



PSA Submission

Government Policy Statement on Housing and Urban Development (GPS-HUD)

Discussion Document

July 2021

About the PSA

The New Zealand Public Service Association Te Pūkenga Here Tikanga Mahi (the PSA) is the largest trade union in New Zealand with over 80,000 members. We are a democratic organisation representing members in the public service, the wider state sector (the district health boards, crown research institutes and other crown entities), state owned enterprises, local government, tertiary education institutions and non-governmental organisations working in the health, social services and community sectors.

The PSA has been advocating for strong, innovative and effective public and community services since our establishment in 1913. People join the PSA to negotiate their terms of employment collectively, to have a voice within their workplace and to have an independent public voice on the quality of public and community services and how they're delivered.

The PSA is an affiliate of the New Zealand Council of Trade Unions Te Kauae Kaimahi (CTU).

Our values

Solidarity - Kotahitanga

We champion members' interests with a strong effective voice. We stand together, supporting and empowering members, individually and collectively.

Social justice - Pāpori Ture Tika

We take a stand for decent treatment and justice. We embrace diversity and challenge inequality.

Integrity and respect - Te Pono me te Whakaute

Our actions are characterised by professionalism, integrity and respect.

Solution focused - Otinga Arotahi

We are a progressive and constructive union, constantly seeking solutions that improve members' working lives.

Democratic - Tā te Nuinga e Whakatau ai

We encourage participation from members. We aim to be transparent, accessible and inclusive in the way we work.

Summary

The PSA supports the purpose of Te Tūāpapa Kura Kāinga – Ministry of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) consultation on the Government Policy Statement on Housing and Urban Development (GPS-HUD) but believes that some adjustments are needed to ensure a reformed housing and urban development policy agenda is comprehensive, fit-for-purpose and relevant moving forward. These include:

- The vision must state that homes are accessible and meet everyone's long-term needs
- The aspirational outcomes must include the empowerment and participation of people
- The six focus areas must include a commitment to a programme to provide more state built social housing for rent and purchase, and to make the social housing stock more accessible and sustainable

The PSA's position

We welcome that Te Tūāpapa Kura Kāinga – Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is leading the development of the Government Policy Statement on Housing and Urban Development (GPS-HUD), which will communicate the long-term vision for our housing and urban development system, and how Government will work with others to make it happen.

The PSA has a long-standing interest in shifting the way we, as a country, house our people. It is one of the most pressing issues for Aotearoa New Zealand and for our members. Housing is a human right that ensures people live in safe, secure, healthy, energy-efficient, accessible and affordable homes in which to raise their children and to grow old. It enables us to learn, to work, to be healthy and happy.

The human cost of our current housing crisis is already too high which is why we need immediate change. Our poor-quality rental stock is contributing to long term mental, emotional and physical impairments. The rising cost of housing and renting has far outstripped the pay increases our members have received (or might not receive due to government's wage restraint for the public service) making it impossible for many to manage their budgets. Communities suffer and long-term inequality with its manifold detrimental impacts on the society and economy is further substantiated.

It is important that key workers, including those working to deliver essential public and community services, are able to afford to live near where they work. This ensures that those workers are well connected to their communities and also reduces commute times, carbon usage and pressure on overstretched transport infrastructure. This is currently not the case in our major urban centres. A 2017 survey of PSA members working in public and community services in Auckland (n=2512) found that these key workers were more likely to rent than the general population and if they own the home they live in, less likely to be mortgage free than the general population. Close to half had unaffordable housing (spent more than a third of their income on housing) and close to 1 in 5 spent two thirds of their income on housing. 6 in 10 said that the housing crisis had impacted negatively on their quality of life.

Significant investment and commitment are needed by the state to build more and better social housing for rent and purchase. We also need to build processes that give people greater input into decision-making about how they live. Policy and planning should include consideration of accessibility of affordable housing for key workers.

Principles and recommendations

We welcome the intention to work together across agencies and entities and partner with stakeholders to make safe, secure, healthy and affordable housing a reality for all living in Aotearoa New Zealand. It is time to pool our collective wisdom and our sense of fairness and compassion to design the best housing solutions for current and future generations. This is the only way we can achieve the proposed vision “that everyone in Aotearoa New Zealand lives in a healthy, safe, secure, and affordable home that meets their needs, within a thriving, inclusive and sustainable community.”

Recommendation 1: The vision must state that homes are energy-efficient, accessible and meet everyone’s long-term needs

We support the outlined position but believe that it needs to be amended to state “that everyone in Aotearoa New Zealand lives in a healthy, safe, secure, **energy-efficient, accessible** and affordable home that meets their **long-term** needs, within a thriving, inclusive and sustainable community.”

The PSA recommends making explicit that homes must be energy-efficient and accessible and that homes meet long-term needs of people. Accessibility is crucial for differently-abled people (including the elderly or people with babies and young children). All newly built homes should reflect universal design principles. Secure homes -by definition- meet the long-term needs of people to enable them to fully integrate into a community, its schools, workplaces and neighbourhoods.

Recommendation 2: The aspirational outcomes must include the empowerment and participation of people

To achieve genuine and enduring partnerships and meaningful place-based approaches the empowerment of people and their participation is crucial. Participation and cooperation are ways of working. Decision-making should be participative and inclusive. It is difficult to see how outcomes can be equitable without this. Participation should also be a focus area as well as an outcome in its own right. Empowering people to participate and take ownership in ensuring a basic human right like housing (for themselves and others) makes a significant contribution to a stable democracy.

Workers in the public and community services are expert in a range of interrelated topics including housing, health, inclusive community development, social assistance, transport, just industry transitions, energy efficiency and so on. As public servants they must be an integral part of the decision-making process regarding policy and service design.

NGOs representing the interests of renters must also be included to ensure participation of those affected by rent increases, substandard houses and unaffordability of buying their own home. Renters' rights must be strengthened in legislation and ongoing participation helps to improve access and conditions of rental properties.

Recommendation 3: The six focus areas must include a commitment to build more social housing and to make social housing stock more accessible and sustainable

The heart of the current housing crisis is a critical shortage of affordable housing. Insufficient investment in social housing by successive governments has dovetailed with the preference of private developers to build at the expensive end of the market where profits can be maximised. The impact of this on low- to middle-income New Zealanders has been disastrous.

The PSA wants to see the integrity, dignity and value of the social housing sector restored. We believe the provision of social housing equals the provision of a public good which supports the respect for, protection and fulfilment to the basic human right to adequate housing.

The most recent [IPSOS New Zealand Issues Monitor from June 2021](#) housing is the top concern for people in New Zealand. 53% of respondents mentioned it as an important issue facing New Zealand, double the next most important issue. Key concerns are housing affordability, high or increasing house prices as well as high rental costs. Surveys of our members confirm that they share these concerns also. The lack of appropriate wage and salary increases over the years and the announced pay restraint for the coming years will have significant impacts on many of our members - not only on their current and future housing situation but also their health, wellbeing and for instance future investment in education. Sicker, poorer, unhappier workers will impact on their work in public and community services and their communities at large.

While we are aware of the Public Housing Plan 2021-2014, which intends to provide an additional 8,000 public and transitional housing places, the discussion document neglects the importance of social housing. The purpose and intended outcomes of creating more and better social housing for rent and purchase should be made explicit within the overall strategic direction (rather than just referencing the Public Housing Plan).

A commitment to a programme to provide more state built social housing for rent and purchase, and to make the social housing stock more accessible and sustainable should be included in the Government Policy Statement on Housing and Urban Development. The government should increase

investment into social housing. The bulk of this investment should go to the building of quality state housing for both rent and purchase. However, the state should also work collaboratively with local government, Iwi, other Māori organisations and the community not-for-profit sector to support both building and tenant care programmes.

There are many arguments in favour of the state building social housing. Apart from the state's duty to respect, protect and fulfil its human rights obligations to adequate shelter through houses that can be purchased or rented, there are a combination of factors that are unique to the state. For instance, the state's size, its ability to raise low-interest loans, its understanding of housing needs across the country and its ability to plan on a national scale, mean that it would provide the most efficient and effective way of delivering a comprehensive social housing building programme.

PSA members are ideally positioned to contribute to a transformation of social housing in New Zealand. Our members in HUD, the Ministry of Social Development, in local government, in the public and community services have an excellent understanding of the needs of tenants (including the most vulnerable) and communities, people's needs who apply for financial assistance, knowledge of the current housing stock and how to design and make liveable communities.

Thank you for considering our submission.

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