



Safe, affordable housing and preventing transmission of COVID-19

On Census night 2016 there were 37,715 people experiencing homelessness in NSW.

Of these over 16,000 were in severely overcrowded dwellings. This means they were 4 or more bedrooms short of the national standard. But we also had another 32,512 in overcrowded dwellings – meaning they were 3 bedrooms short of the national standard.

There were an additional 6,600 people living in boarding houses.

At a minimum over **55,000** NSW residents live in overcrowded dwellings. The advent of COVID-19 was always going to be of concern as international evidence clearly shows that the contagion spreads quicker in indoor crowded venues.

The situation in Victoria has highlighted these dangers.

During the pandemic, we have been pleased to see collaborative work undertaken by NSW Health, the Department of Communities and Justice, Inner West Council and Newtown Neighbourhood Centre working with residents of boarding houses in the inner west of Sydney to work with owners and residents to provide education, cleaning and regular testing alongside general community and health check ins. This shows what can be done to assist in preventing community transmission.

Alongside NCOSS we have written to Ministers Hazzard, Pavey and Ward to request that joint community planning be undertaken to help ensure that any risk of the spread of COVID-19 in social housing is minimised and communities supported during this period.

The real solution is of course an adequate supply of social housing. In NSW no one should live in substandard housing. That is why Homelessness NSW has consistently called on the NSW Government to increase social housing supply by 50,000 new additional dwellings.

As we hopefully move on from the pandemic the right to affordable and appropriate housing should be recognised as a fundamental right for all.