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Community urged to shape the future of housing in the Northern Territory

NT Shelter welcomes the Northern Territory Government's announcement of public consultation on the Northern Territory Housing Strategy, saying the process presents a critical opportunity to set a plan for affordable and social housing across the Northern Territory.

Sufficient housing, from affordable and social housing to market housing, is central to every aspect of life. It is the social and economic infrastructure that underpins health, education, safety and community connection. It shapes whether businesses can recruit staff, whether essential workers can afford to live near their workplaces, and whether the Territory can grow a strong and resilient economy.

"The Northern Territory cannot achieve workforce stability, economic growth or stronger communities without addressing affordable and social housing supply," said Annie Taylor, CEO of NT Shelter. *"When essential workers cannot afford to live near the communities they serve, schools, hospitals and emergency services struggle to recruit and retain staff. When households spend more than 30 per cent of their income on housing, they cut back on food, healthcare and other essentials, weakening both families and the broader economy."*

NT Shelter is calling for affordable and social housing supply to be the non-negotiable foundation of the Strategy. The Northern Territory has the highest rates of housing need and homelessness in the nation. A sustained program that delivers net growth in affordable and social housing, backed by clear regional targets and transparent reporting must sit at the heart of the Strategy.

"The need is urgent. Darwin is now such an expensive place to rent that the affordability threshold is only crossed at a net wage of \$120,000 per year. This is not a crisis confined to the lowest incomes. When stock is too tight, rents rise, waitlists grow, homelessness increases, and behaviour in overcrowded housing deteriorates. Underinvestment in housing is not a saving. It is a deferral with compounding interest." Said Ms Taylor.

Housing crises are not resolved by overall supply alone. Australia builds a significant number of new homes each year, yet affordability continues to decline because investment in affordable and social housing has reduced over decades, even faster in the NT.

"Building more houses isn't enough if they are out of reach for large portions of the population," Ms Taylor said. *"It has to be the right type of housing, homes that Territorians can afford to live in."*

The housing peak body is also urging the Government to commit to density done well, ensuring that new housing growth in our urban centres creates thriving communities where people of different incomes and backgrounds live side-by-side and contribute to local life.

"Territorians are right to want to leave peacefully and see stability and fairness in their communities. The good news is, we have a community housing sector who want nothing more than to demonstrate how to get housing right. This Strategy presents a rare opportunity to reset the direction, let's use it to aim higher."



NT Shelter will be engaging with its members and stakeholders to inform its formal submission and encourages the community to make their voices heard through the Government's consultation channels.

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