



NSW ELECTION CAMPAIGN MESSAGING GUIDE

This messaging guide has been developed for the CHIA NSW campaign, Confront the Crisis, ahead of the March 2023 state election and has been informed by research conducted with NSW voters who identified themselves as experiencing some degree of financial stress.

This messaging guide can be used by CHIA NSW and its members to communicate with target audiences, earned media and State MPs and candidates in order to increase the salience of housing as an issue ahead of the election.



WHAT WE KNOW FROM THE RESEARCH

- The rising **cost-of-living is the top election issue for the majority of people suffering financial stress. Housing is seen as a key cost-of-living** indicator and is raised as a top-of-mind priority unprompted. This means our campaign is already positioned as a central State Election issue, rather than having to establish its importance.
- Whereas ‘housing affordability’ has been seen as an ‘affordable home ownership’ issue previously, the focus is now clearly on rental costs. Many people agree **there is a housing crisis unfolding in NSW** and feel that this issue is **not talked about widely enough** in state politics. They say the housing crisis encompasses both the rental and the property market, but since many people who are struggling to make ends meet have given up on the dream of homeownership **the focus of the affordability discussion is now framed around renting.**
- Many recognise that housing **supply needs to be increased in order to mitigate the crisis** but only some of these voters immediately think of social and community housing as a solution in this context. They discuss other potential measures like rent freezes, increasing Centrelink and other government support payments, abolishing stamp duty etc. **Social housing is part of the conversation but does not currently top the list in terms of available solutions.**
- People in the focus group tend to think that people from lower socio-economic backgrounds are the main demographic who are facing housing vulnerability. Many note, however, that if we continue on the current trajectory with the cost-of-living skyrocketing and wages stagnating – **soon anyone on a low- to middle-income could face housing vulnerability.**
- This suggests that there is a **real opportunity to shift this issue from something that concerns ‘others’ to an issue that is relevant to everyday voters.**



- There are currently relatively **low levels of knowledge and understanding of the concept of social and community housing**, i.e., voters generally don't know for certain who provides and manages these housing options, who is eligible for social housing, who typically lives there, etc. The exception are five participants who either lived in social housing or are currently on the waitlist.
- The audience is generally supportive of the concept of social and community housing – but most don't really think this is for people like them. When people learn that community housing providers are 'not-for-profit organisations that exist to support people into a home,' they feel that these providers are genuinely driven by the goal to provide secure, safe homes rather than by profit.
- Comments in the focus group illustrate that there is still some **stigma attached to people living in social housing**:
 - Many assume that they are **built in bad, poor and/or unsafe neighbourhoods** – meaning that voters don't really want to live in those developments or have them in their backyard.
 - Some think people who live in these developments are criminals, drug addicts, alcoholics, people who don't want to work etc.
 - **Some think of social and community housing as 'short-term shelters'** rather than places that provide a good quality of living, where people make a home, raise families and grow old.
- **A successful campaign needs to spell out as clearly as possible that more investment in community housing will take the pressure off the rental market and deliver significant benefits to target voters like them.**



GENERAL PRINCIPLES



We frame the issue as a “housing crisis”

By framing the issue as a housing crisis, people understand that this issue affects a broad range of families and individuals in NSW. They see it not as a problem that only impacts the most vulnerable, but as one that affects young families, older people and anyone renting.



We use compelling facts to prove the urgency of the crisis

The facts are shocking and prove the urgency of confronting the housing crisis. These include the waiting list size, waiting times, number of people seeking emergency accommodation, rental price rises and rental availability. Each statistic reinforces the crisis theme.



We connect the dots between the housing crisis and community housing as the solution

When people understand that investment in more social housing takes the pressure of the private rental market, it helps them to understand how it can be of benefit to them and their situation, rather than simply being an investment that helps the most vulnerable (i.e. people other than them). Community housing is the most cost-effective way to reduce the social housing waiting list, and provides individuals and families who may need it with a supportive network around them.



We tell real stories to build empathy

Stories of real people experiencing the housing crisis will truly speak to our target audiences and motivate them to act. Real experiences build empathy and help many to make sense of the issue and understand that the housing crisis impacts a broad range of people, that it can affect anyone.

CAMPAIGN NARRATIVES [!]

The campaign will use four broad frames and narratives, outlined below.

Having **four frames** provides the campaign with more flexibility and opportunities to talk about our issue.

The first two narratives (The housing vulnerability crisis in NSW and 50,000 families on the social housing waitlist) both do a good job at spelling out the problem and highlighting the depth of the crisis. Both include key facts about the crisis and feedback suggests that the narratives could almost be used interchangeably.

The Women's narrative adds colour and emotion to the topic by highlighting who is currently on the waitlist and what life circumstances bring them there.

Investing in community housing – a win for all NSW families delivers a key component of the broader story to make social housing policy relevant to a wider demographic of voters.

50,000 families on the social housing waitlist

FRAME
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There are 50,000 families on the social housing waitlist in NSW.

Many are waiting for 10 years or more for a home.

And we know this is likely to get worse. Rent prices are skyrocketing, interest rates are rising, and the cost-of-living continues to soar.

We're facing a housing crisis.

Social housing in NSW has been chronically underfunded for decades - but our state leaders have a chance to fix this.

Investment in community housing, through not-for-profit community housing providers, would change this. It would get people off the waiting list, and into long-term, secure homes. And for those who need it, it would give them a supportive network around them, to get them back on their feet.

It's time for the State Government to act; it's time to invest in community housing to cut the social housing waitlist and confront the growing crisis.

The housing crisis in NSW is widening

NSW is in the midst of a housing crisis.

With interest rates and rental prices rising, more people are struggling to keep a roof over their heads.

Vacancy rates have plummeted across the State – in many areas, rental housing is neither affordable or available.

The housing market is broken, with supply falling well short of housing demand.

And the people on low to moderate incomes are most affected by these changes.

They are pensioners, young people, people with a disability, women and children, and people who have fallen ill.

They are also the workers that keep our communities running – teachers, nurses, cleaners and many more.

Communities across NSW are feeling the economic impact of employers being unable to find workers because those workers cannot find affordable rental housing.

That's why we're calling on our government to make a real and long-term commitment to invest in community housing.

The Government has a moral responsibility and an economic imperative to act.

Women and the housing crisis

Women in NSW are at particular risk of housing vulnerability.

In fact, older women are the fastest growing group of people experiencing homelessness in Australia.

Women retire with lower superannuation than men, as they may have taken time out of the workforce to care for children, been in female dominated lower paid jobs and faced gender pay inequality.

Women experiencing family violence often have nowhere they can afford to go –they are forced to leave and face homelessness or stay in danger.

That's why one of the key ways to support women is to invest in **community housing**, to be delivered and managed by not-for-profit community housing providers.

This would ensure women on low-incomes, or the pension or on low superannuation have a safe, long-term, secure home.

The problem can be fixed

Right now, we are in the middle of a housing crisis.

Every-day people are facing soaring rent prices and rising interest rates.

Families are applying for rental property after rental property, as they are forced to compete with so many others in the same situation.

Vacancy rates for rental homes in NSW have halved in a year to a record low of 1.2%. Rental prices have risen by over 10% in the last year.

The fact is, there just aren't enough affordable rental homes. That's why we need urgent investment in **community housing** from Government and others, to be delivered and managed by not-for-profit community housing providers.

This will provide long-term secure homes for families on low-incomes, **take** the pressure off the private rental market, and reduce the risk of homelessness for thousands of people.

We can begin to fix the problem.

Investing in community housing works. It's a win for NSW families and a win for the economy.



COMPELLING FACTS



There are **50,000** people families and individuals on the social housing waitlist in NSW. Many are waiting **more than 10 years** for a home.



Older women are the fastest growing group of people experiencing homelessness in Australia.



Vacancy rates for rental homes in NSW have halved in a year to a record low of 1.2%.



Rental prices have risen by over **10%** in the last year in NSW.



There are **more than 15,000** women who are homeless in NSW.



Older women are at particular risk, with almost **5,000** women over the age of **55** on the waiting list for social housing in NSW.



The number of **older women who are homeless** across **Australia** increased by **55%** in the last decade.



A full-time worker earning the minimum wage will only be able to afford 1.6% of rentals nationally, according to Anglicare's Rental Affordability Snapshot 2022.



Those who are fortunate enough to have a roof over their head are facing steep rent hikes as many landlords pass on the costs of successive interest rate hikes - **in Sydney, median house rents in Sydney are up \$50 year-on-year, while unit rents increased by \$30.**



The University of Sydney found **for every \$1 dollar invested in social housing, there is an \$4.80 return**

WORDS THAT WORK

Replace	Embrace	Because...
Housing vulnerability crisis	Housing crisis or housing emergency	While housing vulnerability does elicit compassion, people often do not identify themselves as being vulnerable – even when they are. However the housing crisis is a concept that was identified as affecting everyone.
House	Home	“Home” is an emotive term, and speaks to the idea that everyone has a right to one.
N/A	There are 50,000 families and individuals on the social housing waitlist	Many people are shocked that the waitlist is so long, and see it has a signal that urgent action from the Government is required.
N/A	Average wait times for a family or individual on the social housing wait list in many parts of the state are longer than 10 years.	Many are shocked by the wait times, and say that it highlights the urgency of the issue.
People are facing homelessness	Rents are skyrocketing, interest rates are rising and the cost-of-living continues to soar.	While you can talk about homelessness, we recommend avoiding talking about homelessness alone. By talking about the issue in relation to rents, cost-of-living and rising interests rates it broadens the issue to every-day people, and therefore the reader can understand how it may affect them.
Community housing providers	Not-for-profit community housing providers	Many people are reassured that if providers are not-for-profit than they have positive intentions
Tenants	People living in community/social housing	Personalises people living in social housing
Homeless people	People who are homeless People facing the housing crisis	Using person-first language personalises the individual and emphasizes the facts that their identity goes beyond their current situation of homelessness.

THE STORIES WE WANT TO SHOWCASE

Some examples of some of the stories of real people who are facing these housing crisis – or case studies – include individuals or families who are on the social housing waitlist or struggling to pay their rent. These may include:

- Older women
- Survivors of family violence
- Individuals who may have fallen ill and found themselves struggling to get by
- Young people, especially those who may have been impacted by the pandemic
- People living with a disability
- Women and/or single mothers who may have been separated and found themselves financially insecure

These stories can be used in earned media pitches, in social media assets, on the websites or even in videos, and bring the crisis to life.



IN SUMMARY

Prove the crisis:

- NSW is in the midst of a housing crisis.
- There are 50,000 families and individuals on the social housing waitlist, with wait times of up to 10 years and more.
- Rents are skyrocketing, interest rates **and** rising and the cost-of-living continues to soar.
- Older women are the fastest growing group of people experiencing homelessness.

Use stories to bring the crisis to life:

- Use killer facts to prove how urgent and pervasive the crisis is.
- Tell stories of real people to illicit empathy and understanding from target audiences.

And the solution:

- It's time our state government confronted this growing, urgent crisis.
- They need to invest in the community housing our state desperately needs.
- This will take the pressure off the private rental market, as less people are competing for the same homes.
- It will also move 50,000 families and individuals off the social housing waitlist and into a long term, secure home.
- **Community housing** delivered and managed by not-for-profit providers is not only cost-effective, but it provides individuals and families with a supportive network to get them back on their feet.