

6 July 2020

The Hon Brad Hazzard MP
Minister for Health
52 Martin Place
Sydney NSW 2000
E: Office@Hazzard.minister.nsw.gov.au



The Hon Gareth Ward MP
Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services
52 Martin Place
Sydney NSW 2000
E: Office@Ward.minister.nsw.gov.au

The Hon Belinda Pavey MP
Minister for Water, Property and Housing
52 Martin Place
Sydney NSW 2000
E: Office@Pavey.minister.nsw.gov.au

Dear Ministers

We write to commend your responsible and compassionate approach to ensuring that the most vulnerable members of the community are kept safe during the pandemic. In this regard, there is now an urgent need to move quickly to avoid the situation unfolding in Victoria - where residents of nine social housing towers have been subject to sudden and drastic lockdowns, much harsher than those imposed on other residents in identified hotspots.

We urge you to work with the community organisations that support social housing estates and tenants across the greater Sydney area, to develop and activate a COVID-19 social housing plan for each estate. The aim of such a plan should be to: minimise the likelihood of outbreaks; manage any outbreaks that do occur in a timely and coordinated way; and ensure the health and well-being of tenants and the provision of information, care and support, along with other necessary resources. In particular, vulnerable residents with complex needs will require access to medication, health care, mental health services and other supports.

Identifying clear roles, responsibilities and lines of accountability across government agencies and non-government partners will be critical to successful implementation of the plan. Preventative measures that it will need to encompass and which should be deployed immediately include: high frequency, thorough cleaning of housing estate common areas; ready access to hand sanitiser at key points throughout each estate; regularly updated information on social distancing, testing and other relevant matters available in community languages; and welfare check-ins and assistance to access support for the most vulnerable.

Our two organisations will provide whatever assistance we can to ensure that this urgent measure is taken. With the right leadership and decisive action, NSW can avoid the Victorian situation which is exacerbating challenges for already vulnerable groups and exposing them to unnecessary risk.

Yours sincerely

Handwritten signature of Joanna Quilty in black ink.

Joanna Quilty
CEO
NCOSS

Handwritten signature of Katherine McKernan in blue ink.

Katherine McKernan
CEO
Homelessness NSW