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Senate Standing Committees on Economics
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Via email: [REDACTED]

Dear Standing Committee

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the *National Housing and Homelessness Plan Bill 2024* (the Bill) on behalf of the Queensland Family and Child Commission (QFCC). The QFCC has provided submissions to the *National Housing and Homelessness Agreement Review Issues Paper¹* and *National Housing and Homelessness Plan Issues Paper²* highlighting key priorities to ensure safe, stable and affordable housing for children, young people and their families.

The QFCC welcomes the Bill in providing a foundation for the National Housing and Homelessness Plan (the Plan) and the proposed functions in the Bill to monitor and evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of the Plan. Housing and shelter is one of the foundations of life. Too often governments approach housing policy as an economic and infrastructure issue – while those of us in frontline human services know that housing policy matters more to, and is driven by, our social, health, safety, education and participation policy settings. Housing is not about bricks and mortar – it is about who we are.

Homelessness, and facing homelessness, has a profound impact on children and young people, including disruption to education, employment and health care, and experiences of isolation and increased risk of exposure to exploitation and violence, and poorer experiences of mental and physical health.³ Homelessness is also recognised as a contributing factor for involvement in the child protection and youth justice systems.⁴

¹ Queensland Family and Child Commission (2022), *Productivity Commission National Housing and Homelessness Agreement Review Issues Paper- Policy Submission*, [Productivity Commission Housing and Homelessness Agreement Review \(qfcc.qld.gov.au\)](https://qfcc.qld.gov.au)

² Queensland Family and Child Commission (2023), *National Housing and Homelessness Plan Issues Paper- Policy Submission*, [D23 13662 FINAL - QFCC submission on National Housing and Homelessness plan - 31102023.pdf](https://qfcc.qld.gov.au/files/13662/FINAL-QFCC-submission-on-National-Housing-and-Homelessness-plan-31102023.pdf)

³ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2021), *Homelessness and overcrowding, Australia's youth: Homelessness and overcrowding* - Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (aihw.gov.au)

⁴ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2016). *Vulnerable young people: Interactions across homelessness, youth justice and child protection*. <https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/944d5eb5-a940-41be-b1a6-f81f95636aa5/20475.pdf?v=20230605173150&inline=true>



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In a 2024 survey by the QFCC, one in ten parents reported cost of living pressures, housing affordability, and homelessness as the greatest concerns for families.⁵ The median weekly rent for a three bedroom house in Queensland has risen 42.9 per cent from \$350 in 2018, to \$500 in 2023.⁶ Interest rates across Queensland for an owner-occupied property have also increased, from 5.22 per cent in February 2018 to 8.52 per cent by June 2023.⁷ In our consultation with young people regarding the Bill, we heard that the biggest challenge facing children, young people and their families was a lack of appropriate and affordable rental properties, and limited housing support.⁸ Data from the *2024 Rental Affordability Snapshot* indicates that of 8,553 rental properties surveyed, only 0.5 per cent were affordable and appropriate for households on income support, and 8.9 per cent were affordable and appropriate for those on minimum wage.⁹ The report highlighted that none of the properties surveyed were affordable and appropriate for young people or low-income families with children.¹⁰

One young person told us:

"I cannot find appropriate housing within an area that suits us. In Queensland after the new rental laws were introduced all of the rental prices are advertised at a lower rate, then at a certain date they are increased significantly. I have three more months left at my current place that I will not be able to increase my lease. Even with rent connect support I have been declined from 59 rental applications."

Only 28 per cent of respondents to the QFCC *Community Perceptions Survey 2023*¹¹ agreed that the views of children and young people are listened to and valued by the public housing system. It is critical that young people and families with lived experience of housing distress, housing insecurity, or homelessness are represented in the development of the National Plan, and that the National Plan specifically address the needs of young people existing in statutory and state-care systems. The *2022 Youth Justice Census* indicated that 30 per cent of Queensland young people under community supervision were living in unstable and/or unsuitable accommodation.¹² The *2021 Post Care Report*¹³ highlighted the difficulties faced by young people exiting out-of-home care, with 30 per cent of respondents reporting homelessness in the first year after leaving statutory care.

⁵ Queensland Family and Child Commission (2024), *Community Perception Survey 2023*, [Community Perceptions Survey Report 2023 \(qfcc.qld.gov.au\)](https://qfcc.qld.gov.au)

⁶ Queensland Residential Tenancies Authority (2023), *Median rents quarterly data*, [Median rents quarterly data | Residential Tenancies Authority \(rta.qld.gov.au\)](https://www.rta.qld.gov.au/median-rents-quarterly-data)

⁷ Reserve Bank of Australia (2023), *Statistical Tables*, [Statistical Tables | RBA](https://www.rba.gov.au/statistics/tables/)

⁸ The QFCC employs Youth Advocates, aged 14 to 25 years, on a casual basis to provide advice and inform QFCC projects, policies and outcomes.

⁹ Anglicare Southern Queensland (2024), *Rental Affordability Snapshot*, [Rental Affordability Snapshot - Anglicare Southern Queensland \(anglicaresq.org.au\)](https://www.anglicaresq.org.au/rental-affordability-snapshot)

¹⁰ Anglicare Southern Queensland (2024), *Rental Affordability Snapshot*, [Rental Affordability Snapshot - Anglicare Southern Queensland \(anglicaresq.org.au\)](https://www.anglicaresq.org.au/rental-affordability-snapshot)

¹¹ Queensland Family and Child Commission (2024), *Community Perception Survey 2023*, [Community Perceptions Survey Report 2023 \(qfcc.qld.gov.au\)](https://qfcc.qld.gov.au)

¹² Queensland Department of Child Safety, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs (2022), *Youth Justice Census Summary: State-wide (2018 to 2022)- under supervision*, [YJ Census Summary Statewide \(desbt.qld.gov.au\)](https://www.desbt.qld.gov.au/yjcensus-summary)

¹³ CREATE Foundation (2021), *CREATE Post Care Report 2021*, [CREATE-Post-Care-Report-2021-LR.pdf](https://www.create.org.au/post-care-report-2021-lr.pdf)



In 2022–23, 4.0 per 10,000 specialist homelessness service clients were children in contact with the child protection system (either leaving care or children on protection orders).¹⁴ Stable and secure housing also poses challenges for parents wishing to reunite with their children in the out-of-home care system. One young parent told the QFCC that they needed safe and secure housing to regain custody of their daughter, but due to pricing and availability it took eight months for them to find somewhere suitable to live. The QFCC heard that increasing rent prices, and rental increases for existing tenancy contracts, are significant factors in housing distress for young Queenslanders.

The QFCC specifically acknowledges Clause 15 in the Bill, detailing the requirement for diverse representation on the *National Housing Consumer Council*, and the role of the Council in providing advice to the Minister on the effectiveness of the *National Housing and Homelessness Plan*. The QFCC emphasises the importance of direct engagement with young people, First Nations people, individuals with lived experience of homelessness, and people with disability and specific housing needs, and welcomes the broad membership of the Council. The QFCC recognises the Council membership will include “other groups who face special disadvantage in the housing system” and highlights the need for experiences of victim-survivors of domestic and family violence (including those with children), young people exiting statutory care systems, and low-income or single-parent families be represented.

A National Housing and Homelessness Plan must include early intervention services to support families to access and maintain sustainable housing, and to address the causes for housing distress such as cost of living pressures and significant rent price increases. The QFCC welcomes the Bill providing the framework to deliver a meaningful operational strategy to ensure everyone in Australia has adequate housing.

If you have any issues or wish to discuss further, please contact me via telephone on [REDACTED], or via email at [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]
Luke Twyford
Principal Commissioner
Queensland Family and Child Commission

9 August 2024

¹⁴ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2023), *Specialist homelessness services annual report 2022-23*, [Specialist homelessness services annual report 2022-23, About - Australian Institute of Health and Welfare \(aihw.gov.au\)](#)

