Housing Registrar Report
2007-08
Our Mission

To protect social housing assets and ensure quality services to tenants by regulating well governed, well managed, financially viable rental housing agencies
Contents

Our vision 4
The registrar 6
The director 7
Housing associations and housing providers 8
Housing registrar 10
The registered housing sector 12
Outcomes for tenants 14
Future plans 19
With thanks 20
The team 21
Our vision

A robust, vibrant regulated rental housing sector that grows affordable housing for the Victorian community
Amendments to the Housing Act 1983 in January 2005 created a regulatory framework to encourage the development of rental housing agencies providing affordable housing to low-income Victorians.

This legislation also created the Registrar of Housing Agencies, with functions and powers to register and regulate rental housing agencies.

The Housing Registrar was established as an operational unit within the Department of Human Services in 2005.

The Housing Registrar has two main functions:
- registration of rental housing agencies
- compliance and performance monitoring of registered agencies

At 30 June 2008, there were eight registered housing associations and four registered housing providers.

Our principles of good regulation

Transparency – clear explanations of decisions and actions taken

Accountability – decisions justified by data and evidence

Proportionality – monitoring is appropriate to the risks facing an individual agency

Consistency – judgements and actions are applied in a predictable way

Targeting – focused engagement
Creating a new form of supply where government investment could be leveraged by the not-for-profit community sector was seen as the most effective way forward, but it would have been unwise to commit large volumes of funding without ensuring there were adequate safeguards.

Amendments to the Housing Act 1983, passed in 2005, created a robust regulatory framework. This provides a high degree of confidence and assurance to both government and other stakeholders that registered housing agencies are able to deliver quality services to their tenants, and in the case of housing associations, develop new affordable housing, leveraging government grant.

Registration and regulation have also enabled us to build the capacity of the sector, which has increased the degree and extent of trust the government has in the sector, as is manifest in the substantial degree of investment afforded to registered agencies.

Such leverage is important as it increases the amount that government can spend on affordable housing by an extra 25%. Given that the affordable housing budget commitment in 2007-08 of $300m, this represents many more additional homes for people in housing need.

The Victorian Government has also been able to transfer stock assets to associations for the first time with the eight housing associations receiving some 550 properties worth in excess of $175m.

By investing in the regulated affordable housing sector Victoria is leading the way across Australia, providing a real and complementary alternative to traditional public housing.

I would commend The Housing Registrar Report to you as it clearly demonstrates the significant progress we have made in the growth of affordable housing in Victoria. Our achievements to date clearly demonstrate how this new form of affordable rental housing delivery has made a significant contribution to meeting housing need.

In coming years we will approach the next term of government, which we hope will build on the investment made to date in these new housing associations and providers.

Ken Downie
When I first arrived in Australia some three years ago, all we had was legislation, a set of Performance Standards, six registered agencies and a couple of staff. We now have a regulatory framework that is robust, fair and transparent and sets the standard across the country. We also have many more registered agencies and 12 staff.

Our regulatory framework has enabled Government to begin to meet the crisis in affordable housing. Over the last three years, there has been just over half a billion dollars invested, primarily through housing associations, with the 25% leverage they bring, delivering 1000 new homes to date for Victoria with another 1200 expected in the coming years.

Introducing the regulatory framework has not been without its challenges as it represents a major change for the sector in the way it relates to government and works with communities to provide affordable housing. Our comprehensive set of Performance Standards means that our sector has a solid set of business standards on which to judge their performance. They also provide the basis for continuous improvement over time.

Agencies have responded well to this challenge and whilst registration has been a difficult and demanding process, organisations are much more business and performance focused at the end of the process.

The affordable rental housing sector has gone from strength to strength and now has 5500 homes with assets worth almost a billion dollars, yet it has not lost its diversity or commitment to the community.

Still, we cannot rest on this major achievement as homelessness and the limited supply of affordable rental housing are real issues facing us all.

The Housing Registrar in its regulatory capacity looks forward to working with government as an investor and registered agencies as developers to further grow the supply of much-needed affordable rental housing, by ensuring that the sector is well governed, viable and well managed.

Anthony Hardy
Housing associations and housing providers

‘With the creation of affordable housing and significant development capital on the table, Victoria is now leading the way in the reform of how affordable housing is provided in Australia’

‘The board is excited by the prospect of being able to provide the services within its charter and to maintain a healthy balance sheet well into the future’

‘With the government’s transfer of ownership of property assets to housing associations the value of assets will more than double over the next two years’

‘Our biggest and best assets are not our great buildings but our great staff’

Registered housing agencies are not-for-profit organisations that provide affordable rental housing for low income households and are registered as either housing associations or housing providers under the Housing Act 1983.

All registered agencies must comply with Performance Standards and in addition, housing associations undertake capital projects to grow affordable rental housing, using a mix of government funds and private sector investment.

Housing associations must be companies limited by shares or guarantee. Housing providers can also be incorporated associations or cooperatives.

Registered housing agencies

> Own, manage and develop affordable rental housing
> Provide a range of housing support and assistance to clients
> Are viable businesses partnering with both government and the community
> Have met registration criteria and meet ongoing regulatory compliance against Performance Standards

Quotes from registered housing agencies
Registered housing agencies deliver a broad range of housing assistance and support services to a wide cross-section of groups and clients.

Registered housing agencies as at 30 June 2008

**Housing associations**
- Common Equity Housing Ltd
- Community Housing (Vic) Ltd
- Loddon Mallee Housing Services Ltd
- Melbourne Affordable Housing
- Port Phillip Housing Association Ltd
- Rural Housing Network Ltd
- Supported Housing Ltd (registered housing association within Housing Choices Australia)
- Yarra Community Housing Ltd

**Housing providers**
- HomeGround Services
- Servants in Hawthorn Inc
- WAYSS Ltd
- Women’s Housing Ltd

**Types of housing**
- Long term rental housing
- Transitional housing
- Crisis accommodation

**Services provided**
- Youth support
- Family violence crisis
- Homelessness support
- Women’s outreach
- Private rental assistance
- Social housing advocacy and support
- Housing information and referral
- Complex care needs
- Housing support for Indigenous tenants
- Indigenous men’s family violence support

**Client groups**
- Older people
- Singles and families
- People with a disability
- Young people
- Key workers (workers with employment in the inner city in lower paid jobs)
- Women
- Indigenous Australians
In 2007-08 we

- Launched the Housing Registrar’s website providing agencies with a central point of contact, visibility and communication
- Published the regulatory framework series that consists of four major publications
  - Our regulatory framework
  - Registration
  - Compliance and performance
  - Financial viability

These publications promote communication to key affordable housing stakeholders through clear guidelines for agencies and the role of the regulator.

The Housing Registrar team received a commendation under the Department of Human Services Valuing Achievement awards in recognition of our commitment and performance during 2007-08.
Team achievements

Registration
> Developed and launched online application system, REGIS, which allows for efficient uploading of documents and reports from agencies through an online medium
> Provided registration training, advice and information to over 40 agencies
> Published three guidance documents to assist agencies applying for registration
  - Completing the registration form
  - Understanding the registration criteria - legislative requirements
  - Understanding the registration criteria - winding up provisions
> Registration approved for six new agencies

Regulation
> All registered agencies demonstrated compliance with legislative and reporting requirements as well as continuous improvement through the annual review process
> Streamlined regulatory reporting and review requirements for registered agencies
> Undertook first collection and analysis of key performance measures data from registered agencies as part of ongoing assessment of agency viability
> Published guidance documents, templates and forms including
  - Complaints investigation
  - Key performance measures
  - Agency self assessment and reporting
  - Newly registered agencies

Financial appraisal
> Assessed all registered agencies as financially viable
> Conducted targeted financial training for up to 40 agencies seeking registration
> Commenced development of enhanced financial appraisal tool
> Assisted over 30 agencies to prepare registration financial reports
> Employed two additional staff members to support financial and business appraisal as a part of the annual registration process
The regulated housing sector
12 registered agencies in Victoria as at 30 June 2008

Sector overview
- Number of registered agencies: 12
  (8 housing associations, 4 housing providers)
- Number of properties managed: 5523
  (Housing associations 4692, Housing providers 831)
- Value of assets owned: $942 m
- Total operating revenue: $62 m
- Total capital expenditure: $153 m

Growth in affordable housing
- Number of new properties: 648
  This was a 12% growth in new properties over the period (also 797 new tenancies added over period)
- Number of new households housed: 2816
  in long term accommodation over 12 month period (HA 2045, HP 771)

People
- Number of staff: 581
- Total number of households: 7167
  (HA 6199, HP 968)

Percentage of new affordable rental housing: 98%
Geographical spread of housing association properties

- Barwon 12%
- Grampians 4%
- North & West 28%
- Loddon 9%
- Hume 8%
- Gippsland 6%
- Metropolitan Southern 26%
- Eastern 7%
- North & West 28%
Outcomes for tenants

It’s not just about the growth of affordable rental housing or registered housing agencies. The sector is helping tenants to participate, feel safe and secure, and move on with their lives.

Working with the community

Loddon Mallee Housing Services established a Tenants Reference Group in 2008 to provide advice and feedback on their operations. The group consisting of nine tenants provide the Loddon Mallee board with input to policy, critical issues and areas of opportunity within their property and services portfolio.

Providing a place to call home

‘I feel like I have been given a second chance, both in life and with this home, I’m so happy and thankful’.
Delivering safety and security

‘...the feeling of no more being scared, stressed, my kids safe and able to start again (can’t put it into words, but it was a blessing)...’
Developing life skills

In 2007, Port Phillip Housing Association funded a cooking class program for the residents of the Woodstock Rooming House. The aim of the program was for residents to engage with each other and develop a sense of community while learning how to cook simple, healthy and delicious food.

The results include

▶ obtaining a $10000 grant from the local council after the success of their ‘Breaking the Bread’ program
▶ over one third of the residents participating on a weekly basis
▶ printing of residents’ cookbook
▶ provision for the catering at the 2008 Annual General Meeting for the Port Phillip Housing Association

Pride and a huge sense of accomplishment has been felt by all the residents involved.
Future plans

Looking to the future, the affordable housing sector can anticipate unprecedented growth, both in the number of agencies registered and the amount of affordable housing owned and managed by registered further agencies. In 2008-09, the Housing Registrar will focus on supporting agencies through the registration process and on strengthening our regulatory engagement with already registered agencies.

**Development highlights for 2008-09**

- Victorian Government is investing around $80 million in over 400 new homes
- Examples of planned significant housing projects
  - Elizabeth Street Common Ground Supportive Housing Project – 160 Units (Yarra Community Housing Ltd)
  - Victoria Harbour Docklands Affordable Housing – 57 Units (Melbourne Affordable Housing)
  - House and land packages for families across Bendigo, Ballarat and Geelong – 61 Units (Loddon Mallee Housing Services)
  - 89 units across 3 sites in Elwood and St Kilda targeted towards singles (Port Phillip Housing Association)
  - House and land packages for 69 units within Brimbank (Community Housing (Vic) Ltd)
  - House and land packages for 22 units in Lalor (Supported Housing Ltd)
- Finalising housing associations asset strategies which will drive future investment decisions

**Housing Registrar aims for 2008-09**

- Around 40 agencies to be registered by June 09
- More targeted regulatory engagement based on proportionate risk
- Enhanced capabilities of REGIS, our online portal with registered agencies
- Development of new agency business planning tool to support agency growth planning and risk mitigation
- Publication of two additional documents to complete the regulatory framework series
- Development of regulatory guidance documents, including partnership and mergers and treasury management
With thanks

The Housing Registrar thanks the following organisations for their contribution to our work in 2007-08 with the affordable housing sector:

- Community Housing Federation of Victoria
- Council to Homeless Persons
- Domestic Violence Victoria
- CDL and Associates
- Minter Ellison Lawyers
- Actual Size

Thanks also to all agencies listed on page 9 that provided input to this year’s report.

A special thank you for those agencies that enabled us to take photographs and talk to their staff and tenants:

- Community Housing (Vic) Ltd
- Loddon Mallee Housing Services Ltd
- Port Phillip Housing Association Ltd
- Supported Housing Ltd (registered housing association within Housing Choices Australia)
The team

Mark Hamilton-Smith
Project Leader
Regulation

Caroline Neske
Project Officer
Regulation

Michael Forbes
Manager Regulation

Anthony Hardy
Director
Housing Registrar

Ken Downie
Registrar of Housing Agencies

Olga Anisimova
Project Leader
Registration

Emma Harrowfield
Project Officer
Registration

Chamath Fernando
Senior Financial Analyst

Sue Bell
Manager Financial Appraisal

Jo McInerney
Manager
Registration

Olga Anisimova
Project Leader
Registration

Julie Tirpkos
Executive Office Coordinator

Christine Witton
Project Officer
Registration

Mark Hamilton-Smith
Project Leader
Regulation

Caroline Neske
Project Officer
Regulation

Michael Forbes
Manager Regulation

Anthony Hardy
Director
Housing Registrar

Ken Downie
Registrar of Housing Agencies

Olga Anisimova
Project Leader
Registration

Emma Harrowfield
Project Officer
Registration

Chamath Fernando
Senior Financial Analyst

Sue Bell
Manager Financial Appraisal

Jo McInerney
Manager
Registration

Niraj Pau
Senior Business Analyst