

Social Housing Regulatory Review: Priorities for Reform

1. Overview

The Community Housing Industry Association Victoria (CHIA Vic) has welcomed the final report from the Social Housing Regulatory Review, along with Government's response.

The Review presents a critical opportunity to strengthen confidence in the social housing system and drive continuous improvements in the delivery of homes and services for renters.

This paper outlines CHIA Vic's response to the Review's recommendations, highlighting key issues and priorities for the community housing sector.

2. Background

In 2020, the Victorian Government commissioned an independent panel to undertake the Social Housing Regulation Review. The Review aimed to identify and recommend regulatory reforms that support the long-term interests of social housing renters.

CHIA Vic, alongside other stakeholders, contributed feedback at each stage of the process. The [panel's interim reports and stakeholder submissions](#) were published via Engage Victoria throughout 2021 and 2022. The [final report](#) was released in late 2024, accompanied by the [Government's response](#) to each of the 44 recommendations.

3. Priority Reforms

CHIA Vic has identified and prioritised key areas for regulatory reform. These are presented below in two tables:

- Table 1 outlines priority reforms that should be progressed within the next 12 months.

- Table 2 highlights additional reform areas we recommend addressing over the next 2 to 3 years.

Each table includes commentary and recommendations from the community housing sector to support effective implementation.

4. Next Steps

We look forward to working with Homes Vic and the Department of Treasury and Finance on the implementation of reforms.

5. Contact Details

If you have any questions or would like to give input into sector priorities for reform, please contact us via email at Jason.Perdriau@chiavivic.com.au.



Social Housing Regulatory Review: Priority Reform Areas

Recommendation/Response	Issues	CHIA Vic's Recommendation
1.6 Create a single advocacy body for social housing tenants (Government response: support in principle)	As noted in the report, there is an effective advocacy body for public housing, but community housing renters lack a representative voice.	It should be a priority to ensure the voices of all social housing renters are adequately represented. This should be supported by a body that exists to engage with renters and ensure their voice of renters is heard and considered. Ideally such a body would be co-designed with renters to ensure that it meets their needs.
2.1 Establish common performance standards for social housing (Government response: support in part)	Performance standards differ between community and public housing in Victoria and also differ across states and territories. Community housing currently reports annually on 7 standards that cover tenant services, policies and procedures and financial metrics. These standards have been considered by government and set to ensure transparent and good governance, financial sustainability and quality tenant services.	CHIA Vic strongly support the use of common performance standards between public and community housing. We recommend that at a minimum, public housing adopt and publicly report on the existing community housing performance measures. A longer-term goal should be set for all stakeholders to align performance measures and indicators across all Australian social housing jurisdictions.



Recommendation/Response	Issues	CHIA Vic's Recommendation
	There is no publicly available information on these metrics for Public Housing. These standards align with, although do not match exactly to, those required by the National Regulatory System for Community Housing. Since the Regulatory Review concluded, the Housing Australia Future Fund has been established and the number of cross-jurisdictional CHOs has increased. These developments increase the importance of nationally consistent performance standards for community housing.	
2.3 Strengthen the transparency of financial performance information for public housing provision (Government response: support in part)	A noted above, the performance standards for community housing include measures to ensure financial viability. These measures are intended to protect the value of government investments and ensure the ongoing provision of social housing to those that need it. Good governance for the social housing sector requires this transparent oversight	Strengthening the transparency of financial reporting will improve the ability of policy makers and the general public to understand the costs of social housing across the spectrum. This is a critical initiative as future investments should be informed not only by initial capital costs but ongoing maintenance of the system.



Recommendation/Response	Issues	CHIA Vic's Recommendation
	across the entire social housing system to support policy making and protect this public investment.	
3.9 Require social housing providers to provide culturally safe services (Government response: support in full)	Resourcing is needed to embed cultural safety in public housing and mainstream community housing services.	CHIA Vic welcomes the development of a performance standard on culturally safe services. The implementation of such a standard may require funding support for capacity building within the sector, and the introduction of this standard should be phased in accordingly.
3.10 Create a workforce development strategy for the social housing sector; & 3.11 Require providers to embed a culture of ongoing professional development (Government response: support in full)	With funding from Homes Vic, CHIA Vic has developed a Workforce Strategy and Capability Framework for community housing workers and commissioned and examined the training and development needs of the community housing workforce. It also includes consideration of formal qualifications.	CHIA Vic welcomes this initiative. There are opportunities to build on recent work to meet the needs of a growing workforce. Ensuring that workforce development is properly resourced is essential to effective implementation.
5.1 Enable effective regulation in an environment that is increasing in complexity	The financing landscape is becoming increasingly complex and the regulator must be equipped with the appropriate structures and resourcing to ensure that	CHIA Vic has completed recent work on the role of Special Purpose Vehicles (SPVs) in the social housing system and has made recommendations.



Recommendation/Response	Issues	CHIA Vic's Recommendation
(Government response: support in principle)	these structures continue to deliver value to government and importantly quality services to renters.	This work highlighted the need to distinguish the role of financial/development vehicles from charities operating community housing These recommendations should be considered as part of this broader piece of work.
5.2 Regulation of affordable housing (Government response: not supported)	Since the regulatory review was completed the Victorian Government has released its Housing Statement and the Federal government released the first round of the Housing Australia Future Fund. Both of these envision the growth of affordable housing products, without a clear policy rationale, target group or allocation processes. There is a risk that without some regulatory oversight these products will not have a significant impact on the cohorts they're designed for.	We believe government should support the recommendation to regulate affordable housing. At a minimum, we recommend government establish a register of all subsidised affordable housing properties. This would allow for data collection and the tracking of affordable housing numbers.
5.4 Develop a uniform performance reporting framework for social housing (Government response: support in full)	See 2.1	See 2.1



Recommendation/Response	Issues	CHIA Vic's Recommendation
6.3 Reduce duplication where registered community housing agencies report to multiple regulators (Government response: support in full)	The number of CHOs operating across regulatory jurisdictions has increased since this review, making this recommendation more important.	Performance measures and KPIs should be aligned across jurisdictions, allowing all CHOs to submit their reports to the regulator in the jurisdiction where they principally operate. Regulators could then share information between as needed.
7.1 Establish an independent social and affordable housing regulator (Government response: under consideration)	This recommendation was included in the 2021 interim report so there has been over three years for this to be considered. Other recommendations (including ones fully accepted by Government) cannot be implemented without a single regulator.	We support the recommendation to establish a single social housing regulator. We believe government should provide a definitive response to this recommendation.

Social Housing Regulatory Review: Additional Reform Areas

Recommendation/Response	Issues	CHIA Vic's Recommendation
1.1 Create a clear objective for social housing regulation in legislation	The proposed objective is:	CHIA Vic supports including an explicit objective in the Housing Act (or other eventual relevant legislation as the case



Recommendation/Response	Issues	CHIA Vic's Recommendation
(Government response: support in full)	“to promote and safeguard the interests of current and prospective tenants.” This encompasses the growth of social housing, but the suggested objective could be altered slightly to ensure it is clear that “interests” relate to housing.	may be), to provide a clear objective for the social housing regulatory system. We suggest altering the suggested objective slightly, from ‘interests of current and prospective tenants’ to ‘housing interests of current and prospective tenants’ to ensure it is clear the “interests” relate to housing. This should also consider the role, definition and regulation of Affordable Housing.
1.2 Develop a customer charter of social housing service standards (Government response: support in principle)	There are already a variety of customer charters that CHOs have developed and are in use.	We note that service standards can be dependent on contractual arrangements with Homes Vic (e.g. General Lease) and these should be taken into account in developing any standard charter across the sector.
1.3 Decisions about regulation should be informed by tenants (Government response: support in part)	Access to safe, secure and appropriate housing is the foundation for opportunity and empowers people to have a voice and choose to be involved with the issues and communities that matter to them.	When making changes to increase renter engagement it is important to recognise and reflect the reality that individuals have various levels of interest participating in tenant engagement.



Recommendation/Response	Issues	CHIA Vic's Recommendation
	For some social housing renters, this will mean involvement in a social housing community and engagement with their rental provider. Others want their rental provider to ensure their home is well-maintained but to otherwise stay out of their lives. They may seek to engage with the broader community or with specific communities that come together with a common purpose. In the same way that private market renters may want little interaction with their landlord or real estate agent, renter engagement may not be on the list of priorities for some social housing renters.	It is also important to note that some regulations do not pertain directly to tenant services, like those for financial sustainability. However, these are critical to the ongoing provision of services to tenants and should be continued. It is also important to consider the cost implications of adequately resourcing meaningful tenant participation.
1.4 Strengthen the requirement for tenant involvement in housing providers' activities and operations (Government response: support in principle)	As noted above, renter engagement must be fit for purpose to tenants needs. A stringent performance requirement may not be the most effective mechanism to secure renter input into service delivery.	See 1.3
1.5 Support tenants and providers to engage	See response above to recommendations 1.3 and 1.4.	See response above to recommendations 1.3 and 1.4.



Recommendation/Response	Issues	CHIA Vic's Recommendation
(Government response: support in principle)		
1.7 Commissioner for Residential Tenancies to consider public housing (Government response: support in full)	N/A	We welcome Government's support of this recommendation.
2.2 Assess registered agencies' allocation practices against their allocation strategies (Government response: support in full)	This is already monitored by Homes Victoria as part of the compliance with the VHR Opt-in Agreement signed by community housing organisations.	Consider ways to reduce duplication of reporting by use of existing reporting.
3.1 Monitor and report on energy efficiency in social housing (Government response: support in principle)	Community Housing organisations hold significant information on their housing assets, however, this does not include energy performance.	In order to collect and report on the energy efficiency of more than 26,000 properties Community Housing Organisation will need funding to support property audits to meet reporting obligations.
3.2 Require social housing properties to comply with minimum standards prescribed by the Residential Tenancies Act 1997 by January 2027 (Government response: support in principle)	These regulatory standards already apply equally to social housing and private market housing. Some compliance obligations are only triggered when a property is re-let after new regulations are introduced, and we understand the panel's recommendation	Funding may be required to meet minimum standards within the timelines proposed, and some flexibility may be required where significant upgrades are required in an ongoing tenancy. This is particularly the case with legacy housing stock managed under the General Lease.



Recommendation/Response	Issues	CHIA Vic's Recommendation
	aims to ensure that recently introduced regulations are applied retrospectively to existing tenancies. Some regulatory impact analysis would be needed to understand the costs and benefits of that proposed change.	
3.3 Review maintenance systems and processes for public housing (Government response: support in full)	NA	NA
3.4 Regulator to monitor fire safety in social housing properties (Government response: support in full)	We note that this recommendation is reliant on a single regulator.	There should be clarity on where this information is to be collected and reported in the absence of a single social housing regulator. We would support this information being collected and reported by the Housing Registrar.
3.5 Ensure needed accessibility modifications to social housing properties are made promptly (Government response: support in principle)	We support the principle that all renters should be able to access the property modifications they require to live independently. Access to funding for modifications in community housing is available through	We recommend an examination of who is best placed to assess the need for and approve public expenditure on disability modifications. We welcome further discussions on this and on collaboration to improve access to



Recommendation/Response	Issues	CHIA Vic's Recommendation
	federal government agencies responsible for assisting people to live independently, including the National Disability Insurance Agency, My Aged Care, and the Transport Accident Commission. We note that these schemes can have unclear eligibility requirements and onerous assessment hurdles and that many people in need of modifications can struggle to navigate the system or fall through the gaps. Any changes would require an examination of the funding models that would work best and the implications of increasing state funding in an area of federal responsibility.	necessary modifications to community housing renters. Given there are existing government bodies responsible for assessing and funding disability modifications, we suggest an examination of why people are falling through the gaps and how this existing system could be improved to prevent that happening.
3.6 Enhance the measurement of tenancy sustainment (Government response: support in full)	The Social Housing Regulatory Review recommends survival analysis as the preferred measure of tenancy sustainment. While this is the gold standard, we note that this has only been applied by one organisation with the assistance of a University researcher. This is a resource that most CHOs do not have available and a methodology that is	Significant resourcing will be required to support CHOs to implement a survival analysis of tenancy sustainment. CHIA Vic recommends that a shared and standardised measure be developed as part of developing shared performance standards. It is also important to note that not all exits are negative and measurement should be careful to



Recommendation/Response	Issues	CHIA Vic's Recommendation
	not easy to deploy with existing data systems.	distinguish between tenants moving for positive reasons and negative exits. We support a principle that all social housing renters should have access to the support needed to sustain tenancies, live independently, and build meaningful lives. CHOs already treat eviction as a measure of last resort, and they can only occur after lengthy processes of assessment and engagement with multiple checks and balances to ensure procedural fairness is provided and renters have every opportunity to sustain their tenancies.
3.7 Require registered community housing agencies to apply human rights principles in decision making (Government response: support in full)	Community housing organisations are already required to apply human rights principles in decision making. There are obligations under the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act, and the sector holds a strong commitment to upholding and protecting human rights. CHIA Vic provides training and resources to the community housing sector to apply	We support the recommendation as it will remove any ambiguity about the scope of existing obligations under the Charter.



Recommendation/Response	Issues	CHIA Vic's Recommendation
	human rights decision making in tenancy management practice.	
3.8 Strengthen tenancy sustainment practices in social housing (Government response: support in principle)	Evictions are always a measure of last resort, and CHOs work closely with specialist support services which are designed to help vulnerable households to sustain their tenancies. This support system requires an in-depth review, additional resourcing, and a plan to expand support and provide greater flexibility and targeting.	We support a principle that all social housing renters should have access to the support needed to sustain tenancies, live independently, and build meaningful lives. We believe this recommendation must be supported by the expansion of Tenancy Plus and other tenancy support programs to ensure that where tenancies are at risk, renters are supported to maintain their housing.
4.1 Streamline public housing complaints management processes (Government response: support in principle)	NA	NA
4.2 Strengthen complaints management processes for registered community housing agencies (Government response: support in full)	Clear complaints management processes and escalation pathways for community housing renters are already in place, with all CHOs required to make their complaints process publicly available. Existing Performance Standards include requirements for CHOs to have dispute	We welcome improvement of complaints management performance standards to ensure that they reflect best practice principles. In line with our other recommendations, and those of the Regulatory Review Panel, we recommend that performance



Recommendation/Response	Issues	CHIA Vic's Recommendation
	resolution procedures in place that are easily accessible, and that complaints and appeals must be promptly and fairly managed. There are also reporting requirements along with requirements to continually review and improve processes. Complaint metrics are reporting publicly by the Housing Registrar, with the Housing Registrar also operating as an external complaints body.	standards for complaints management be shared across public and community housing.
4.3 Establish a support and referral service for complaints and disputes (Government response: support in principle)	As noted above and in the report, there is an effective body for public housing, but community housing renters lack a representative voice that could perform this function. An advocacy body for social housing renters should be established in a manner	We support the creation of a representation and advocacy organisation for all social housing renters to perform this role.



Recommendation/Response	Issues	CHIA Vic's Recommendation
	that ensures that it is truly representative of all social housing renters.	
4.4 Establish a specialist external dispute resolution service (Government response: support in principle)	The Housing Registrar already operates as a specialist, external dispute resolution service for community housing renters.	CHIA Vic supports the recommendation to create an independent complaints management body for all social housing renters
4.5 Provide restorative justice services for neighbourhood conflicts and disputes (Government response: not supported)	CHIA Vic believes that restorative justice approaches could provide a clear pathway for resolving complex disputes and issues between renters that can escalate to put tenancies at risk.	We urge Government to consider a trial of these approaches.
5.3 Develop rules and a mechanism for allocating affordable housing and a methodology for evaluating the Victorian Affordable Housing Rental Scheme (Government response: support in full)	Recent Government policy initiatives are generating a supply of 'affordable housing' stock that does not have allocation guidelines. Where affordable housing is generated through the planning system (eg Section 173 agreements) and there is not funding attached, these properties cannot be Gazetted as "affordable housing" and managed as Affordable Housing programs under the Residential Tenancies Act	A clear and consistent policy framework for the delivery and management of Affordable Housing is an important piece of system architecture.



Recommendation/Response	Issues	CHIA Vic's Recommendation
6.1 Amend the wind-up provisions to ensure the assets of a specialist housing agency are transferred to another registered agency that shares its mission, and that Aboriginal housing remains in Aboriginal hands (Government response: support in full)	NA	CHIA Vic supports this recommendation and urges implementation as a matter of priority to support the growth of the ACCO housing sector
6.2 Facilitate the registration of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (Government response: support in full)	NA	We welcome Government's support of this recommendation and acknowledge the work underway in this area.
6.4 Reduce duplication and confusion in regulatory and contract reporting (Government response: support in full)	There are currently multiple layers for accountability mechanisms for community housing providers and these should be streamlined to minimise the reporting burden wherever possible. The principle of "collect once, use many times" should be adopted to streamline reporting, reduce overlap and avoid adding additional layers of reporting.	We welcome Government's support of this recommendation



Recommendation/Response	Issues	CHIA Vic's Recommendation
6.5 Expedite land transaction approvals as a step towards enabling a portfolio management approach (Government response: support in principle)	The community housing sector owns over 13,000 of the 25,000 properties it manages, many of which have been transferred from or partially funded by the Victorian Government. This typically means these properties have a Homes Victoria interest (caveat) on the title. Gaining Homes Victoria approval to redevelop or sell these sites as part of a growth strategy is a complicated and ad hoc process. Where assets have reached the end of their useful life or are no longer fit for purpose, this system needs to speed up the process for disposal and reinvestment.	Homes Victoria should develop a policy framework and begin fast-tracking approval for land transactions. To improve access to state government land, community housing organisations should be added to the groups (currently government departments/agencies and councils) given first right of refusal to purchase surplus government land prior to it going on sale in the private market. This land should be sold to community housing organisations at a restricted use value, similar to land sold to councils for community purposes. This reflects the cost savings and societal benefits provided by social housing.
6.6 Registered agencies to develop and maintain an up-to-date assets and liabilities register (Government response: support in full)	We are consulting with members on this recommendation.	



Recommendation/Response	Issues	CHIA Vic's Recommendation
6.7 Strengthen the regulator's role in supporting growth (Government response: support in part)	CHOs already develop long term strategic plans, which include their objectives in relation to growth. Some organisations have ambitious plans to deliver a high number of new homes while other organisations are concentrating on tenancy management and improving existing services.	We supporting strengthening the regulator's role in supporting growth. The principal way regulation can support growth is by improving confidence in the social housing system and driving ongoing improvements to the delivery of homes and services for renters. The implementation of regulatory reforms should be made with these key goals in mind.
6.8 Create a pathway for Victoria to join the National Regulatory System for Community Housing (Government response: support in full)	CHIA Vic notes that some of the accepted recommendations in the Review will move Victoria further away from the NRSCH performance standards, which may make this challenging to achieve.	The sector would welcome a process to create a truly national regulatory system as it would make reporting more efficient for organisations operation across multiple jurisdictions.
7.2 Resource a program of inspections and enhance the regulator's inspection and audit powers (Government response: support in principle)	The Housing Registrar already holds powers to inspect, investigate and intervene in community housing operations. This includes powers of entry	This recommendation was made in reference to a single regulator, and we support that recommendation as outlined above.



Recommendation/Response	Issues	CHIA Vic's Recommendation
	and powers to require persons to appear and produce documents.	If established, that regulator should have adequate powers and resources to effectively fulfill their role.
7.3 Remove the statutory distinction between housing association and housing provider (Government response: support in principle)	When the definition of Housing Associations and Providers was introduced, this was to distinguish between organisations that were intended to be developers (Association) and organisations that were to be Tenancy Managers.	This recommendation should be supported by a clear policy intent from government on the shape and role of the Community Housing sector.
7.4 Enhance the tools available to the regulator to allow for a more graduated approach to enforcement (Government response: support in full)	We note that this recommendation is reliant on a single regulator.	See 7.2 above.
7.5 Transfer eligibility and allocations powers to the Minister (Government response: not supported)	NA	NA
8.1 Offer support to applicants on the Victorian Housing Register (Government response: support in principle)	Additional resourcing is also needed for existing support services. This includes changes needed to cut waiting times for Tenancy Plus and	The existing support system requires an in-depth review, additional resourcing, and a plan to expand support and provide greater flexibility and targeting. CHIA Vic considers that the resourcing of tenancy



Recommendation/Response	Issues	CHIA Vic's Recommendation
	expanding the availability of the Support for High-Risk Tenancies Program to community housing renters (currently it is only available to renters in public housing).	support services should be a matter of urgent priority.

