



Update: New Directions in Social Housing for Older People



Currently, more than 60,000 older people live in public and community housing in NSW, with the number expected to grow considerably over the next 20 years. The NSW Government plays an important role in providing housing for older people in NSW. In April 2006, the NSW Government launched its plan *New Directions in Social Housing for Older People*. The plan complements actions to assist older people in the State Plan as well as the whole-of-government strategy, *Towards 2030: Planning for Our Changing Population*.

Progress 2006–2009

Housing NSW has made significant progress over the first three years of the five-year plan in a number of key priority areas as outlined below.

Assets

Key priorities:

- Invest \$420 million to increase social housing for older people by 10 percent, equaling an additional 2800 homes over the next five years.
- Invest \$75 million over the next five years in modifications to properties to make life easier for older people in social housing.

Progress to date:

- Already 660 new homes for older people have been completed and a further 625 are at various stages of construction. Planning is underway for the remaining homes to ensure that the target for new construction over the five years of the strategy is met.
- Over \$42 million had been invested to modify around 8,700 homes and upgrade a further 500 public housing homes for people with mobility related disabilities including older people.

Ageing in place project – Gallop Court, Maroubra

Gallop Court is an Ageing in Place project for public housing tenants in Maroubra. Housing NSW has modified this apartment complex, with the first apartment block completed in December 2007. Bathrooms were modified to be more suitable for residents with disabilities and mobility problems. Lifts and an intercom security system were installed so residents feel safer in their homes. Housing NSW is working together with local service providers to enable tenants to remain within their community as they age. Housing NSW plans to repeat this approach in other areas around NSW.



Senior communities and precincts

Key priorities:

- A focus on housing older people with other older people.
- Develop designated older persons precincts in major social housing redevelopments.
- Develop clear guidelines for best practice design of social housing to better meet the needs of older people.

Progress to date:

- Senior Communities are being established in over 250 public housing complexes, giving older people the choice to live near other older people.
- Accommodation options for older people are included in major redevelopments such as Glebe, Minto, Riverview, Villawood and Redfern East.
- Housing NSW has developed guidelines for building and upgrading housing that is more appropriate for older people.
- Housing specifically for older Aboriginal people is currently under construction in the Illawarra and in Orange. A total of 12 new units are committed for older Aboriginal people and will be managed by community housing providers.

Major Redevelopment – Redfern East

Housing NSW began redeveloping the Elizabeth Street, Redfern public housing site in April 2007. Part of the redevelopment will include 66 new seniors living units, six of which can be adapted for people with a disability. There are community rooms, landscaped common areas and gardens. Construction is expected to commence shortly with the first tenants expected to move in during 2010.



Supporting older tenants

Key priorities:

- Improve partnerships and service delivery arrangements to allow older people to age in place.
- Provide more flexibility in the way housing services are delivered to older people.

Progress to date:

- Housing NSW introduced the Keeping in Touch with the Over 60s program where staff phone or visit any tenants who have not been in recent contact with Housing NSW.
- In July 2008, Housing NSW Tenant Connect was launched. This is a daily telephone monitoring service operated by the Australian Red Cross for isolated older social housing tenants. Almost 400 tenants are already participating in the service.
- Housing NSW is working in partnership with other agencies under the Housing and Human Services Accord to support older tenants across NSW.

Tenant and community participation

Key priorities:

- Encourage people in public housing to keep an eye out for older neighbours.
- Encourage older people to be leaders in their own community.

Progress to date:

- In 2006/07, Housing NSW allocated \$170,000 for a grants program Connecting Older Tenants. Nine projects have been funded to promote neighbourliness within social housing communities.
- Housing NSW continues to encourage older tenants to participate in their communities through targeted activities, such as Seniors' Week.

Partnership with Anglican Retirement Villages

A partnership between Housing NSW and Anglican Retirement Village has resulted in real benefits for tenants living in two senior communities complexes in the St Marys area. A library for use by residents has been established in the community room of one of the complexes. Regular morning classes are held, with talks provided on a range of age-related topics. Christmas and Easter celebrations were also popular. Work is planned to make the garden more accessible, with donations from Anglican Retirement Village.

Connecting Older Tenants - Casino and Wagga Wagga

Under the Connecting Older Tenants program, Housing NSW provided a grant to a community organisation to produce a Local Life History Stories DVD on the lives of older people living in public housing in Casino. Tenants met weekly and many friendships developed through the project. The Connecting Communities project, run by Wagga Wagga City Council, has also increased older tenants' access to social events, gatherings and activities, including bingo, tai chi and regular group dinners.



Next steps

Over the remaining two years of the plan, Housing NSW will continue to introduce new initiatives to support older tenants.

Assets

- Increase the number of homes for older people by 10 percent by 2011.
- Continue to improve existing properties through modifications and upgrades.

Senior communities and precincts

- Research appropriate housing options for older Aboriginal people who are living in social housing.
- Establish precincts for older people in major public housing redevelopments.

Supporting older tenants

- Implement the NSW Government's Interagency Protocol for Responding to the Abuse of Older People.
- Support isolated carers living in social housing, including carers of older tenants, under a Carers' Initiative funded in partnership with NSW Health.
- Continue to build partnerships under the NSW Housing and Human Services Accord.

Tenant and community participation

- Improve the participation of older people in their communities.

In the next two years, Housing NSW will formally evaluate initiatives for older people living in social housing.