before.

We commend the recognition of the need in Western Sydney via the WestInvest announcement to rebuild the quality of life and inject jobs into the community, at the same time we urge you to hear us, and the people we have worked alongside for the past long months of lockdown.

The sacrifice from the community has been immense. So too have the impacts – some of which are hidden, and many are long lasting. Savings whittled down to nothing, parents skipping meals to ensure kids are fed, stress placing immense pressure on relationships and wellbeing.

And what has been highlighted during the lockdown is the essential need for all Western Sydney residents to have access to a safe, affordable and appropriate home. For 'WestInvest' to succeed and truly make a difference in Western Sydney, it must be expanded to include investment in social and affordable housing.

Investment in social and affordable housing will not only providing much needed housing for the community, but it would also stimulate the economy, grow jobs, support small and medium size businesses and respond to the most vulnerable in Western Sydney.

Investing in social and affordable housing ticks all the boxes. The solutions have already been laid out. Existing analysis and expertise has been captured.

There is a moral, economic and health imperative for NSW to act now. The projects are 'shovel ready' and they can ensure safe and secure housing for families in need, and economic and health security for us all.

As such, we call on the Perrottet Government to:

1. Acquire existing social and affordable housing stock to meet the immediate need in the community, including the public health needs of COVID-19
2. Commit an additional \$500 million to repair existing social housing stock
3. Deliver at least 5,000 additional social housing dwellings per year for the next 10 years.
4. Reduce all types of homelessness by committing to a fully funded state-wide action plan, with the goal of ending homelessness in NSW by 2030.

Signatories- page over

Signatories:

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Attachment A: Background to homelessness in the NSW lockdown

Overcrowding – the most hidden form of homelessness and a circumstance where households require four extra bedrooms to provide safe housing - has increased by 74 percent in NSW since 2011, compared to a 34 percent increase across Australia.

This is particularly acute in South Western Sydney, where increases in homelessness across Fairfield (61 percent increase), Liverpool (36 percent increase) and Canterbury-Bankstown (86 percent increase) [have all been driven by overcrowding](#). This situation is a direct result of an unaffordable housing market combined with limited availability for larger sized families.

On the more visible forms of homelessness, long term inaction has also meant we are now resorting to responses at the emergency end of the spectrum to keep people alive. But with approximately 1800 people in hotels, with over \$20 million spent to keep them there, there are no options on the horizon to house them – other than a return to sleeping rough and couch surfing, among others – as restrictions ease.

In fact, [capital expenditure on social housing in NSW has declined from \\$554.3 million in 2015-16 to \\$370.1 million in 2019-20](#). This means there is [now a wait of between 5 to 10 years to access housing](#). From 2019 to 2020, NSW lost – not gained but lost – 700 social housing dwellings.

Homelessness services are bracing themselves for the overwhelming demand that will follow this current lockdown due to a lack of social or affordable housing.

And the situation may well get worse as people face joblessness, and as house prices rise exponentially while the supply of affordable housing does not.