

Social Housing Units

North Coast New South Wales | November 2015 | Enova Energy

What is social housing?

Sector overview

Social housing is rental housing provided by not-for-profit, non-government or government organizations to assist people who are unable to access suitable accommodation in the private rental market.

Social housing encompasses three forms of housing accommodation:

1. Public housing.
2. Community housing.
3. Aboriginal housing.

Definitions of housing:

Term:	Definition:
Community housing	Subsidised rental housing for very low-to-moderate income households managed by a Community Housing provider. Community housing can include affordable housing for very low-to-moderate income households and crisis accommodation for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.
Public housing	Dwellings owned (or leased) and managed by State and Territory housing authorities to provide affordable rental accommodation.
Aboriginal housing	The Aboriginal housing sector seeks to meet the particular housing needs of the Aboriginal community although not all Aboriginal people in the social housing system use Aboriginal housing.
Affordable housing	Housing delivered using some form of government intervention (via funding/subsidies, policy or legislation) to supply housing that is affordable for and targeted to households on very low to moderate incomes.

Social housing quick facts:

NSW has the largest social housing system in Australia, with roughly **150,000** dwellings.

Profile of tenants in social housing:

Over half of the members are of working age (between 18 - 64 year olds).

35% of tenants have a disability; **19%** have severe mental illness.

85% have completed junior secondary schooling, but only **33%** have completed Year 12 or beyond.

More than one in three individuals in social housing is a child or young adult, with roughly **4,000** of these young adults being the household head of the tenancy.

Source:

NSW Department of Family and Community Services

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Social housing regulatory structure:

NSW Department of Family and Community Services (FACS): FACS is the principal regulator and administrator of social housing.

Land and Housing Corporation (LAHC):

The LAHC is a statutory body responsible for managing the following social housing units:

Public housing

Aboriginal housing

Community Housing Providers (CHPs):

CHPs manage and own community housing properties.

Aboriginal Housing Office (AHO):

The AHO is a statutory body that works with FACS and LAHC to implement Aboriginal housing. AHPs also own and manage properties.

Aboriginal Housing Providers (AHPs):
Own and manage Aboriginal housing.

Amount of dwellings per housing type:

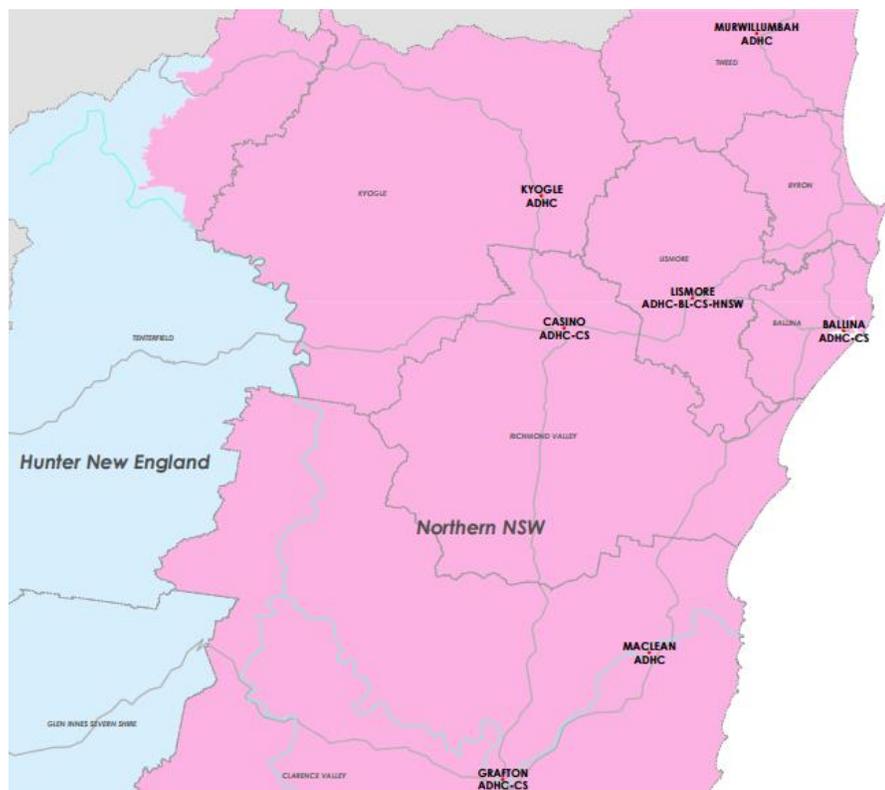
- Public housing: **120,000** dwellings;
- Aboriginal housing: **5,000** dwellings managed by LAHC; **5,000** managed by ACHPs.
- Community housing: **33,000** dwellings;

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Localities in region I assessed:

- Ballina
- Byron
- Clarence Valley
 - Maclean
 - Grafton
- Kyogle
- Lismore
- Richmond Valley
- Tweed Heads



Overview of results:

I interviewed three separate social housing unit employees and one social housing unit resident.

- 1 out of the 4 properties used renewable energy for electricity.
- 2 out of the 4 properties used solar hot water heaters.
- 2 out of the 4 properties had energy efficiency programs.

The main barriers for renewable energy in implementation:

- 4 out of 4 properties cited capital as a barrier to implementation.
- 2 out of 4 properties cited information distribution as a barrier to implementation.
- 1 out of 4 properties cited safety as a barrier to implementation.
- 2 out of 4 properties cited retrofitting old infrastructure as a barrier to implementation.

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Anglicare North Coast:

Anglicare North Coast delivers a wide range of services to disadvantaged and vulnerable persons across the north coast of NSW, with a current service area focus on accommodation for low income populations.

The locations for community housing units are:

- Grafton
- Maclean/Yamba
- Murwillumbah

Energy status:

All units are currently connected to a standard energy retailer and do not use renewable energy for electricity. However, there are 6 units with solar hot water that were recently constructed and an employee who traveled to units to teach about energy efficiency. The position was suspended this year due to funding constraints.

Address:

7 Wiseman Way (Head office)
Grafton, NSW 2460

Phone:

02. 6643. 4844

Website:

anglicarenorthcoast.org.au

Common Equity NSW:

Common Equity offers a mixture of properties some of which are provided via a head lease from NSW Land and Housing Corporation and some are owned and provided by Common Equity. They offer rental accommodation in the Sydney metro and select regional areas for people who are in need of low cost accommodation and who qualify for social and affordable housing. They also operate a co-operative in the region. I interviewed a resident of that co-operative.

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Location of co-operatives in region:

- Myocum
- Clunes
- Federal

Energy status: All five of the co-operative homes have solar hot water heaters; however, no units have renewable energy for electricity production. The units implemented an energy efficiency program through their electricity retailer that was successful.

Address:

3/362 Kent Street (Head office)
Sydney, NSW 2000

Phone:

1800.066.834

Website:

commonequity.com.au

On Track Community Programs:

OTCP manages over 220 properties and assists people to apply for social housing through Housing Pathways.

The locations for community housing units are:

- Tweed Heads

Energy status:

Some units use a standard electricity retailer whereas their “Nation Building” units (built by the government in 2007) have renewable energy for electricity. Additionally, some of the units have solar hot water technology. The units do not have an energy efficiency program.

Address:

44A Wharf Street (Tweed Heads office)
Tweed Heads, NSW 2485

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Phone:

07.5536.2537

Website:

otcp.com.au

Tweed Valley Women's Service:

This is a not-for-profit crisis accommodation center encapsulated under community housing. It provides safe crisis accommodation for women and children escaping family violence.

The locations for community housing unit is:

- Tweed Heads

Energy status:

The organization does not use renewable energy for electricity nor solar hot water heaters. In addition, it has not implemented an energy efficiency program.

Address:

Cnr Prince & Nullum Street (Head office)

PO Box 407

Murwillumbah, NSW 2484

Phone:

02.6672.4188

Website:

www.tswomen.org.au

Other social housing not interviewed (due to time or nonresponse):

Community housing:

- North Coast Community Housing
- BaptistCare

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Aboriginal Housing (could not interview due to ethical constraints associated with program I am researching with):

- Gurehlgam Corporation
- Jali Local Aboriginal Land Corporation
- Lismore Neighborhood Center
- Tweed Aboriginal Co-Operative Society

Special homelessness services (subset of community housing):

- Clarence River Women's Refuge and Outreach Services
- Women Up North
- Byron Emergency Accommodation Project
- The Family Center
- Youth Connections North Coast
- Northern River Women and Children's Services

Public Housing

- Housing NSW

Guidelines for future renewable energy installation in social housing:

The most significant barrier cited by social housing units was the capital barrier of installation. Affording the cost is difficult for any low-income or vulnerable household, so finding ways to finance the installation is imperative. Many programs have used the landlord-tenant relationship to accommodate this barrier by repaying the installation cost with increased rent payments for the tenants.

Another significant barrier to consider is the information barrier. This means that tenants have a complex set of needs and need to be well-informed about the installation and how it will affect them.

Additionally, concerns over retrofitting old units to new technology and safety restrictions against installation of technology on roofs was expressed by the social housing unit interviewees.

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My study assessed if CORE could be a solution to these barriers – and it can. Having the project be localized in the community will allow for greater information spread and could combat the costs of installation either through community donation or having community investment to pay for the installation.

This is a promising field and Enova should consider it in the future, especially if the company can offer a competitive price tariff to maximize energy savings. The only major barrier is the inherent business of the social housing sector. However, given more time, this could be a feasible project if one successfully addresses the above barriers.

Resources for more information:

Locations of social housing:

- <http://www.housingpathways.nsw.gov.au/Contact+us/List+of+Community+Housing+Providers.htm>:

(Community Housing Providers List)

- <http://www.housingpathways.nsw.gov.au/Contact+us/List+of+Public+Housing+Offices.htm>

(List of Public Housing offices)

- [http://www.housing.nsw.gov.au/NR/rdonlyres/8C1495A3-2DBD-49BC-B4F8-](http://www.housing.nsw.gov.au/NR/rdonlyres/8C1495A3-2DBD-49BC-B4F8-E8888BD8DAC9/0/NorthernNSWSHSFactSheet.pdf)

[E8888BD8DAC9/0/NorthernNSWSHSFactSheet.pdf](http://www.housing.nsw.gov.au/NR/rdonlyres/8C1495A3-2DBD-49BC-B4F8-E8888BD8DAC9/0/NorthernNSWSHSFactSheet.pdf)

(List of Special Homelessness Services)

- [http://cpagency.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/CPA_Future-Energy_Eurobodalla-](http://cpagency.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/CPA_Future-Energy_Eurobodalla-SHASA_Stage-1-Report-Final.pdf)

[SHASA_Stage-1-Report-Final.pdf](http://cpagency.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/CPA_Future-Energy_Eurobodalla-SHASA_Stage-1-Report-Final.pdf)

(Study in process analyzing barriers of implementing renewable energy in low-income community housing unit. It is very relevant to this subject).