

CHAPTER 16

COMMONWEALTH-STATE HOUSING AGREEMENT

One of the curious facts of life is that the market system does not, in any industrial country, provide good inexpensive housing for the poor. It's one of the great defaults of capitalism.

(John Kenneth Galbraith, *Capitalism, Communism and Coexistence*)

INTRODUCTION

161 As noted in Chapter 15, many homeless young people, particularly those aged 16 and 17, are in this situation due to a lack of affordable accommodation and of access to public rental housing. Their need is not for support and counselling such as is provided by YSAP services, but for affordable housing. Many young people in crisis who initially require supported accommodation will also, after a period, require unsupported accommodation in which to make the transition to independent living. This chapter describes the policies and practices of State housing authorities in providing access to public housing for young people.

NATURE OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR

162 State housing authorities generally have a charter to provide housing to people unable to afford accommodation in the private market, either as owners or tenants. Traditionally the focus has been on low-income families and the aged. Nationally, approximately 6% of housing stock is owned by the public sector, although this proportion varies considerably across the States and Territories.

TABLE I: AUSTRALIAN HOUSING STOCK

<i>State/ Territory</i>	<i>Public Stock at 30/6/187^a</i>	<i>Total Stock^b at 30/6/18e</i>	<i>Public as % of Total</i>
NSW	108,084	1,810,726	6.0
Vic	53,902	1,346,760	4.0
Qld	29,791	833,503	3.6
SA	58,884	472,825	• 12.5
WA	31,661	456,515	6.9
Tas	13,061	148,799	8.8
NT	8,791(c)	39,100	22.5
Total	304,174	5,108,228	6.0

(a) Cwth Department of Community Services and Health, *Housing Assistance Act 1984 Annual Report 1986-87*, at 103.

(b) Population Census 1986.

(c) Includes public servant housing.

COMMONWEALTH-STATE HOUSING AGREEMENT

163 Federal funding for State and Territory housing programs is provided under the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement 1984 (CSHA) entered into pursuant to the *Housing Assistance Act 1984* (Cwth). The Australian Capital Territory joined the Agreement in August 1987. The States and the Northern Territory have undertaken to match Federal funds, at least as to most of the untied portion (a total of \$450 million in the first year of the agreement).² The majority of CSHA funds from the Commonwealth are allocated as untied grants for the provision of rental housing and home purchase assistance. Additional funding is allocated for specific purpose programs:

- the Mortgage and Rent Relief Scheme (MRRS) — allocated \$24.1 million in 1986-87;
- the Crisis Accommodation Program (CAP) — allocated \$14 million in 1986-87;
- the Local Government and Community Housing Program (LGCHP) — allocated \$11 million in 1986- 87; and
- rental assistance for pensioners and Aborigines.'

These schemes are administered by the States within the broad objectives specified in the CSHA.

164 The primary principle of the CSHA is:

...to ensure that every person in Australia has access to adequate and appropriate housing at a price within his or her capacity to pay by seeking to:

- alleviate housing-related poverty; and
- ensure that housing assistance is, as far as possible, delivered equitably to persons resident in different forms of housing tenure.⁴

165 In implementing this principle the following, among other considerations, apply:

the primary consideration in delivering housing assistance under this agreement will be the needs of people, rather than to attach assistance to particular dwellings or categories of dwellings;

housing assistance provided under this agreement will be available to all sections of the community irrespective of age, sex, marital status, race, religion, disability or life situation. However, priority in granting assistance shall be determined by the need for assistance...³

166 The intention to cater for the needs of young people was made even more explicit in the following provision:

the design, style and siting of public housing will, to the maximum extent practicable:

- reflect the need for accessibility and suitability for habitation by disabled persons, Aborigines, youth, the elderly, or other identified groups...⁶

However, most States and the Northern Territory have continued to deny young people (without dependants), and especially those under 18, access to public housing. It was submitted to the Inquiry that 47% of waiting lists across Australia are composed of single people, yet only 14% of public housing stock is for singles.⁷

167 In April 1987, following intense lobbying by the youth services sector, the Housing Ministers' Conference agreed to amend the Housing Assistance Act so that housing authorities could no longer discriminate on the basis of age, that is to say, against young people. Priority in public housing, however, is still determined on the basis of 'need'. This means in practice that many States exclude single people under the age of 18 years because it is assumed they are able to live with their families or that they can afford share-housing or single units in the private sector. In this context it should be noted that the *Housing Assistance Amendment Act 1987* (Cwth) empowers the Minister to revoke grant funding in whole or in part in respect of any State acting in contravention of the CSHA.⁸ On the other hand, it should be noted that no Commonwealth funding is provided on the specific condition that it be allocated to the provision of housing for young people.

168 Although families are the primary focus of public housing authorities throughout Australia, the Inquiry was told that adolescents and young people with dependent children are often excluded from public housing and are often, as a result, without adequate housing — for both themselves and their children. Those State housing authorities which extend some access to public housing to adolescent parents, nevertheless often impose obstacles to that access. In Perth the Inquiry was told that Homeswest policy on the issue is 'subjective and ambiguous'.⁹ In Queensland people aged under 17 are not eligible to apply for public housing even if they have dependent children. At 17, young singles with dependants may apply but they cannot be offered accommodation until they reach 18.⁸ This policy, it was submitted:

...means that the Queensland Housing Commission fails to assist a group of people - parents and children - who are extremely vulnerable in the housing market. Most adolescent parents are women and many are single parents. Factors which must be considered are that women are more likely than men to be in poverty, that single parents are one of the most impoverished groups in Australia and that there are high rates of unemployment for young people compared to older people and women compared to men. So in denying adolescent parents access to public housing in Queensland, the Queensland Housing Commission is adding to their already considerable burden in attempting to raise their children with security and dignity."

CSHA PROGRAMS

Mortgage and Rent Relief Scheme

16.9 The Mortgage and Rent Relief Scheme (MRRS) aims 'to provide short-term assistance towards rent and mortgage payments for those experiencing extreme financial difficulty in meeting their rent or mortgage commitments'. Short-term accommodation without support services is also provided 'to those who are homeless due to factors such as eviction, family break-up and inability to afford available accommodation'.¹² Commonwealth and State funds under the Scheme totalled \$52 million in 1986-87.³ Funds were allocated for the following purposes in the following proportions:

<i>Stater Territory</i>	<i>Mortgage Relief</i>	<i>Rent Relief</i>	<i>Capital Projects</i>	<i>Community Housing"</i>	<i>Admin.</i>	<i>Other"</i>
NSW	13.0%	25.0%	-	49.0%	12.0%	
Vic	8.7%	61.7%	17.5%		12.2%	
Qld	26.1%	28.1%	32.9%	-	12.9%	
SA	10.2%	88.9%	-	-	-	1.0%
WA	6.4%	80.5%	-		13.0%	
Tan	0.06%	66.5%	23.1%		10.3%	
NT	0.2%	58.7%	26.9%		14.3%	

(a) Refers to the NSW Head Leasing Transfer Scheme.
 (b) Services to youth in South Australia.

Also funded under MRRS are housing advice and referral services in New South Wales, Victoria, Western Australia and the Northern Territory.'

Crisis Accommodation Program

16.10 The Crisis Accommodation Program (CAP) provides capital funding for short-term emergency accommodation and, therefore, is closely linked to the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP). In 1986-87, 56 youth shelters were purchased or constructed (almost 30% of all CAP projects in the period)."

16.11 The joint Federal-State SAAP co-ordinating committees in each State also make recommendations to their respective State Housing Ministers on CAP funding and priorities.

CAP priorities are largely determined by funds available under SAAP and by priorities set within SAAP for allocation of services.¹⁶

Local Government and Community Housing Program

16.12 The Local Government and Community Housing Program (LGCHP) has the following objectives:

- to encourage local government bodies and community groups to provide rental housing to facilitate greater tenant management of such dwellings;
- to respond to specific housing needs previously overlooked;
- to attract local government and non-government funds and other resources into the Program; and
- to involve local government and community groups in the identification of housing needs and the formulation of local housing policies.⁷

To advise Housing Ministers on broad priorities for funding and to consider funding applications from local government authorities and community groups, advisory committees have been established in each State and the Northern Territory. These committees comprise representatives from Federal and State housing authorities, the local government sector and non-government housing groups.' It is not possible to state accurately how much youth housing is provided with LGCHP funds.

16.13 One LGCHP project for young people visited by the Inquiry was Ansti House, near Darwin. This project is intended for homeless alcoholic young people and offers rehabilitation and job skills training. On a property outside Darwin, using tractors and other equipment loaned by the Northern Territory Government and LGCHP funds, work has commenced on the building of a number of A-frame houses. The young people learn to build these houses and, upon completion, are entitled to live in them.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S ACCESS TO PUBLIC HOUSING

16.14 The States and Territories have implemented a variety of policies on access to public rental accommodation by young people and other singles as part of their mainstream housing programs. Either to supplement this access or to substitute for it, some States have established programs specifically targeted at young people.

New South Wales

16.15 Mainstream Programs: Single people 16 and over became eligible for direct tenure to public housing in 1983 in New South Wales. Under an affirmative action policy, a separate waiting list was established for singles and a significant number of young people were housed.

Singles Housing, and the affirmative action which went with it in the initial stage of implementation, was a successful programme in that it housed a significant number of young people who were either homeless, or living in unstable or transitory housing.

However, the implementation of Singles Housing did have a number of shortcomings...

The most obvious and glaring of these shortcomings was the absence of resourcing, back-up and support to assist the young people to establish and maintain their housing...'

However, the Department of Housing revoked the separate list in 1986 and young people applying have since been placed on the normal waiting list with a waiting time of four to eight years in the Sydney metropolitan area.'

16.16 There is an alternative route to direct tenure for young singles (aged at least 15 years and nine months) in the form of the Head Leasing Transfer Scheme, a pilot scheme which leases mainstream housing stock to community organisations which are funded by SAAP. These organisations establish and support a shared household of young single people in need of initial social and/or emotional support. The organisation charges standard Housing Department rents (that is, 20% of the tenant's income) but retains 20% of that amount to cover its own administrative costs, including maintenance. When the organisation and the young people consider themselves ready (generally after about three months), the property is transferred back to the Housing Department and the residents become direct leasing tenants of the Department. The organisation may apply for another house. To the end of 1987 some 18 organisations had been allocated a total of 37 bedrooms.' The Inquiry considers this an effective way of providing long-term priority housing with initial support to the young residents. We discuss this scheme further in Chapter 18, Accommodation Services.

16.17 The Department of Housing also operates boarding house accommodation which is managed by live-in managers on a 'fee for tenant' basis.²² However, this program is not targeted specifically for young people and, in fact, is not greatly utilised by them.

16.18 Youth Targeted Programs: The Supported Housing Program (Youth) currently houses 420 young people in New South Wales. Government-owned properties are acquired by the Department of Housing and leased to community organisations which sub-let to young people. The Community Tenancy Scheme also targets young people among others. Housing stock is leased to community housing organisations which sub-let to low-income tenants. The organisations are also funded to subsidise the rent of tenants, perform repairs and maintenance and administer the program locally. Single people are targeted under this Scheme and about 15% of those accommodated are persons under 18."

16.19 In the Illawarra region, the Illawarra Community Housing Trust operates a community tenancy scheme and has recently developed an affirmative action youth housing policy under which 11 households have been set aside for allocation to young people. Five of those households currently accommodate people under 18. An idea of the level of need in this region alone can be gleaned from the fact that for one apartment let recently, there were no fewer than 90 applicants under the age of 18.²¹ The guidelines under the scheme currently require letting to permanent tenants. The Illawarra organisation submitted that these guidelines should be modified, young people should be able to move on into general housing stock and the scheme housing could then be used for other 15 to 18-year-olds.'

16.20 Rent Relief: In July 1987, the Department of Housing took over the former Rental Assistance Scheme from the (then) Department of Youth and Community Services. The (now) Bond and Relocation Scheme is available only to people who are eligible for public housing. Assistance with establishment costs (bond, advance rent up to two weeks, removal costs and/or utility connection charges) in the private rental market is provided. This scheme was allocated \$6.8 million from MRRS funds in 1987-88.

Victoria

16.21 Mainstream Programs: Young (as opposed to aged) single people are not eligible for independent public rental housing in Victoria. The Victorian Government advised the Inquiry that a major review of this policy had now been undertaken and that the Ministry of Housing and Construction:

...is currently finalising its singles housing policy. It acknowledges the claims of single and young people to a range of housing assistance but also indicates that these claims have to be dealt with in a context of budgetary constraint and the need not to disadvantage traditional groups of public housing tenants.'

The Inquiry heard evidence that the policy has been subject to extensive reconsideration by the Victorian Government over a considerable period²⁷ and there is still no indication as to when it will be finalised. In its submission to the Inquiry, the Victorian Government called on the Commonwealth Government, through the CSHA, to 'direct additional funds to effect an increase in public housing stock to allow additional allocations to young people'²⁸

16.22 In 1981 Victoria established a Rooming House Program which sought to arrest the decline of this form of accommodation in high need areas through the purchase and rehabilitation of stock. There are 51 rooming houses in the program ranging in size from six to 98 bedrooms (total 970 beds). Community management is the preferred management model and 20 groups are operating under this program. However, not many young people have been catered for in this form of accommodation to date." This is probably largely because up-front service charges are prohibitive for those young people likely to be seeking rooming house accommodation, namely the unemployed.

16.23 Youth Targeted Programs: Victoria established a Youth Housing Program in 1981 'in response to the need by an increasing number of homeless young people for secure, low-cost, medium to long term accommodation together with access to support networks which would enable them to develop the skills needed to move into an independent housing situation'."

The program provides medium to long term housing on a shared basis to young people who are:

- aged 16-21 years (with flexibility up to 25 years in exceptional cases where management groups wish to introduce the stabilising influence of an older person as a head tenant);
- homeless ie. presently without adequate accommodation or in a position which may cause them to be homeless in the future; and
- capable of independent living with limited non-residential support. The

program currently operates some 130 properties [330 beds] throughout Victoria."

16.24 Another 34 one and two bedroom properties (a total of 49 bedrooms) operate under the Youth Initiative Scheme (YIS), established in 1986. Six more projects, totalling 32 bedrooms, will commence operation before the end of 1988. YIS permits direct tenure of mainly self-contained single bedroom or bedsitter units for people under 25 and is intended to operate with some outreach support to enable the young tenants to establish themselves."

16.25 Rent Relief: Since the Inquiry began, rent assessment procedures have been amended in Victoria for both tenants under 18 years living independently and young people living as 'other residents' in public housing. Rebated rents are now assessed on a fiat rate calculated on 20% of income, either of gross wages or of benefits or allowances received. Thus, a young person in receipt of the Job Search Allowance at the non-independent rate of \$25 per week will be charged \$5 per week rent. Young people under 18 who are living as 'other residents' will not be charged rent at all." Victoria also operates a Bond and Relocation Scheme to assist people, including young people 16 years and over, to gain access to private rental accommodation by contributing to establishment costs (maximum \$500 for singles)." The total allocation for rent relief in 1986-87 was \$10.3 million from MRRS funds. The Victorian Government was not able to inform the Inquiry concerning the number of young people assisted by these schemes.

Queensland

16.26 Mainstream Programs: Young people (with or without dependants) and non-pensioner singles are not housed at all in the Queensland public housing sector." The policy has been attributed to the legal difficulties of under-18-year-olds signing a lease."

According to the Queensland Housing Commission, a young person must be at least 17 years old, have a dependent child and be receiving the Supporting Parent's Benefit in order to go onto the waiting list for rental accommodation. However, no offer of housing is actually made until the person turns 18 years of age."

The Queensland Government submitted that:

Increased Commonwealth housing funds are essential if the problem of homeless single youth's access to public rental accommodation is to be solved."

16.27 -Both the Crisis Accommodation Program (CAP) and the Local Government and Community Housing Program (LGCHP) can accommodate young singles in Queensland but neither targets under-18-year-olds. Young people may also benefit by the provision of emergency accommodation under the Mortgage and Rent Relief Program. Local authorities and community agencies may apply for the lease of a Housing Commission house for use as a crisis, emergency or halfway house. There are approximately 200 houses under this scheme at present." Some young people do benefit from these schemes but the bulk of accommodation provided is in the form of halfway houses attached to women's refuges or emergency housing for families in need.

16.28 Rent Relief: As only those on the public housing waiting list may qualify for rent relief in Queensland, there is no assistance for those under 18 years. Young people over the age of 18 must have dependants and have come from a caravan park or have spent 28 days in crisis accommodation, as well as being on the waiting list, in order to qualify for a bond guarantee of up to \$500.

South Australia

16.29 Mainstream Programs: All young people with an independent income, including wages, pensions and benefits (effectively those 15 years and over) are eligible to apply for normal Housing Trust accommodation. However:

A problem in the delivery of housing services to young people is the lack of a specific S.A. Housing Trust Youth Housing policy. It is suggested that one be developed as a matter of priority.'

16.30 Youth Targeted Programs: Young singles (16 to 25 years) are also targeted by the Direct Lease Scheme which provides houses on direct lease to 'young people who have a history of forced transience and who have little option of getting into normal private rental accommodation'.⁴¹

Acceptance into the Scheme is assessed by the youth tenancy officers and access to the Scheme does depend fairly heavily on the youth tenancy officer. Referrals are accepted from shelters, Community Welfare or any other organisation who is prepared to refer as an advocate for young people."

At the end of 1987 there were over 230 such leases and, by September 1988, there were 416. The Scheme was extended to country areas in June 1987.⁴³ Houses are leased under this Scheme for between 12 and 18 months, at the end of which period the lease is reviewed. The tenant will be assisted into private accommodation if possible or the lease will be renewed. Approximately one-half of the leases are held by young single women with children; the remainder are held by groups of two or three young singles. It is estimated, therefore, that about 700 children and young people benefit under this scheme.

Direct lease tenancies do provide a good means of minimal supported accommodation, but some individual tenancies require a greater amount of support than is provided by the youth tenancy officer alone."

There are also currently 103 youth shelters (both short and medium-term) operated by community-based organisations under the South Australian Community Tenancy Scheme.

16.31 Rent Relief: Young people have access to financial assistance in the form of bond payment through the Emergency Housing Office of the Housing Trust.

The Emergency Housing Office is a State Government initiative funded under a combination of State and Federal moneys. I think you will find it is unique structurally...

It has a function to provide services to assist households in housing crisis and assist them into immediate short and medium term housing options. It is separate from other tenure. ...in the sense that most EHO clients would be assisted from the point of the crisis today until they were able to access other tenure options...

...in 1986-87 the Emergency Housing Office was contacted by 33,000 households seeking some form of assistance: 60% of those were under the age of 25 and 60% also were...female-headed households..."

16.32 The Office runs 'Whereabouts' which is a free listing of available accommodation; a Pool Housing Program with 100-120 houses to be used for short-term accommodation; and an information, counselling and financial assistance service (including bond, rent in advance and removal assistance) to enable access to be made to the private market. Four specialist youth housing officers are employed who deal mainly with those under 18.⁴⁶ In one regional centre (Port Augusta) in the 12 months to April 1986, 15% of successful applicants were under 18 years of age."

Western Australia

16.33 Mainstream Programs: It is only recently that singles over 18 have become eligible for public rental accommodation through some 'Homeswese programs. Adult singles do not carry a high priority and only 294 were accommodated between November 1986 and October 1987." Generally under-18-year-olds are not housed although individuals have been in some cases where exceptional circumstances have been demonstrated." Like Victoria, Western Australia took a decision to review its youth housing policy after the Commission announced this Inquiry.

The review is focussing on major housing issues for young single people on low incomes and on the identification of appropriate solutions to the housing needs of this group. Within the context of the review, the issue of the provision of public housing services to under 18 year olds will be carefully and thoroughly considered.'

The results of the review have not yet been released.

16.34 Rent Relief: There is a Bond Assistance and Rental Support Program to assist single people with costs associated with renting in the private sector. However, under-18-year-olds do not have access to this assistance. "

Tasmania

16.35 Mainstream Programs: As in South Australia, eligibility for normal public residential accommodation is not restricted according to age in Tasmania. However, the Housing Department tends to lease only to under-18-year-olds with dependants and 'is not prepared to pursue...a policy of positive discrimination in favour of housing young people.'" Most young public tenants are accommodated under the Master Tenancy Scheme whereby a dwelling is leased to a community group or other organisation." Of the approximately 60 dwellings under this scheme, 18 (30%) are allocated for young people. In its submission to the Inquiry, the Tasmanian Government has acknowledged that there is a need for more public accommodation for young people."

16.36 Rent Relief: Any private renter, regardless of the amount of rent paid, who is eligible to receive housing assistance is also eligible to receive rent relief. The only exceptions are residents of women's shelters. Rent relief, once approved, is paid weekly and is calculated as the difference between the weekly rental paid and the rent payable according to the rebate scale, subject to a maximum amount set at \$25 per week. However, there is a waiting list for rent relief which is established and maintained on a priority system. This has the effect of excluding most under-18-year-olds from the relief because few are in private tenancies long enough (at least as under 18s) to reach the head of the list.

Northern Territory

16.37 Mainstream Programs: Under-18-year-olds are not eligible for public housing in the Northern Territory unless there are special circumstances.

Those under 18 are scrutinised very carefully. There are some exceptions made to give them access to public housing but preferably with guarantors. The concerns are legal, managerial and financial in the broadest sense..."

Nevertheless, the Northern Territory Government advised the Inquiry that it had also initiated a review of existing policy:

The general availability of public housing stock is much greater in the Northern Territory than in the States, with a greater proportion of the housing market being owned by the public sector, and with much lower wait[ing] times for public housing. There is therefore the possibility for addressing some of the problems of homeless youth through the public sector.

The Northern Territory Government is looking at ways of mixing community service and housing programs in a more flexible way to provide for needs such as those of homeless youth in the future.'

16.38 This review is to be welcomed in light of the alleged inadequacy of present policies:

The Housing Department claims they have a policy but it is extremely unworkable and the access to housing by people in severe circumstances is really quite difficult. You have to prove that there is no alternative accommodation, which means going around to real estate agents and things and getting declarations from them that there is no accommodation for you that they can find you."

16.39 Theoretically, young people may be housed under LGCHP and CAP which also target other special needs groups. However, total funding for each of these programs in 1987-88 was only \$200,000. As in other States, CAP operates only in conjunction with SAAP, providing capital funding as needed." The Northern Territory Government indicated it is also investigating the introduction of a Community

Tenancy Scheme on the New South Wales model and funded by MRRS, which would target low income single people and family groups, and possibly also young people."

16.40 Rent Relief: The Mortgage and Rent Relief Scheme funded under the CSHA was allocated \$474,000 in 1987-88.⁶⁰ Assistance may be provided to people under 18, but only where special circumstances exist.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

16.41 Lack of access to public housing for young people under 18 was a major cause of concern to many witnesses who gave evidence to the Inquiry. Access is virtually impossible in Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory. Even in States which allow access in theory, it is limited in practice. New South Wales is a case in point. The Inquiry received evidence that:

Currently, while young people can put their names down on the waiting list, under-18s, except through priority housing or emergency housing, are not able to secure public housing. There is no youth housing policy, no youth housing strategy in New South Wales. There are 60,000 people on the public housing waiting list.'

16.42 This evidence was borne out in a number of cases, including that of one young woman aged 15 who had been homeless for two years as a result of abuse and who was refused access to public housing in New South Wales. She told the Inquiry:

I have lived in a refuge 18 times in the last two years. I am presently living in a boarding-house where residents are much older than me and are mainly men with drinking problems. The Housing Department will not house me until I am 18. I had a letter from them saying I am in a better situation and financial situation than most applying for emergency housing. How can that be when I am only getting \$73 a week...?"

Another homeless young person, also 15, told the Inquiry:

The Department of Housing would not house me because I was too young and even if they would house me their waiting lists are three or four years long. What am I supposed to do in the meantime?"

It was strongly recommended to the Inquiry that the New South Wales Housing Department should introduce a Youth Housing Program 'to produce a range of housing options and initiatives which will meet the special and particular needs of young people for accommodation'.

16.43 There was also criticism of the youth housing programs in Victoria. The Victorian Youth Accommodation Coalition submitted that:

It cannot be viewed as an end solution to youth homelessness, but rather only as a transitional program that is lacking viable, independent options at the end of it. For this to be a workable program, residents in supported houses should be able to transfer into mainstream public housing stock once it is deemed appropriate by themselves and supporting agencies."

16.44 The utility of bond assistance for young people in New South Wales in general, and in Sydney in particular, was queried:

The assumption behind granting bond money is that the applicant will be able to afford the regular weekly rental payments (as well as the more than regular rental increases!). Given the high Sydney rents, it is very doubtful that a young person who is unemployed/on a low wage and with little or no family support will be able to afford to pay the rent regularly. It is equally doubtful that the young unemployed person seeking accommodation will find a real estate [agent] or landlord prepared to rent them anything. This is particularly the case in Sydney, where there is an extreme shortage of rental accommodation."

All available evidence, and the very substantial increases in Sydney rents in the last 12 months, support these reservations about the adequacy of existing programs.

16.45 The design and location of existing public housing stocks were often cited as major drawbacks to youth access. For example, in Tasmania it was acknowledged that:

Another difficulty for public housing authorities is that most of those [singles] who do apply are requesting single unit housing and most of the stock of the Housing Department is three-bedroomed homes and it is inappropriate for housing the young single people...⁶¹

The same is true throughout Australia:

...the stock of housing available to the state housing authorities is often ill-suited to the needs of youth. In the immediate post-war period, public housing was designed to house low income, working class families and was located near major industrial centres. More recently public housing is becoming part of the income security system, that is, de facto welfare housing predominantly for lone female parents. Dwellings designed for these two purposes — that is to say, the vast majority of the public housing stock, are often unsatisfactory to young people. ...the dwellings are often located in areas inaccessible to public transport and services and for young people where a car is often not available, that can be a major problem.'

16.46 Another barrier to young people's access to public housing is community and bureaucratic ignorance of the problem. There is a general failure, the Inquiry was repeatedly told, to recognise the extent of youth needs:

...young people are seen as having fewer needs and a greater capacity to survive on their own or to find their own support systems. ..They may also have an assumption that young people should really be staying at home with their families as implied by the present education and income support policies of the Federal Government. Another implication appears to be that there is an assumption that all young people are a greater risk in housing, both public and private, because of potential damage to property and their irresponsibility.^o

16.47 There was almost unanimous support for the development of Youth Housing Policies in each State. It was felt that such policies would permit the development of programs suitable to the needs of young people. For example, the Tasmanian Government recommended:

That a comprehensive, co-ordinated Commonwealth/State youth housing policy be developed with clear provision for a range of housing stock such as boarding and lodging houses, flats, share-houses, hostels and housing co-operatives both in the public and private sector."

16.48 It was recognised by the recent YSAP Evaluation that all State and Territory housing authorities should 'give more priority to low cost accommodation options for young people'. It was also recommended that 'this housing, as for any other group, should ideally encompass a range of options e.g. private boarding, boarding or rooming houses catering to varying levels of independence, singles apartments or flatettes with a combination of communal and private space, self-contained units, and shared group housing'."

16.49 RECOMMENDATION 16.1

- **The Commonwealth should reaffirm its key role in public housing provision particularly with respect to special needs groups, including homeless young people. The Commonwealth should provide adequate funds to meet the housing needs of homeless young people.**

16.50 Many of the children and young people using emergency shelters require, immediately or eventually, long-term accommodation. In the past, State housing authorities have determined their priorities on the basis of stated or unconscious assumptions about 'deserving' and 'undeserving' cases and unrealistic views about the alternatives available to young people.'" Consequently, public housing is generally not accessible to homeless youth. The private rental market is also not a viable long-term accommodation option because most young people cannot afford it, and those who can are often refused access by landlords and agents. Although it must be acknowledged that there is a big gap between the supply and demand for public housing, there is an undeniably strong case for direct tenure access to public housing for young people on the basis of need and equity.

16.51 The youth housing issues which should be addressed by the Commonwealth and the States are inadequate supply, inadequate access and the unsuitability of existing public housing stock for young people.

RECOMMENDATION 16.2

- **The Inquiry therefore recommends that, in accordance with the principles of the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement (CSHA), the Federal Government direct the appropriate Minister(s) to consult with State housing Ministers to ensure that they:**
- **provide more equitable direct tenure access to public housing for young people;**
- **establish minimum stock-building and acquisition targets to overcome the current shortage of appropriate housing stock for young people; and**
- **appoint youth tenancy officers to advise and assist young tenants.**

RECOMMENDATION 16.3

- **We further recommend that additional funds be provided through the CSHA to enable the States and Territories to acquire and build the necessary housing stock for young people.**

RECOMMENDATION 16.4

- **The Inquiry further recommends that State and Territory governments, which in the past 12 months have received substantially increased revenues from Stamp Duty on conveyancing transactions, make immediate 'one-off' allocations of funds for the purchase or construction of public housing.**

16.52 The Crisis Accommodation Program (CAP) provides capital funding for short-term emergency accommodation. The priorities of CAP are largely determined by the availability of funds under the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) and by the priorities set within SAAP for the allocation of services. The expansion of the Youth Supported Accommodation Program (or, as we recommend, the establishment of a Youth Accommodation and Support Services Program) to include the provision of medium and long-term supported accommodation will require a corresponding change of emphasis in capital funding through CAP.

RECOMMENDATION 16.5

- **The Inquiry recommends that the Crisis Accommodation Program guidelines be extended to allow for the immediate provision of medium and long-term supported accommodation for young people and that funding levels be significantly increased to meet these new objectives.**

16.53 An approach which was strongly supported and cogently argued by many witnesses to the Inquiry was the leasing of public housing stock to community organisations to provide supported accommodation for young people. As young people prepare to move away from supported accommodation, breakdown is best averted by gradually removing the support system but leaving the young person in the same accommodation. In other words, support should be provided to young people in their long-term housing.

RECOMMENDATION 16.6

- **The Inquiry recommends models similar to the Victorian Youth Housing Program and Youth Initiative Scheme and the New South Wales Head Leasing Transfer Scheme which provide support to young people in secure, affordable public housing with the aim of assisting them to become independent. We recommend that the Federal Government direct the appropriate Federal Minister(s) to consult with State housing authorities to implement such schemes, particularly where local community-based organisations can be involved.**

16.54 The Local Government and Community Housing Program (LGCHP) is an effective mechanism which can be used to encourage both local government and community groups to respond to youth housing needs. This program could have wide application in meeting youth housing needs, since it not only attracts additional funds from local government and non-government sources, but also attracts

community resources (which are often provided voluntarily) to provide the support mechanisms often necessary in the initial housing of young people.

RECOMMENDATION 16.7

- **The Inquiry recommends that additional funds be allocated to the Local Government and Community Housing Program, specifically for youth housing, as an affirmative action program over a 5-year period.**

Notes

1. C. Crowe, ACT Youth Accommodation Group, *Transcript* at 519; A. Williamson, Shortcuts Information Service for Young People (ACT), *Transcript* at 550.
2. Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement 1984, cl 15.
3. Cwth Department of Community Services and Health, *Housing Assistance Act 1984 Annual Report 1986-87*, at 74.
4. *Housing Assistance Act 1984* (Cwth) Schedule 1, Recital (D).
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*
7. C. Crowe, ACT Youth Accommodation Group, *Transcript* at 521.
8. Section 4.
9. M. Horseman, King Edward Memorial Hospital Adolescent Clinic (WA), *Transcript* at 677.
10. C. Tilbury, Adolescent Parents Support Group (Qld), *Transcript* at 304.
11. *Id.*, at 304-305.
12. Cwth Department of Community Services and Health, *Housing Assistance Act 1984 Annual Report 1986-87*, at 75.
13. *Id.*, at 74.
14. *Id.*, at 76.
15. *Id.*, at 77, 162.
16. *Id.*, at 77.
17. *Ibid.*
18. *Ibid.*
19. S.50, Come-In Youth Resource Centre (NSW), *No Vacancies*, at 29.
20. *Id.*, at 27.
21. J. Schwager, Youth Supported Accommodation Program (*Working Paper, SAAP Review*, 1988) at 39.
22. *Id.*, at 39.
23. *Id.*, at 40.
24. J. Matters, Illawarra Community Housing Trust (NSW), *Transcript* at 1815.
25. *Ibid.*
26. S.120D, Victorian Government, at 16.
27. D. Otto, Youth Accommodation Coalition (Vic), *Transcript* at 905.
28. S.120D, Victorian Government, at 17.
29. *Id.*, Appendix 1.
30. *Ibid.*
31. *Ibid.*
32. *Ibid.*
33. *Id.*, at 12.
34. *Id.*, Appendix 1.
35. S.120A, Queensland Government, at 9.
36. C. Tilbury, Adolescent Parents Support Group Program (Qld), *Transcript* at 304.
37. *Ibid.*
38. S.120A, Queensland Government, at 9.
39. *Ibid.*
40. S.106, Youth Affairs Council (SA), at 25.
41. J. Schwager, *op cit.* at 39.
42. M. McGregor, SA Department for Community Welfare Port Augusta, *Transcript* at 1402.
43. *Ibid.*

44. *Ibid.*
45. P. Fagan-Schmidt, Emergency Housing Office, SA Housing Trust, *Transcript* at 1268.
46. *Id.* at 1269.
47. M. McGregor, SA Department for Community Welfare Port Augusta, *Transcript* at 1410.
48. C. Keogh, Council of Social Service (WA), *Transcript* at 658.
49. S.120B, Western Australian Government, at 21.
50. *Id.* at 22.
51. *Ibid.*
52. T. Howe, Youthcare, Anglicare (Tas), *Transcript* at 1497.
53. S.120F, Tasmanian Government, at 12.
54. *Ibid.*
55. E. Vos, NT Department of Housing, *Transcript* at 1623.
56. S.120E, Northern Territory Government, at 8.
57. Anon., *Transcript* at 1722.
58. S.120E, Northern Territory Government, at 6.
59. *Id.* at 7.
60. *Id.* at 6.
61. D. Annis-Brown, Youth Accommodation Association (NSW) *Transcript* at 32. See also, *Transcript* at 110.
62. E. Teixeira, *Transcript* at 94.
63. N. Burrows, *Transcript* at 1806.
64. S.50, Come-In Youth Resource Centre (NSW), *No Vacancies*, at 30.
65. D. Otto, *Transcript* at 905.
66. S.50, Come-In Youth Resource Centre (NSW), *No Vacancies*, at 28.
67. T. Howe, Youthcare, Anglicare (Tas), *Transcript* at 1497.
68. R. Johnston, National Shelter, *Transcript* at 576.
69. T. Howe, Youthcare, Anglicare (Tag), *Transcript* at 1497.
70. S.120F, Tasmanian Government, at 12.
71. J. Schwager, *op cit.* at 40.
72. See also, National Youth Coalition for Housing, *Singles Access to Assistance Under the 1984 CSHA* (Cwth Department of Housing and Construction, nd) at 12.