



## **Submission**

# **Housing Diversity SEPP – Explanation of Intended Effect (EIE)**

Council on the Ageing (COTA NSW)  
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## **COTA NSW**

COTA NSW is the peak body representing people over 50 in NSW.

We're an independent, non-partisan, consumer-based non-government organisation. We work with politicians, policy makers, service and product providers as well as media representatives to make sure our constituents' views are heard and their needs met.

### **The focus of the COTA NSW submission**

COTA NSW welcomes the review and consolidation of the: Affordable Rental Housing, 2009 (ARHSEPP), Housing for Seniors and People with a Disability, 2004 (Seniors SEPP) and the Affordable Housing No 70 SEPP.

COTA NSW has long called for a review of these planning instruments and the inclusion of measures that encourage and allow for responsive and innovative solutions for older people in NSW. It is evident that through the long-term advocacy of peak organisations, community housing providers and others that NSW Planning has proposed changes to the Housing Diversity SEPP that have been advocated for, particularly in the areas of boarding houses, co-living and build-to-rent housing schemes.

As the EIE acknowledges, there will continue to be a demographic shift in NSW, with an increasingly older population. The development of innovative models of affordable housing is required to facilitate the ability for older people to age in place – in areas that are well located and close to services and transport.

Underpinning any discussion of housing is the importance of housing design. COTA NSW has long advocated for the introduction of increased minimum design standards of accessibility that will allow older people and the broader community to be able to live in a home that meets their needs as their circumstances change over a life course. COTA NSW supports universal design principles as espoused by Livable Housing Australia that takes a 'whole of life' approach - that is inclusive - regardless of age, ability or background. Taken in this context, universal design should not solely be considered in the realm of 'adaptable' or 'accessible' housing but as a design standard to ensure liveable communities for all.

There is currently a significant shortfall in social and affordable housing, this is why COTA NSW supports the affordable housing sectors call for the implementation of inclusionary zoning, with targets of at least 15% on all new developments on private land and 30% on government land applied across the whole developments.

This submission will respond to those amendments and additions relevant to older people within the proposed SEPP, namely: Build-to-rent housing, Co-living, and seniors housing provisions.

## Build-to-rent housing

COTA NSW welcomes the inclusion of development standards for build-to-rent housing within a new Housing Diversity SEPP. This type of house has long been a component of an affordable housing rental mix in countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom. The availability of medium to long lease terms is particularly important to older people to ensure certainty of tenure and the opportunity to develop connections to their local community.

In response to the development standards outlined within the EIE, COTA NSW raises the following points:

- The minimum requirement of 50 self-contained dwellings may inhibit the construction of these developments. As height restrictions would be determined by Councils, the ability to build a block with this number of dwellings in a particular zone or parcel of land will be limited. In the absence of an explanation as to the reasonings for this number, COTA NSW recommends that this number should be reduced to 30 self-contained dwellings. This is particularly relevant in regional areas.
- That any design guidance specifies a minimum gold level Livable Housing standard for all new builds. This will allow older people to age in place and provide accessible housing to families, people with chronic illness or people with disability.
- That the new SEPP provides links or refers to any programs or industry incentives that are developed by Government to encourage investment in build-to-rent housing such as discounts on land tax or reduction in developer contributions.
- That a definition of affordability is included within the SEPP to allow a standardised approach across local government for rent determination.
- Where Government subsidy for build-to-rent developers is made available on basis that build-to-rent properties will deliver a better tenant experience - this must be demonstrated. Mechanisms must be included with the guidelines that implement clear requirements and accountability measures in relation to security of tenure, affordability and tenant participation outcomes.

## Co-living

The introduction of the new terminology to replace new generation boarding house. Unfortunately, there exists a stigma within the general community about boarding houses and those that reside within them. The term co-living has more positive connotations and accurately describes the model of housing.

COTA NSW also welcomes the requirement of co-living housing to be provided as affordable housing and managed by Community Housing Providers (CHPs). COTA NSW would argue strongly that the affordability of these housing types should be maintained as affordable in perpetuity. Further investment in co-living dwellings will generate more housing that is genuinely affordable for very low, low- and moderate-income households.

In response to the development standards outlined within the EIE, COTA NSW raises the following points:

- That any design guidance specifies a minimum gold level Livable Housing standard for all new builds. This will allow older people to age in place and provide accessible housing to families, people with chronic illness or people with disability.
- That a definition of affordability is included within the SEPP to allow a standardised approach for rent determination.
- Clarification on whether management is required to reside on-site.
- Provide guidance on the zones where this type of dwelling will be permissible.
- Clarification on application of the affordability requirement on existing dwellings classified as boarding houses.

## **Amendments to seniors housing provisions**

COTA NSW supports amending the Seniors SEPP to ensure consistency across planning instruments. We also note the clause that will prevent access to transport services cannot be used for meeting accessibility requirements; this is welcomed.

In response to the development standards outlined within the EIE, COTA NSW raises the following points:

- COTA NSW strongly encourages the development of Government-owned land for the delivery of new social housing. It is proposed that subdivision of Government-owned land will be allowable without consent. COTA NSW would like to reiterate the importance of demonstrating that the necessary local infrastructure exists to support these developments in any plans. Older people are often reliant on public transport or the ability to walk short distances to shops and other services. Streamlining of planning processes should not exclude consideration of local factors that would support new residents.
- The extension of an exemption from lift access requirements to the LAHC is of a concern. The importance of the ability to age-in-place cannot be underestimated. All seniors housing should be built to minimum accessibility standards such as the gold level Livable Housing guidelines. This would preclude the removal of lift access to floors on levels 2 and above.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on this EIE. COTA NSW looks forward to working with NSW Planning to ensure that the needs and desires of older people continue to be planned for and addressed.