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23 February 2017

The Hon Malcolm Turnbull M.P.
Prime Minister of Australia
PO Box 6022
Parliament House
Canberra 2600

Dear Prime Minister,

Regarding: The Government's commitment to the National Affordable Housing Agreement and request for a meeting.

We write to ask that you provide unequivocal commitment to maintaining and renewing the National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA), the funding attached to it and that you agree to meet with us to discuss ways it may be improved to increase and enhance the affordable housing options and homelessness responses it contributes to.

The NAHA, its predecessor the Commonwealth States and Territories Housing Agreement and its allied partnership agreements have formed the basis of Australia's social and affordable housing responses since 1946 and our responses to homelessness since the mid 70s.

National Shelter and its state, territory and national members work to develop proposals and interact with governments, the community and private sectors to improve our affordable housing and homelessness responses.

National Shelter is concerned that the government is considering ending or adjusting these programs and resources without any consultation on any alternative or new plan proposed. We see recent reports as potentially extending the commonwealth's withdrawal of its attention from this critical national issue which has to date has:

- Ended the Housing Ministers Advisory Council
- Removed the National Housing Supply Council
- Removed all housing related research funding from the Department of Social Services

- Cut the National Rental Affordability Scheme
- Prematurely ended contracts with housing and homelessness peaks

We have noted encouraging indications around housing since you became Prime Minister including indications from Minister Porter regarding the seriousness of the issue, maintaining funding for the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness, Statements from Treasurer Morrison around the critical issue of housing supply and your intention to develop a housing affordability package, tasking Assistant Minister to the Treasurer Michael Sukkar M.P. with a role. We have also seen an unfortunate and inaccurate criticism of the NAHA and particularly state governments, as not producing new supply.

The NAHA was not able to produce significant growth or new supply since the agreements (NAHA and its predecessor the Commonwealth State/Territory Housing Agreement) have insisted on targeting to the highest need lowest income households, dating back to the early eighties. Growth has occurred, mainly in community housing, through previous stimulus and leverage from community housing providers. To remove NAHA would produce substantial reduction in social housing.

We remain ready to assist in providing views about how affordable housing policy, including improvements to the NAHA and allied programs may be made and how this may be developed alongside cities policy, infrastructure development, financing, new tenure forms and tax reform.

It is in no-one's interest to see argument between different levels of government about an agreement which has never been sufficiently resourced by either the commonwealth or states to meet the increasing demands on it, reduce public housing waiting lists, cope with the added weight forced by housing cost rises and the increasing numbers of people experiencing homelessness.

On behalf of the tenants, frustrated would be owners, services and advocates who deal with the fallout of these long standing major national issues we ask you unequivocally commit to enhancing the NAHA and improving options for housing affordability and meet with us to exchange views on the best ways of achieving this.

Sincerely yours,



Adrian Pisarski
Executive Officer

Cc to Treasurer The Hon. Scott Morrison M.P., Assistant Minister to the Treasurer The Hon Michael Sukkar M.P., Minister for Social Services The Hon Christian Porter M.P., Assistant Minister for Social Services and Multicultural Affairs The Hon, Senator Zed Seselja.