



PARLIAMENT OF NEW SOUTH WALES  
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

**FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-SEVENTH PARLIAMENT**

**Private Members' Statement**

4 February 2020

**SOCIAL HOUSING**

**Ms SONIA HORNERY ( Wallsend ) ( 17:56 ):**

It is interesting that the first two private members' statements today have been about very similar matters. The issue is very topical and on all of our minds. The Albury Project sounds very interesting, along with its impact on children, education and homelessness. I speak to a report by Compass Housing entitled, Estimating Current and Future Demand for Housing Assistance, which shows the extent of the demand for social housing and how it will grow in coming years as technological developments displace low-income workers. In other words, it is harder for working-class people to get a job these days. If a constituent matter is brought to the attention of my office it is highly likely that the issue will relate to public housing. It feels as though there is a hotline directly between my office and housing providers as we work together to try to resolve issues such as maintenance and transfers.

Wallsend has a significant number of public houses. The issue is of great importance to me—I have brought up social housing in the area many times over the past 12 years—as I was brought up in social housing. Not a day goes by without a vulnerable person in social or public housing reporting an issue to our office. I am sure it is the same for all members of this place. Sometimes the problems are resolved quickly, but sometimes they drag on for months or even years, with complaints getting lost in the system or some being sacrificed in the face of budget shortfalls. As I said earlier, I am sure all members of this place will agree that finding housing for our constituents—whilst it takes a lot of time—is a priority for us. Staff of the different housing providers are excellent. They work hard to address the concerns we bring to them. But there are simply not

enough resources to fix every maintenance issue and there is not enough social and public housing stock to meet the existing demand.

If the system cannot support the people who are already reliant on public housing, how can it hope to manage the growth in demand predicted by this report? It is something for us to look at and really consider. Across Australia, 144,800 applicants are on the waiting list for public housing. More than 48,000 households are on the waiting list in New South Wales—the highest number in Australia—which is equivalent to more than 30 per cent of the total social housing stock. The list is long, with 1,190 people on the list in Newcastle and 960 in Lake Macquarie. The waiting time seems endless. The average waiting time in the Hunter is between five and 10 years and is about 10 years in Wallsend also.

The report from Compass Housing reveals that this is only the tip of the iceberg. Research from income and asset census data found that 175,904 households in New South Wales are eligible for public housing. This means that 127,000 households are eligible for public housing but have not yet chosen to apply—thank heavens. In the *Newcastle Herald*, Martin Kennedy said:

If every household in NSW who met the eligibility criteria for social housing decided to apply, waiting lists across the country would increase by more than 261 per cent ... The number of households eligible for social housing but not currently living in it, is equivalent to approximately 21 per cent of all renting households in NSW ... and in regional NSW areas such as the Hunter it is 34 per cent.

Unfortunately, the Government's Future Directions for Social Housing in NSW policy has only proposed enough dwellings for less than half of the current waiting list over the next decade. I am approaching the Government to ask that we make public housing a priority. Let us reduce homelessness. Let us look at the Albury Project, which I have just been informed of and which sounds very interesting. I call on the Government to make sure that we all work together to reduce homelessness and the need for social housing in our State.