

By email: secretariat.PESRAC@treasury.tas.gov.au.

Shelter Tas is the peak body for housing and homelessness services in Tasmania. We appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback to the Premier's Economic and Social Recovery Advisory Council on the status of the challenges and issues that Tasmania faces due to COVID-19, and potential immediate actions and initiatives.

Our submission consists of:

- 1) An Executive Summary with recommendations
- 2) A substantial response, based on evidence from our members, to the questions presented by the Committee.

Executive Summary: Issues and Recommendations

The COVID-19 public health emergency has highlighted the crucial link between housing and health – without a home to stay in, people cannot practice hygiene and social isolation. Tasmania is only safe when citizens are securely housed. Housing needs to be the cornerstone of any pathway to recovery.

Tasmania's housing crisis was recognised long before the COVID-19 health emergency. Hobart led the nation as the least affordable capital city, with increasing numbers of people experiencing homelessness. In 2016, 1 622 Tasmanians were experiencing homelessness on Census night, and we know that number is much higher now. In 2019, CoreLogic reported that rents in Hobart had increased by 45.7% over the last 10 years, far outstripping people's incomes and ability to pay. Housing is the highest household expense for people on low to moderate incomes. There are over 120 000 Tasmanians living in poverty.^[1]

The Tasmanian Government has delivered a strong housing-based response to the COVID-19 public health emergency. Renters have been assisted to remain in their homes through a moratorium on evictions and a rental relief fund. Hotel accommodation is being provided for many people who were homeless, without secure places to stay. The Commonwealth Government introduced JobSeeker and JobKeeper income supplements, so that people could remain housed and afford essential costs of living.

These timely housing initiatives have averted a much worse health crisis. Tasmania's pre-existing housing and homelessness crisis is also to be addressed as part of the recovery. The temporary measures of income supplement, hotel accommodation and rental relief funding will all expire, but

^[1] TasCOSS 2018 <https://www.tascoss.org.au/120000-tasmanians-live-in-poverty/>

Tasmania's problems of homelessness and a lack of affordable housing will hinder the economic recovery from COVID-19 unless they are addressed.

Housing is an essential part of recovery from the health and economic impacts of COVID-19. The State Government's announcement of \$100M for social housing, along with other construction stimulus, recognises the fundamental links between health, housing and economic recovery.

Shelter Tas Recommendations

As Tasmania moves to the next phase of recovery, Shelter Tas has three main recommendations:

1. Address barriers in the planning system in order to implement the Premier's *Rebuilding Tasmania Infrastructure Investment*. There needs to be a change in both culture and regulation to enable swift construction of social housing and a continuous flow of work for the economic recovery. There are several examples in recent months, in various local government areas, where local government planning officials have approved development that includes social and affordable housing but, against that advice, the Council still rejects the plans. We can provide further details if that would be useful. Recovery strategies, such as the investment in the building and construction sector, depend on an efficient planning pathway for social housing, where expert recommendations are followed rather than overturned by local councillors.

2. Maintain a focus on housing as the foundation of health during the COVID-19. Over the next six months JobSeeker and JobKeeper payments, safety net programs will expire and risk of unemployment remains high. Continued funding for essential housing and homelessness services will need to keep pace with demand. As COVID-19 related payments dry up, and rental protections end, more Tasmanians will be at risk of defaulting on their mortgages and unable to pay their rent. This is a key risk during the early recovery period, and mitigating strategies are needed. If people lose their homes, the already stretched housing and homelessness sector will face a surge in demand. The associated unsafe, unhealthy ways of living will present a significant economic cost as well as a threat to public health in the event of a COVID-19 resurgence.

3. Establish a new data set, to monitor the impacts of COVID-19 in the changing recovery environment. Data is currently patchy and fragmented, and available too late to ensure pre-emptive action can be taken. Shelter Tas would be happy to lead the work of developing an objective data set for monitoring the longer-term impacts of COVID-19 on people's housing and market trends, drawing on our expertise in the housing and homelessness sector. This will be essential to inform an integrated evidence-led Recovery. Note: funding would be needed for this work.

Shelter Tas submission and answers to the questions

About Shelter Tas and our members

Shelter Tas is the peak body for housing and homelessness services in Tasmania. All the funded specialist homelessness services and community housing providers across Tasmania are members of Shelter Tas. Our response to the PESRAC consultation reflects our knowledge of the Tasmanian Housing and Homelessness Sector, and the feedback our members have provided to us. Our submission also reflects our engagement with National Peak organisations including the Community Housing Industry Association (CHIA), and the National Shelter Network.

In addition to our usual consultation practices, since March Shelter Tas has held weekly online meetings with the specialist homelessness services and community housing providers across the state. An average of 40-50 participants each week from all regions of Tasmania have attended these meetings, providing a very secure evidence base for this submission.

Shelter Tas can provide additional information on any of the issues raised in this submission.

Tasmania's Housing System

Housing is at the forefront of public health measures, if people are to stay home in order to stay safe.

All measures for public health and for social and economic recovery need to recognise that everyone needs to be safely housed, and this is far from a reality across Tasmania. Housing needs to be the cornerstone of the recovery.

All kinds of housing across Australia and Tasmania receive some kind of government subsidy, from first home buyer/builder grants, negative gearing for investors, Commonwealth Rent Assistance, and direct state funded social housing including public housing, and affordable rental delivered by not for profit community housing providers.

The Tasmanian Affordable Housing Strategy and its associated Action Plans deliver many programs, including Rapid Rehousing for people escaping family and domestic violence, Private Rental Incentive Scheme (PRIS) and Private Rental Assistance (PRA) which assists low income Tasmanians with rental bond payments.

<https://www.communities.tas.gov.au/housing/tasmanian-affordable-housing-strategy>

Tasmania's social housing system assists over 13,000 households with income based rents. There are nearly 3,500 people on the waiting list for social housing, and the average waiting time for priority one applicants is more than a year.

Tasmania's housing system includes emergency and transitional accommodation for people experiencing homelessness, delivered throughout Tasmania by specialist homelessness services funded by the Department of Communities Tas.

A response to COVID-19 needs to take account of the full range of forms of homelessness. Street homelessness represents only about 12% of the entire population of people experiencing homelessness. The ABS definition of homelessness includes living in overcrowded and precarious

situations, such as couch surfing, sleeping in cars, and fitting into other households that become overcrowded. Women and young people are typically less visible as they are couch surfing, or living without secure tenure. In these circumstances are extremely vulnerable to sexual and other violence and exploitation. The 2016 Census, which counted over 1600 people experiencing homelessness in Tasmania, showed overcrowding was growing faster than any other form of homelessness. This trend accelerates in the economic crisis following Coronavirus.

Housing and homelessness are complex issues. There is no single, fast and effective solution to resolving the current crisis of homelessness and lack of affordable housing across Tasmania. An increase of supply of affordable social housing is essential, and in many cases, appropriate support to keep people safely housed. A collaborative effort to address these challenges is required from all levels of government, the private sector and the community sector.

Overview of the housing and homelessness system in Tasmania

- Housing Connect provides the first point of contact for people seeking help. Assistance ranges across the need for help to access homelessness services through to home ownership. The Housing Connect service is delivered by Anglicare in the North and Northwest, and Colony 47 in the South, funded by the State Government through the Department of Communities. **Housing Connect Front Door receives inquiries about all the housing initiatives announced by the State Government in response to the Coronavirus crisis. Before the crisis, Housing Connect received over 40,000 inquiries each year. Each COVID-19 announcement generates a tremendous number of new inquiries and applications to be processed. This adds greatly to the workload of the Front Door service.**
- Social housing is public housing and community housing (managed by professional not-for-profit community housing providers). There are over 13,000 social housing dwellings in Tasmania. **The announcement on 4 June of State Government investment of \$100M to build another 1000 homes will help to meet the demand, at present nearly 3500 households are on the waiting list for social housing.**
- Homelessness support is provided across Tasmania through a network of Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS). These highly skilled and professional services help house and support people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. **Homelessness services are seeing increased demand resulting from lockdown pressures, especially for women and their children escaping family and domestic violence, and people who have been staying informally with others (couchsurfing and in overcrowded households) but who have been asked to leave due to social distancing concerns.**
- SHS services provide emergency and supervised accommodation; assist people to find longer term accommodation; support and house people escaping from family and domestic violence, or facing substance abuse and mental illness; and support people to establish themselves in independent living and to maintain their existing tenancies. SHS services also provide specialised information and advice, advocacy and financial support.
- Specialised housing support workers assist people in crisis to find emergency accommodation, help people in temporary housing to find pathways to more permanent options, and support people with information and applications for the multiple assistance programs funded by

government, such as rental relief fund, private rental assistance (bond payments), and Rapid Rehousing.

- Additional specialist workers working in the housing and homelessness sector include professionals with expertise in mental health, substance issues, transitioning people who have been institutionalised to community living, specialised support for young people, support for people who are chronically homeless, supportive accommodation options, financial counselling.

In the Covid-19 health and economic crisis, there is an urgent need to secure additional crisis and emergency accommodation, and specialist workers to support people in the short term, and in the longer term to provide permanent, stable accommodation for people currently homeless or housed in temporary or crisis accommodation. **The COVID-19 recovery and stimulus funding need to deliver pathways for people who are homeless, in emergency or precarious short-term housing to long term permanent homes.**

1. What are the current impacts of COVID-19 on your sector, organisation and/or service users?

The social housing sector and affordable housing sector have largely continued to operate throughout the Coronavirus crisis. As a sector delivering essential services, work has continued and increased in many areas. The homelessness sector is operating at full capacity with increasing numbers of people being turned away each year, now over 28 per day.

The most vulnerable are suffering the greatest hardship

Already, there are 120,000 people living in poverty in Tasmania. Some groups are especially vulnerable the risk of homelessness in an economic downturn. These groups include younger people including unaccompanied homeless children under 16, older people, people with disability, people affected by mental illness, members of aboriginal communities, people in Tasmania on student, worker and spouse visas, and people experiencing poverty. Specialised support is essential for members of especially vulnerable group to enable them to live well and stay housed. This includes specialised support and tenancy support for people who are living in their own rentals, or may be support for people living in specialised services such as Youth At Risk facilities and Foyers for young people, lodges, Wintringham models for older people who have experienced homelessness, accommodation linked to mental health support services and the like.

People experiencing digital exclusion are being left further behind. As services and support - including essential government services - are increasingly delivered over digital platforms, many people face new barriers, costs and exclusions.

Workload is intensifying for support workers in the Housing Connect front door services where people go to access support including new programs such as the Rental Relief Fund.

Workload in the housing and homelessness sector has increased, with more people needing advice and support, new programs, and the need to cope with changed ways of working due to coronavirus. This increased pressure has led to caseloads of over 35, where 10-13 would be considered sustainable best practice. The opportunity to increase employment to deliver these much-needed services, and embed training to increase and upskill this workforce, would be a valuable form of economic stimulus as well as delivering public benefit.

Some emergency accommodation services are now operating at reduced capacity due to social distancing requirements. For example, shared rooms have become single occupancy, thus limiting the number of people who can be accommodated. It is unclear if, when and how this reduced capacity will be recovered. Social distancing requirements will continue to limit the capacity of some services.

Investment to prevent and reduce homelessness is urgently needed. Increased homelessness will cost millions of dollars each year, and the impact on lives is immeasurable. Based on previous estimates for Australia increased homelessness can be expected to cost between \$218 million and \$445 million each year, nationally.¹

Many work practices have changed, including

- Clients who cannot access face to face services but may also lack the equipment, data plan and digital literacy to manage interactions online
- Services are concerned about the impacts of isolation on vulnerable people
- Working with clients and other services by phone or video
- Less capacity in shelters due to social distancing
- Working from home – ramping up of IT, need to upskill to manage different technology and forms of engaging with people
- Tenancy managers cannot visit premises
- Influx of information – public health fact sheets, tailored fact sheets, specific information from contract managers, updates from Worksafe.

2. What impacts do you anticipate in the next few weeks and months and what will influence those impacts?

Increase in income support has been beneficial, with a reduction in hardship and rent arrears. If these additional payments and protections are withdrawn suddenly, the effects are unknown. Risks include a surge in evictions with fourteen days' notice at the end of the eviction moratorium. This would place incredible pressure on the housing system. Withdrawal of the JobSeeker and JobKeeper payments could place people at risk of mortgage default. These impacts need to be monitored and managed.

- When the JobSeeker payments return back to pre-COVID-19 levels, many people who are self-funding in motel accommodation will be unable to afford it, and they are at high risk of falling into homelessness.
- People are entering leases now on the basis of additional income, and these rental costs may be unsustainable when the additional JobSeeker and JobKeeper payments expire.
- The digital divide will worsen. People and households who do not have adequate access to internet can no longer use public options, and when these become available, will likely face

¹ Equity Economics *Supporting Economic Recovery in NSW* available at <http://www.equityeconomics.com.au/#/copy>

significant restrictions on access. Students, people needing access to government and other services need home-based access in order to stay safe and connected when many public options are closed.

- People are entering short leases under six months, often where properties have been previously in the short stay visitor accommodation market – it is unclear what will happen to tenants at the end of these short leases. If these accommodation prices rise, or properties return to the short stay visitor market, we will likely see a surge of renters at risk of homelessness.

New government programs and increasing numbers of people suffering housing distress will continue to increase pressure and demand for services from the housing and homelessness sector.

Awareness of gender impact and unintended consequences

It will be important to analyse the effects of gender when considering appropriate recovery strategies. Coronavirus impacts, economic crisis and stimulus initiatives will likely affect women and men differently. Gendered issues include increase in family violence, and the impact of focussing economic recovery on traditionally male sectors such as construction. Additional employment stimulus in the housing and homelessness sector would go some way to redressing this disparity as this workforce is largely female.

3. What data or information can you share to demonstrate this impact?

As the peak body for housing and homelessness services, Shelter Tas meets and consults regularly with all the Specialist Homelessness Services and Community Housing Providers across Tasmania. Since March we have convened weekly meetings with these services, with 40-50 participants attending. Our Policy Committee includes representatives from all regions of Tasmania and all service types, including emergency accommodation, women's shelters, community housing and tenants services. Our understanding of the impact of Covid-19 is drawn from this comprehensive and thorough ongoing consultation with our members.

We are happy to provide more detail about specific questions.

We understand that the Department of Communities and Housing Connect are collecting weekly data with AIHW on relevant measures of COVID-19 impact.

In addition, there are many sources of data for the housing and homelessness sector across Tasmania, these include:

- Department of Communities (Housing Tas) Quarterly Housing reports and Dashboard reports
- The Housing Connect system, which tracks information on people who are brokered into hotels and short term accommodation due to housing crisis and emergency, the social housing waiting list, and Programs such as bond payments
- AIHW data compiled regularly on usage of the specialist homelessness shelters (refuges, women's shelters, emergency accommodation, youth shelter) and on the unassisted requests (unmet need).
- Rental Affordability Index produced annually by SGS Economics and National Shelter

- Anglicare Rental Affordability Snapshot produced annually
- AHURI studies including new housing research being undertaken by the University of Tasmania titled Regional Recovery after COVID-19. (Disclosure: Shelter Tas is a member of the Advisory Panel for this research)
- Bond data released monthly from Tasmania's Residential Deposit Authority
- Data on Short Stay Accommodation
- Monthly reports from CoreLogic and the Real Estate Institute of Tasmania (REIT)
- The ABS Census and other ABS reports
- The annual Report on Government Services (ROGS)
- Reports from the No Interest Loan Scheme (NILS)

Shelter Tas calls for the development of a new integrated data set, to monitor the impacts of Covid-19 in the changing recovery environment. Data is currently patchy and fragmented, and available too late to ensure pre-emptive action can be taken. Shelter Tas would be happy to lead the work of developing an objective data set for monitoring the longer-term impacts of Covid-19 on people's housing, drawing on our expertise in the housing and homelessness sector. This will be essential to inform an integrated evidence-led Recovery. Note: funding would be needed for this work.

4. What has been put in place so far to address these impacts?

There are numerous state and federal government initiatives, income measures, protections for renters, and additional investment in social housing. Expanded and new programs in Tasmania include

- Increased funding for brokerage to keep people safe in hotels
- Moratorium on evictions and freeze on rent increases
- Safe Space in Hobart and in progress for Burnie and Launceston (24 hour low barrier shelter for people experiencing homelessness)
- Covid-19 Rent Relief Scheme (for private renters)
- Increased funds for Rapid Rehousing and the Private Rental Incentive Scheme
- Additional and expanded funding for people escaping family and domestic violence
- Social housing boost of \$100M - announced on June 4.

These emergency responses have been extremely welcome. As the Recovery commences, we need to plan well for long term durable solutions.

5. What isn't being addressed?

There are three additional areas that are not yet being addressed: The level of unmet need that predates the Coronavirus; the need to adapt the planning system to support and streamline the construction of much needed affordable social rental housing (examples of current barriers can be provided); and the impact on specific groups including women and Tasmanian Aboriginal people.

As discussed above, pathways out of homelessness into safe, secure, affordable and appropriate housing are inadequate, and often unavailable. Many people who have experienced homelessness and trauma need more than just a house, but need support to live well and maintain safe and stable in their homes.

5.1 The underlying level of unmet need that preceded the Coronavirus crisis

Tasmania faced increasing levels of homelessness and chronic shortages of affordable housing well before the COVID-19 pandemic. This unmet need is evidenced by long waiting lists for social housing, and increasing numbers of people turned away from emergency accommodation. This has been amplified by increasing levels of unemployment and lost income, and the potential income cliff for people who have temporary assistance through JobSeeker and JobKeeper payments. The cost of housing especially in the private rental market does not change when people's incomes fall.

Social housing with affordable rent that is calculated based on the household income is the best way to protect families and individuals from housing hardship. But there is a waiting list of nearly 3500 households and an average wait time of over one year for applicants. **The announcement on 4 June of State Government investment of \$100M to build another 1000 homes will help to meet the need, but the demand will still outstrip supply. The time lag of building these homes means that interim measures will be needed.**

5.2 Reforming the planning system to support the building of social housing

The planning system has long needed to adapt to facilitate the timely development of affordable housing. Planning the road to recovery will need to ensure a consistent pipeline of employment and housing supply to keep the economy moving, support our communities and keep people in jobs. We need to respond quickly by reforming the planning system to ensure continued productivity, investment and community wellbeing.

At present the planning system needs to be modernised to recognise the importance of social housing and treat it as an urgent priority. Recent case studies (which we can supply) show developments have been recommended by local government planning professionals but blocked by elected Councillors. This impedes and slows the building pipeline for much needed social housing, in an environment where housing everyone needs to be a priority for public health as well as people's rights to a safe home.

There are multiple recent cases where local resistance (Nimbyism) to the building of new affordable housing and homelessness initiatives presents a significant barrier to new developments. This creates delays, meaning that people are waiting longer for the homes they need, and establishes a 'stop start' flow of employment for the construction industry. At worst, the backlash means that a proposal is abandoned, and a process of finding another appropriately located site has to start again. Better planning, where expert recommendations are followed rather than overturned by local councillors will enable consistent employment.

As Shelter Tas has long argued in our submissions to the state budget process, the planning system needs to be updated to encourage construction of the social and affordable housing that is greatly needed across Tasmania. In short there is a need to cut red tape and fast-track assessment processes to boost the construction pipeline and accelerate new affordable social housing projects. This will create and support construction jobs and allow work to continue wherever possible while

avoiding constraints and delays that could undermine government investment in much-needed social and affordable housing.

We note that Queensland has a system for approval of public housing developments that does not require development approval from local government.² Shelter Tas would be happy to see reforms to the Tasmanian planning system include such a measure for public housing and for social housing, delivered by registered Tier One Community Housing Providers when funded by the Department of Communities.

5.3 The gendered nature of the crisis impacts and solutions such as construction-led recovery.

Shelter Tas strongly supports investment in construction of social and affordable housing as a priority for economic stimulus. At the same time, we are aware that the majority of jobs created in this sector are taken up by men and not women. We also know that many of the impacts of crisis fall on women – greater caring responsibilities, increased family violence, loss of income as women are over represented in precarious employment.

Recent research shows that older women without resources are the fastest growing group of people experiencing homelessness across Australia.

Women live longer in poverty in their later years. Older women are increasingly visible in homelessness statistics, and are the fastest growing group nationally. It is vital that the decisions made to stimulate the economic recovery apply a gender lens to avoid unintended consequences that exacerbate this long term trend of women becoming homeless in later years.

People from Tasmanian Aboriginal Communities are over-represented in the homelessness sector. The experiences of people from Tasmanian Aboriginal Communities need culturally respectful responses and appropriate consultative mechanisms to develop and implement community-led solutions.

6. Within your sector and more broadly, what do you see as priorities for a response?

- Any stimulus response needs to treat new social housing as a priority
- Recognition of affordable and safe housing for all Tasmanians and an end to homelessness as an essential public health response, and the best approach to economic stimulus
- Responding to homelessness as an increasing area of crisis and risk, both short term immediate actions and long-term social housing and support for people who need it

² Public housing in Queensland is considered ‘accepted development’ under the Queensland Planning Act and Planning Regulation. As long as the development is in accordance with the planning scheme it does not require development approval from local government. (See Schedule 6 Part 5 of the Planning Act, proposals for public housing are required to be considered against the relevant local government planning scheme at <https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/view/pdf/inforce/current/sl-2017-0078>)

The Director-General, Department of Housing and Public Works, makes a determination about the level of compliance with the relevant planning scheme. When a public housing development proposal is considered ‘substantially inconsistent with the relevant planning scheme, DHPW will publish notification online and in relevant newspapers, and notify adjoining land owners. Following the end of the public notification, the Director-General will have regard to any submissions received when deciding whether or not to proceed with the proposed development. (see <https://www.yoursayhpw.engagemthq.com/public-housing-developments>)

Information sourced from Queensland Shelter.

- Appropriate accommodation for vulnerable young homeless people, including unaccompanied young people and children under 16
- Purpose-built Supported Accommodation Facilities for young people, older people and people who need a supportive environment
- Adequate staffing models including specialist support tailored to the needs of specific vulnerable groups
- Investment in social and affordable housing will support jobs and training, and makes homes available for people on low and precarious incomes.
- Building additional social and affordable housing stock across Tasmania allows people to work locally as housing is needed in all regions.
- Repairing old social housing stock, further boosts employment and addressing maintenance backlog provides further options for training pathways.
- Rapidly acquiring available properties (spot purchases) in the private market supports the housing market at a time when household income depletion and insecurity may discourage banks from lending to individuals. Infill spot purchasing is an efficient way to deliver much need homes in a framework of inclusive development, and it can increase the supply of social affordable rental properties in well-located areas close to services and employment opportunities.
- Turbocharge existing plans in the Tas Affordable Housing Strategy, using the Stimulus to ensure a consistent pipeline of work, to streamline and expedite the tendering and approvals processes at all levels of government.
- Reform of the planning system to facilitate and streamline construction of social and affordable housing
- Reform of tenancy legislation to better protect housing security, particularly in the private sector, both in short/med term and long term. Tenant advocates have suggested this could include
 - Greater discretion for Magistrates to decline to make eviction orders, or make alternative orders (such as a payment plan);
 - Process for rent reductions - enforceable by court;
 - Regulation of rent increases
 - Process for compensation in case of landlord breach - enforceable by court;
 - No 'end of lease' evictions without valid underlying reason; and
 - Effective enforcement of existing protections, including oversight of minimum standards under the Residential Tenancy Act.
- Planning and resources to manage increased eviction when the current moratorium and emergency period end

7. What can be done to build business/consumer/community confidence?

Australia's experience during the Global Financial Crisis 2008-12 confirms that spending on the social safety net including housing is the most effective way to support economic recovery. Housing for all, including supported accommodation, supports the most vulnerable Australians, including those experiencing or facing homelessness and rising domestic violence, while aiding the economic recovery. Consumers – especially renters - who know there is an effective social safety net, and affordable places to live will be more confident. Preventing housing distress and homelessness will increase community and consumer confidence, and a boost to construction will support business confidence.

8. What would help your sector or organisation to re-employ people?

A clear recognition of housing and homelessness services as essential services requiring long term funding, and support for capacity building across the sector is essential. Building the workforce capacity needs to include apprenticeships and certificate and diploma skills development across the sector. Long term commitment to funding for management of tenanted properties, and supported accommodation facilities such as youth foyers and purpose-built aged care facilities is needed.

A clear pipeline of funded building projects that smooths out 'stop-start' funding, eliminates delays from initial EOI and tender to planning approval and construction starts will assist the sector in direct and indirect employment, and maximise public benefit. Public value and return on investment can be delivered by partnerships between the not-for-profit and government sectors.³

There are several examples in recent months, in various local government areas, where planning officials recommend a development that includes social and affordable housing, but the Council then rejects it. We can provide further details if that would be useful. There needs to be a change in both culture and regulation in order to ensure swift construction of much needed affordable homes and a continuous flow of work for the economic recovery.

People's need for homes and for the safety net of emergency accommodation predates this crisis and will continue after it. The important opportunity now is to shape that system so that the safety net is stronger, the pathways to secure homes are swifter, waiting lists for social housing are shortened, turnaway rates from emergency accommodation are reduced, and people have the supports they need to stay securely and appropriately housed.

Commitment to fund a workforce that can maintain sustainable best practice caseloads for housing and homelessness support workers, at present caseloads can reach 35 per worker, while best practice would be caseload of 10-13 per worker. Where there has been reduced capacity, for example due to social distancing, some accommodation providers have been obliged to reduce the number of clients they can assist on site, it will be important to review and rebuild the capacity in those areas, which may require new capital builds, alteration of existing buildings, or changes to how staff work. If staff are not working on site with clients, they may need to take additional time with clients, for example travelling to the client where needed, and this could increase staff costs.

A better planning system that streamlines and expedites the delivery of affordable and social housing will assist with employment in the construction industry as well as improving delivery of much needed homes for Tasmanians.

The first stage of responding to the COVID-19 crisis has been very effective, but these temporary measures have left people in a holding pattern. Shelter Tas calls on the PESRAC council to keep housing and homelessness front and centre in the response and recovery. A failure to address housing and homelessness as an essential piece of maintaining public health will put the entire social and economic recovery at risk.

For more information, please see www.shelertas.org.au

³ <https://www.communityhousing.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/SHARP-Full-Report-1.pdf?x59559>

Appendix:

The Social Housing and Renovation Program (SHARP) developed by the Community Housing Industry Association, National Shelter and other stakeholders is a national proposal for investment in social housing as a stimulus to offset the economic damage of the COVID-19 pandemic. Below is an extract from the economic modelling of SHARP commissioned from SGS Economics in May 2020, outlining the national benefit. The figure and table show state by state breakdown of the impact of COVID-19 on construction and economic activity, and the employment impacts of the moderate investment scenario that was modelled.

The COVID-19 pandemic represents the most significant challenge to Australia's economy in more than 80 years. The shutdown of large parts of the economy are unprecedented and Australia will experience the biggest contraction in GDP since the Great Depression. Without international migration the demand for housing will fall dramatically during the 2021 calendar year. This fall could be up to 50 per cent in the number of new housing starts and place hundreds of thousands of jobs at risk.

Action is required to support the economy as it deals with the 'shock' of COVID-19.

SHARP aims to develop 30,000 additional social housing units, 75 per cent of which will be delivered within three years, along with accelerated maintenance and renovation of existing social housing stock.

On average of the four-year period, the SHARP would support on average between 15,500 and 18,000 FTE jobs. This is both direct construction jobs and other jobs.

The peak number of jobs supported (between 21,000-24,500 FTE jobs) is in 2021-22. This is when the economy is likely to be at its weakest and every dollar of stimulus presents a real opportunity to save a job. This FTE figure could represent up to 30,000 workers whose jobs would be saved by the SHARP stimulus.

The job impact of the SHARP declines during the following years as assumed return to normal in international migration and broader economic activity recovers the 'multiplier effect' is not as great. In 2023-24 between 13,800 and 15,900 FTE jobs will be supported by the SHARP.

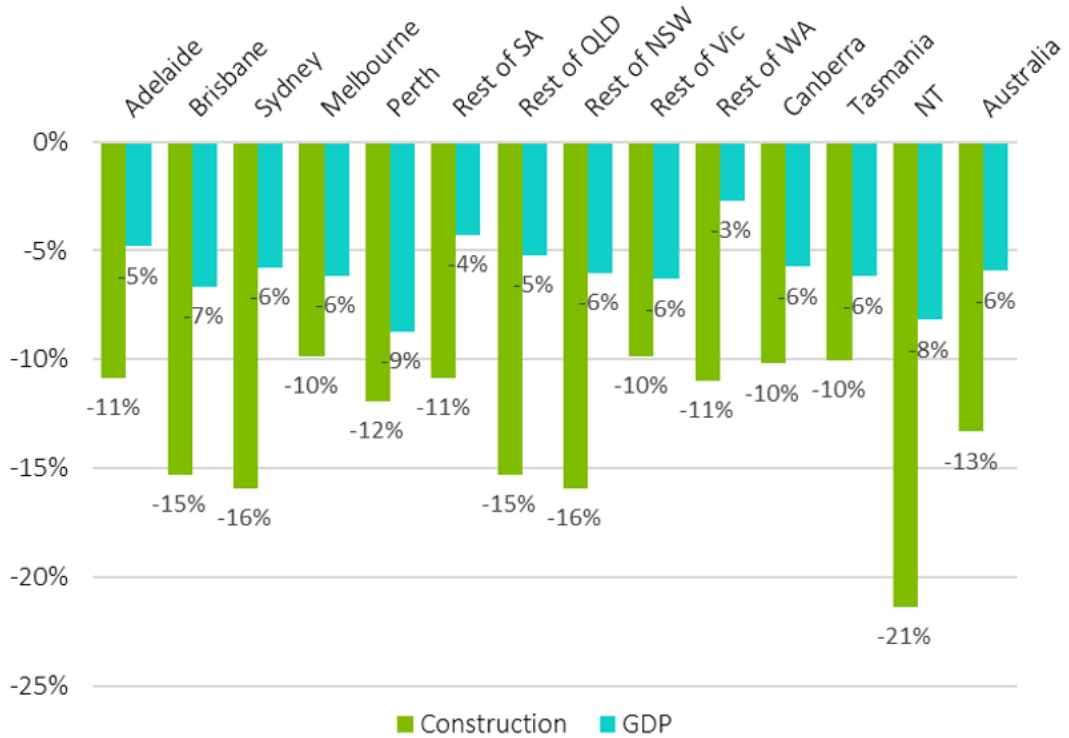
SHARP is estimated to raise output in Australia by \$15.7 billion to \$18.2 billion in total over the four years of construction and increase GDP by between \$5.8 billion to \$6.7 billion.

Investing in construction of residential housing has the potential to have a greater, more reliable stimulus impact than some other potential projects, both in the short term and the long term.

Source – SGS Economics and Planning, report available on request.

FIGURE 3 IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON CONSTRUCTION AND OVERALL ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

FIGURE 3 IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON CONSTRUCTION AND OVERALL ECONOMIC ACTIVITY



Source: SGS Economics and Planning calculations, 2020

Source: SGS Economics and Planning calculations, 2020 (report available on request)

Table 2 Employment and Value Added effects (Central scenario, the high and low investment scenarios are not included here)

TABLE 2 REGIONAL ECONOMIC IMPACTS – CENTRAL SCENARIO

Region	Total Output Effect (\$m)	Average Emp Effect (Jobs)	Total VA Effect (\$m)
<i>Greater Sydney</i>	5,225	5,325	1,887
<i>Rest of NSW</i>	1,008	975	402
<i>Greater Melbourne</i>	5,204	5,205	1,921
<i>Rest of VIC</i>	770	740	278
<i>Greater Brisbane</i>	1,750	1,705	649
<i>Rest of QLD</i>	1,282	1,200	470
<i>Greater Adelaide</i>	502	480	189
<i>Rest of SA</i>	26	25	9
<i>Greater Perth</i>	552	530	236
<i>Rest of WA</i>	25	20	7
<i>Greater Hobart</i>	152	145	59
<i>Rest of TAS</i>	112	100	37
<i>Greater Darwin</i>	68	55	24
<i>Rest of NT</i>	29	25	11
<i>ACT</i>	208	190	70
Australia	16,912	16,700	6,248

Source: SGS calculations, 2020

Source: SGS Economics and Planning calculations, 2020 (report available on request)