

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## **Affordable Housing a key issue in 2019 NSW election**

Community Industry Group is calling for access to safe, secure and affordable housing to be recognised as a key driver for social and economic outcomes by candidates in the upcoming NSW election.

“Access to safe, accessible and affordable housing is the number one issue affecting families on low incomes in NSW,” said Nicky Sloan, CEO of Community Industry Group. “The reality is, that with waiting lists for social housing exceeding ten years, many people on welfare or on minimum wage are trying to navigate the private rental market. We need incentives to encourage more affordable private rental properties as well as an urgent investment in social housing.”

“A safe, secure, long term home is a foundation for better social, economic and health outcomes,” Ms Sloan said. “Children are healthier, happier and achieve better educational outcomes when they know they have a secure long-term home to go to. They become less stressed, so their health and behaviour improves. They make friends when they know they have a home to bring them back to, and they won’t be moving away from these friends at short notice.”

“Adults are also more likely to find a job when they are no longer worrying about where they will sleep each night,” she said. “It’s simple Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs logic. When an individual’s basic needs are met, they can move up to address other social and personal goals.”

Social housing infrastructure has not increased alongside population growth, leading the NSW Government to implement policies to prioritise social housing for people with the most complex needs. This means that the majority of people on low incomes will never be able to access this housing safety net. For many, this leads them to housing stress (paying more than 30% of household income for housing). In the Illawarra, over 12% of households are now in rental stress. Many of these are some of the 270,000 households across NSW which go without food at least once a week to pay rent or bills.

Community Industry Group are calling on candidates to commit to strategies to increase social housing stock in the region, and to encourage the development of affordable rental properties in central areas where people on low incomes will have access to shops, services, and job opportunities.

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“The last Census indicates homelessness has risen by 9% in Illawarra/Shoalhaven and 14% in Southern NSW,” Ms Sloan said. “There are yet more who are the ‘hidden homeless’. People who are couch-surfing, sleeping in vehicles in other people’s backyards, or who are living temporarily in cramped conditions with friends or relatives. We would like to see bi-partisan commitment to ending this shameful situation for our region.”

“The investment in TAFE NSW, and in promoting apprenticeships by waiving fees, could offer major opportunities for our many unemployed young people,” said Ms Sloan, “but we need public transport to enable them to take advantage of these opportunities.”

**Media Contact:** Nicky Sloan, CEO, phone 0407 933 279.

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### **About Community Industry Group**

Community Industry Group (CI Group) is the peak body working for community services and organisations in South East NSW. It supports community organisations, promotes expertise and innovation in community development, fosters industry development and provides advocacy for social justice.

The CI Group represents the non-government community services industry and works closely with numerous organisations which provide support to vulnerable people across the region including:

- social housing providers
- homelessness services
- home and community care services
- people with disability
- individuals and families with multiple layers of social and financial disadvantage
- victims of domestic violence and sexual assault
- youth work programs
- community health services, including mental health and drug/alcohol services
- community legal centre services
- community development and community capacity building.

Visit our 2019 NSW Election virtual forum, available [here](#) for information and resources. We will be collating questions from our stakeholders and sending them to candidates for comment. Responses will be shared on our website.

We will also be updating our ‘Promises Calculator’, which will record commitments from candidates and parties, which are relevant to community organisations and their clients. This calculator will remain on our website after the election, and enable our elected representatives to ‘tick off’ their completed commitments.