

You can! help create a better State

SACOSS Fact Sheet No. 3: Housing

In the lead-up to the 2010 South Australian state election, political parties, independent candidates and interest groups are all constructing their policy platforms in an attempt to entice you: the voter. SACOSS asks that you use your position of power to Help Create a Better State – find out the facts, read beyond the headlines, and make people the foundation of policy in South Australia.

One of the most fundamental of human needs is having a roof over your head – every person requires somewhere they can enjoy safety, privacy, rest and recreation. Sadly, significant numbers of people are unable to access appropriate and affordable housing, meaning many face the risk of ill-health and becoming socially excluded. Conversely, affordable housing helps individuals and households in attaining high standards of health and wellbeing, and hence it is vitally important that we give more South Australians a place to call home.

The Current State...

1. Owning vs. renting — While many Australians enjoy the freedom of home ownership, either through owning their home outright (34%) or paying off a mortgage (35%), a large proportion of Australians rent (29%), either through private rentals (22%) or through public rental housing (5%).

2. Housing stress — 33.4% of South Australians in the private rental market are affected by housing stress, meaning they spend at least 30% of the household's gross income on housing costs.

3. Less public housing — Across Australia, the number of dwellings classified as “public housing” declined from 365,000 in 1995 to 341,000 in 2006.

4. Affordable Adelaide? — Approximately 67% of South Australian homebuyers' income is being spent on mortgages. Despite this, Adelaide is still more affordable to live in than Sydney, Perth or Brisbane.

5. Housing and health — Where people live is an important determinant of their health and quality of life, and improving poor living conditions is one of the key components to improving health. For example, unaffordable housing can be linked to poor nutrition: the more expensive the house, the less money can be spent on other necessities such as food, meaning some low-income earners will often forgo a healthy diet in order to maintain their home.

...a Better State

1. Early intervention and prevention — Identify and apply early intervention strategies to prevent homelessness and issues surrounding inappropriate housing. Such methods will target those who are at risk of becoming homeless or who may suffer the negative consequences of living in unaffordable and inappropriate housing.

2. Increase social housing stocks — *An increase in social housing stocks is needed across the spectrum of housing types, including public and community housing.*

3. Upgrade infrastructure — *Ageing housing infrastructure needs to be upgraded, taking into account environmentally sustainable design principles. This upgrade must take place at the same time as social housing stocks are increased.*

4. Construct communities — *When planning increases in social housing stocks, it is vital that communities are established, as opposed to simply building homes. This means that people living in these communities must have access to services, the opportunity to access training, and to be able to secure reasonable employment.*

5. Collaborative management — *Any new housing that is constructed needs to be developed and managed in a collaborative manner, which means that such housing needs to be accessible and appropriately located for everyone across South Australia, taking into account the diversity of need that exists in the state.*

(You can) Help create a better State

- Get up to speed – read the SACOSS Housing Principles Paper.
- Ask your local MP about housing, and tell them what you think.
- Ask your local candidates what their election policies will include, and tell them what you think.
- Read about the positions of a range of interest groups, and contact them for further information.

REMEMBER that political parties and candidates respond to public opinion – it is our strongest weapon to ensure progressive and equitable policies!

Other Groups to Contact

Shelter SA
www.sheltersa.asn.au
(08) 8221 6488

Homelessness SA
www.homelessnesssa.asn.au

Community Housing Council of SA
www.chcsa.org.au
(08) 8362 1022

Mental Health Coalition of SA
www.mhcsa.org.au
(08) 8212 8873

Youth Affairs Council of SA
www.yacsa.com.au
(08) 8226 3080

South Australian Network of Drug and Alcohol Services
www.sandas.org.au
(08) 8231 8818

COTA-Seniors' Voice
www.seniorsvoice.org.au
(08) 8232 0422