



SENATOR THE HON MARK ARBIB
Minister for Indigenous Employment and Economic Development
Minister for Sport
Minister for Social Housing and Homelessness

MC11-013277

Mr Harry Williams
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Dear Mr Williams

Thank you for your email of 4 November 2011 to the Hon Jenny Macklin MP, Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, concerning housing development and unemployment. As the Minister for Social Housing and Homelessness, your email was referred to me for reply.

I would like to thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts on the current social and economic situation within Australia. Your thoughts on the matter are both interesting and thought-provoking. I share your concerns about social housing and appreciate the time you have taken to consider how this issue might be addressed.

Overall, we spend more than \$20 billion on housing programs to address supply and affordability issues in all areas of the housing market – including \$3 billion this year on Commonwealth Rent Assistance.

The Gillard Government is committed to growth and reform in the social housing sector. Social housing, that is public and not-for-profit housing, provides stable accommodation for Australians who would otherwise struggle in the private rental market.

The Government is investing \$5.6 billion over three and a half years in social housing through the Social Housing Initiative. This investment in social housing is the largest single amount ever committed by an Australian government and is vital to help us meet our target of halving homelessness by 2020. Around 31,000 people will benefit from this.

The Social Housing Initiative supports both the construction of new social housing and the repair and upgrade of existing homes. Around 19,600 new social housing dwellings are being built under the initiative with the assistance of the not-for-profit sector at a total cost of \$5.2 billion. The repairs and maintenance element (\$400 million) has enabled approximately 80,000 existing social housing dwellings to benefit from repairs and maintenance works. This includes major upgrades to around 12,000 social housing dwellings that were vacant or would have become uninhabitable without this work.

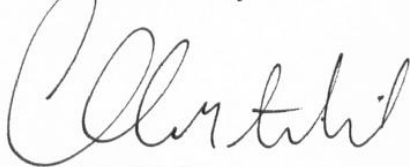
The Gillard Government provides \$6.2 billion in funding to the states and territories to deliver public housing to people in need. The day-to-day management of this housing rests with the individual state and territory governments. This includes location, tenancy matters, management of waiting lists and maintenance.

The Government is also increasing the supply of affordable rental housing for low to moderate-income households through the National Rental Affordability Scheme. Information about the Scheme can be found on the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities website at www.environment.gov.au, by phoning freecall 1800 334 505 (calls made from mobile phones may incur additional costs) or emailing nras@environment.gov.au.

I am always interested to hear of innovative ways of providing affordable housing that in the long term will make this investment reach further in addressing needs of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged Australians. I have referred your email to the Hon Tony Burke MP, Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, for his consideration as the issue of sustainable communities falls within his portfolio responsibilities.

I appreciate the time you have taken to provide your thoughts on sustainable communities. My office will contact you in the near future should an opportunity arise for you to raise these issues in an appropriate forum.

Yours sincerely



Mark Arbib

14 DEC 2011