



**Australian Government**

**Department of Family and Community Services**

Box 7788 Canberra Mail Centre ACT 2610  
Telephone 1300 653 227  
TTY 1800 260 402  
Facsimile (02) 6244 5907  
E-mail  
[www.facs.gov.au](http://www.facs.gov.au)

D07/04/23848

Ms Jan Barnett  
Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes in New South Wales  
PO Box 259  
ROSEBERY NSW 1445

Dear Ms Barnett

Thank you for your letter of 3 July 2004 to the Minister for Family and Community Services about the Housing Summit. The Minister has asked me to reply to your letter on her/his behalf.

The provision of affordable housing to low-income earners is an area in which the Australian government already makes a significant contribution. The 2003 Commonwealth State Housing Agreement (CSHA) provides the States and Territories \$4.75 billion over five years.

In addition, the Commonwealth provides around \$1.9 billion annually for Rent Assistance to help nearly one million private renters with the cost of housing. The purpose is to provide extra help for those in private rental accommodation who face high rental costs.

Rent Assistance has a significant impact on increasing housing affordability for income support recipients and low-income families participating in the private rental market. In most cases, for people on a low-income engaging in the job market, Rent Assistance is the most appropriate form of housing assistance, as it does not lock low-income earners into small location-specific job markets.

Further, the Australian government is contributing \$832 million over five years to the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program, which provides crisis accommodation and support to people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

State and Territory Governments have at their disposal a range of other avenues that could potentially be used to provide housing assistance or to make the development of affordable housing more feasible. Options include planning regulations that respect the rights of low-income people to access appropriate housing and directing stamp duty taxation revenue and revenue from other State Government housing related charges to affordable housing.

Your letter highlights issues concerning the Australian taxation system and its relationship to housing in Australia. This department has responsibility for 'welfare' related housing, while the Australian Government Department of Treasury has responsibility for taxation policy and the broader housing system. Therefore, I have forwarded a copy of your proposal to Treasury.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Liza Carroll". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'L' and 'C'.

Liza Carroll  
Assistant Secretary  
Housing Support Branch

15 July 2004