

<p><i>What influence would you or your organisation have in contributing to the joint delivery of a NSW Housing Strategy?</i></p> <p><i>What data or insights could you provide to support responsive action plans?</i></p>	<p>Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) is an international Catholic organisation, founded in 1980 as a social ministry of the Society of Jesus (“the Jesuits”).</p> <p>In 2019, JRS Australia served approximately 3,800 refugees, people seeking asylum, and migrants in vulnerable situations with emergency financial assistance, including towards housing, temporary shelter, a foodbank, professional casework, community activities, employment support, legal advice, targeted advocacy, and activities designed with women around primary prevention of sexual and gender-based violence.</p> <p>We are currently conducting qualitative research into the experiences of housing and home/homelessness of people seeking asylum, following our publication of <a href="#">Foundations</a>, <i>A Scoping Study on Housing for People seeking Asylum and Strategic Areas of Action for All</i>.</p> <p>We commend the NSW government for this initiative and would be very happy to participate in discussions to further develop the ‘Housing Strategy for NSW.’</p>
<p><i>Vision:</i> <i>Housing that supports security, comfort and choice for all people at all stages of their lives, achieved through supply that meets the demand for diverse, affordable and resilient housing and responds to environmental, cultural, social and economic contexts</i></p>	<p><b>A comprehensive housing strategy must consider current migration and border control contexts, given their impact on housing experiences( eg. through prolonged visa status determination processes and restricted income support) and their impact on the incidence of homelessness.</b></p> <p>Of the 7,480,228 people living in NSW in 2016, just over 6% or 460,688 were temporary migrants (ABS, 2016). The number of people is significant because it quantifies changes to Australian migration policy which resulted in a large number of people who are here ‘temporarily’, and for long periods of time. According to Peter Mares, author of <i>Not Quite Australian</i>, ‘our analysis has not caught up with this changed reality and we need to start thinking critically about what this might mean for Australian society—for multiculturalism and indeed for the particularities and peculiarities of our liberal democracy’, as well as for housing.</p> <p>For example relating to Figure 1 on page 7 of the Discussion Paper, the current rate of home ownership for most temporary residents is 22%, approximately one-third the NSW average, and for most people we work with who are seeking asylum, private rental is also out of reach. Most are sharing with families in informal arrangements. These experiences (e.g. crowded dwellings) need to be considered, firstly through understanding the extent to which they exist and secondly through making these options safer and more sustainable. Other alternatives such as <i>build to rent</i> or <i>rent to own</i> options should be considered specifically for this cohort.</p> <p>In 2016, at the time of the Census, there were approximately 10,000 people on BVEs in NSW. A significant proportion is likely to have been part of the IMA Legacy Caseload. This group of people was not afforded work rights until the passage of the federal <i>Migration and Maritime Powers Legislation (Resolving the Asylum Legacy Caseload) Act</i> 2014. In practice, the then Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP) only began to issue BVEs with work rights through the year 2015. In effect, many of the people in this cohort would have lived in the Australian community for years, without work rights, depending on when they arrived in the country.</p> <p>Since work rights were granted in 2015, many people in this cohort have found work but others have not. These people have long been at risk of being chronically homeless.</p>
<p>Housing supply in the right locations and at the right time</p>	<p><b>Locate social and affordable housing schemes in areas of high growth and high need as evidenced by the location of approximately 75% of people seeking asylum on Bridging Visa E in Western and South Western Sydney.</b></p>

	<p><b>Explore innovative models for building and developing houses particularly in communities with a high number of refugees, people seeking asylum, and migrants in vulnerable situations, in partnership with local Councils</b></p> <p>The Refugee Council of Australia estimates that approximately 40,000 people seeking Australia's protection are living in NSW. As of March this year, 2,200 people in NSW (on Bridging Visa E – location data is not available on other visa classes of people seeking asylum) await a decision on their protection claim, without any access to income support. More than 75% of this group are living in Western and South Western Sydney</p>
Diverse housing for diverse needs	<p><b>Increase supports for the cultural appropriateness, safety and security of housing of informal renters, shared-households and over-crowded dwellings.</b></p> <p>NSW has a large and growing population of temporary migrants, who are particularly vulnerable at this time of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many have lost work (in our experience almost half the clients in JRS' employment program since 2019 have lost work since the start of the pandemic) and are not eligible for federal government support packages. While the private rental market may become more affordable – for people who have no access to income or income support, this means moving to more informal renting and sharing arrangements.</p> <p>These living arrangements, while only a small proportion of the overall rental market, need to be better understood, contextualised, and potentially, safeguarded – at the landlord, real estate agent, and Council levels.</p>
Housing that is more affordable	<p><b>Increase access for people seeking asylum to Housing NSW products including interest-free bond loans, rent assistance, tenancy support, access to social and affordable housing (following the lead of SA Housing) particularly for women and children at risk of Domestic and Family Violence and people with disability.</b></p> <p><b>Explore the use of underutilised / less popular Specialist Homelessness Service properties for access to people seeking asylum and other temporary migrants in vulnerable situations.</b></p> <p>For people who arrived by plane and lodged a claim for asylum, Department of Home Affairs took at an average of <a href="#">231 days</a> (over 7 months) in 2017-2018 to reach a decision. In the same period, the median time taken by the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT) to review this decision was 61 weeks or 15 months, which meant the process of seeking asylum took at least 23 months for most people who lodged a claim and appealed the outcome.</p> <p>For people who arrived by boat prior to 1 January 2014 - and are part of the IMA Legacy Caseload - processing times are even longer. Within JRS' caseload, for people who arrived by boat and lodged a claim under the 'Fast track' process, the time between application and grant of visa or finalised refusal averages between 4 and 6 years.</p> <p>During this time of waiting people seeking asylum are not entitled to any payments from Centrelink. Instead they may be entitled to the Status Resolution Support Service (SRSS), a fortnightly payment that is 89% of the former Newstart payment. Since 2018, only carers of children under 6, people over 70, or those experiencing significant medical and/or mental health issues, or facing significant crisis are eligible for SRSS. Precarious housing, homelessness itself or the loss of work does not meet DHA's criteria for significant crisis.</p> <p>As a result, for example for a couple seeking protection with a child under 5 and a child under 10, we estimate that since they are ineligible for Jobseeker or parenting payments, and may not be eligible for SRSS, they would be able to afford even less</p>

	<p>than the 1.1% of properties deemed affordable by <a href="#">Anglicare's Rental Affordability Snapshot 2019</a>.</p> <p>We support the following recommendation from Shelter NSW: <b>Commit to dramatically increasing the stock of quality and well-located social, affordable and specialist dwellings to address current and future need</b> (current need in Greater Sydney is 136,100 and 80,400 in Regional NSW rising to 217,000 and 99,700 respectively by 2036 according to <a href="#">UNSW City Futures - 'Filling the Gap' (March 2019) research</a>)</p>
Enduring and resilient housing	<p><b>Ensure flexible forms of housing, as well as forms of tenure to allow for unexpected changes and times of hardship.</b></p> <p>90% of JRS' clients who received a one-off emergency relief payment in March 2020 were at risk of homelessness and used payments directly towards rent, and in some cases to delay threatened eviction.</p>
<i>What outcomes should a NSW Housing Strategy focus on?</i>	<p>Locate Housing as a means to a thriving society</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contextualise it as part of a broader strategy including directly related with reduction in homelessness, and increased health outcomes – and evaluation metrics that reflect this connection, including through related costs</li> <li>• Demonstrate that Housing strategy is addressing overall inequalities and challenges across Greater Sydney and in Regional NSW</li> </ul>