



# Media Release

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## **Affordable social housing a looming issue**

G21 has called on all levels of government to better support the challenge of supplying adequate and accessible social housing across the region.

The *G21 Addressing Disadvantage Through Affordable Housing* position paper highlights a looming crisis in the supply of affordable social housing across the G21 region.

The paper was launched by Victoria's Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing, Martin Foley at the Disability Housing Policy Forum at Karingal's Eastern Hub in Geelong today.

G21 CEO Elaine Carbines said there is an urgent need for reliable co-investment funding, and direct government support, to boost the stock of new affordable housing in the G21 region.

"G21 and a group of existing social housing providers in the region are ringing the alarm bells about a problem that is growing rapidly," Ms Carbines said.

"Across the G21 region about 86,000 people, some 38% of the population, earn a weekly gross income less than \$400 per week. In recent years more than 67,000 people in the region rely on some form of Centrelink benefits.

"This is at a time when rent and mortgage payments in the G21 region are skyrocketing, with the availability of private dwellings for public housing decreasing.

"Low income earners and genuine welfare recipients are being squeezed out the housing rental market.

"The latest Office of Housing figures, from 2013, show 2026 people were on the waiting list for public housing, while the total housing stock was only around 3800.

"Affordable rental across regional Victoria in 2013 was estimated by the Office of Housing at 58%, whereas in parts of the G21 region it was as low as 11%. In the City of Greater Geelong it was just under 26%.

“These are startling figures which can’t be ignored. They add up to a social housing accommodation crisis in the making within our region.

“There needs to be more government grants directed to community groups to support the costs of construction and acquisition of land for social housing.

“Successful government-private new housing schemes, such as that in Norlane, must also be replicated across the region.

“Underutilised local, state and federal government property must be considered for development as social housing to meet our rapidly growing community need,” Ms Carbines said.

The G21 position paper makes eight recommendations, paraphrased as:

1. That the role of social housing be recognised and promoted by all levels of government
2. That the role of local government in social housing provision be better recognised in future planning
3. That urgent bi-partisan support be given to identifying reliable ‘co-investment’ in social housing
4. That future social housing funding include up-front investment to encourage greener technology for environmental sustainability
5. That the Commonwealth Rent Assistance Scheme be recognised as vital for delivering future growth of social and affordable housing
6. That all levels of government support the link between providing bricks-and-mortar housing and funding of ongoing support services for people living in social housing
7. That the state government develop a long-term strategy for the sustainability and growth of public housing stock
8. That all levels of government urgently examine funding opportunities to develop new social housing in the G21 region.

The Disability Housing Policy Forum was a joint initiative of G21, Karingal and the MP for Geelong, Christine Couzens.

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