



JOINT STATEMENT FROM National Shelter, Community Housing Federation of Australia and Homelessness Australia

Wednesday 24 December 2014

Housing and homelessness peak bodies out in the cold at Christmas: and a very poor new year to follow for anyone struggling to house themselves

It's not going to be a good Christmas for housing and homelessness peak bodies including the Community Housing Federation of Australia (CHFA), Homelessness Australia and National Shelter.

All three of these peak bodies received news at the beginning of this Christmas week that they would not be funded beyond 30 June 2015.

But this news is a blow beyond undermining Christmas festivities for the people directly involved in these organisations.

These organisations provided a voice in Canberra for the challenges faced in securing affordable housing and keeping a roof over the heads of our most vulnerable citizens.

Without strong national peak bodies, government decision makers will be free to ignore housing and homelessness, leaving one of the biggest welfare issues: whether families can get and keep a home, out in the cold.

Alarmingly, with a federation green paper underway that will look specifically at housing and homelessness issues, there may be no peak bodies at the national level with the research and policy expertise in these areas.

It's a sad day for civil society when governments move to silence anyone who may offer an opinion that differs from theirs.

Peaks play an essential role as a voice for vulnerable people and in taking a broad view of the housing and homelessness system to promote fairness, effectiveness and efficiency.

Governments are impoverished without the evidence based policy knowledge of peaks and their capacity to provide advice and a voice from the community - this is an attack on civil society, and the long term costs will be worn by our most vulnerable citizens.

Community Housing Federation of Australia

The Community Housing Federation of Australia (CHFA), the national industry body representing not-for-profit housing providers.

" For nearly 20 years CHFA has provided advice to both Liberal and Labor Governments, as well as conducting research and policy development aimed at improving housing outcomes for low-income and vulnerable Australians," said John McInerney, CHFA's son. "We are profoundly disappointed by this short-sighted decision."

Carol Croce, CHFA's Executive Director said, "I am surprised by this decision, as it is at odds with the constructive relationship CHFA has enjoyed with successive governments . CHFA has been a successful and respected peak body and an efficient, effective conduit for information to the community housing sector for Government policy, and an avenue for genuine dialogue on housing concerns between the community housing sector and Government."

"More than ever the sector needs to be working collaboratively with Government towards a viable solution to the lack of affordable housing. Diminishing the resources of a prominent stakeholder such as CHFA will be detrimental to this process," Ms Croce said.

"The work of each of our housing and homelessness peaks is essential if people are to have a roof over their heads."

Homelessness Australia

Homelessness Australia represents hundreds of specialist homelessness services: hard-working organisations and people who are the nation's safety net.

"We are deeply disappointed that the government has turned its back on the country's most vulnerable people," Glenda Stevens, CEO of HA said.

"Housing affordability is driving more people to homelessness than ever before. The government can't talk about caring for families without addressing this issue.

"The work of each of our housing and homelessness peaks is essential if people are to have a roof over their heads."

National Shelter

National Shelter is Australia's housing policy peak, advocating for a fairer, more just housing system, particularly for low-income Australian households. We aim to make housing in all the tenure forms, including private rental, home ownership and social housing more accessible, affordable, appropriate, safe and secure for everyone.

National Shelter Chairperson Mary Perkins said National Shelter is a policy peak which focuses at the systems level.

"We take care to work constructively with government, the private and community sectors to build a better housing system for everyone.

"National Shelter brings to the table the collective experience and knowledge of state and territory based housing policy peaks, and our National Members CHFA and Homelessness Australia.

"We're shocked and disappointed that the Federal Government would try to exclude us and the voice of vulnerable people from the conversation about housing policy.

“The work of each of our housing and homelessness peaks is essential if people are to have a roof over their heads.”

ENDS

For further comment

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