

State Election 2006 – Responses from Candidates to CHCSA Questionnaire

Hon Jay Weatherill (Minister for Housing)

1. Are you aware of the Community Housing Organisations which operate in your electorate ? - Yes
2. Have you arranged to meet with representatives of these Community Housing Organisations ?

In my role as Minister I have met many of them, and regularly have contact with CHCSA as a peak body.

3. If not, would you like to be put in touch with the Community Housing Organisations which operate in your electorate (with their consent)? - N/A
4. What do you think are the critical housing issues facing South Australians who cannot afford or who do not wish to become home owners ? What are the solutions ?

There are housing affordability issues in South Australia that prevent people from entering home ownership. Largely, these issues are a result of Federal policies that drive up demand – for example, the First Homeowners' Grant and negative gearing. There has also been a serious cut in funding from the Commonwealth to the social housing system that has traditionally provided a real alternative to homeownership for people.

The Rann Labor Government has been working to address this. In our first term of Government we introduced a range of homeownership products through HomeStart Finance – Nunga Loam, graduate Loan, carers Loan, Equity Start Loan (for social housing tenants) – to encourage homeownership. We have also introduced programs – such as the Private rental Liaison Project through the Social inclusion Unit – to assist those low-income or disadvantaged households that rely on the private rental system.

Our Housing Plan for South Australia provides goals to increase the supply of affordable housing over the next ten years. We have maintained a strong social housing system and have particularly developed the robust community housing sector which meets the needs of many people in our community who can't or don't want to buy a house.

If re-elected, a Rann Labor Government will continue to support the social housing sector. We would look for more growth in community housing which is a sector that we believe provides a high standard of accommodation and support for its tenants. We are also working with private landlords to assist them in providing support for low-income tenants and will continue our work with the private sector, the community and Local Government to increase the supply of affordable housing in all parts of South Australia.

5. What role do you see for community housing in providing solutions to the housing problems of South Australians ?

Community housing is a viable response to many of the housing issues confronting this State. A re-elected Rann Labor Government would continue to expand the sector and work with it to provide the best possible service to its tenants. Since Labor came

into office, an additional 355 community housing properties have been added to the sector, taking the total stock up to 4414 properties, managed by 121 CHOs (from 4059 properties in 02/03).

Unlike the Liberal Opposition, who recently announced they would spend \$20 million of community housing money on a development at Glenside (effectively putting a freeze on two years' of capital development for the sector), we would ensure that housing money is spent on the community housing program.

We have already explored innovative financing arrangements through HomeStart Finance and are working with a range of CHOs to build more housing through the new Affordable Housing Innovations Unit.

We have also introduced a new funding agreement with CHOs to ensure their financial viability and have developed a new Application System that will ensure a much more streamlined application process for community housing.

Paul Caica – Member for Colton

1. Are you aware of the Community Housing Organisations which operate in your electorate ? - Yes
2. Have you arranged to meet with representatives of these Community Housing Organisations ?

The Minister for Community Housing regularly meets with key CHOs and the CHCSA and keeps me informed of his discussions.

3. If not, would you like to be put in touch with the Community Housing Organisations which operate in your electorate (with their consent)?

Any contact would be welcome. I appreciate the CHCSA's offer of assistance and look forward to a productive working relationship with them in the future.

4. What do you think are the critical housing issues facing South Australians who cannot afford or who do not wish to become home owners ? What are the solutions ?

As per Minister's answers.

5. What role do you see for community housing in providing solutions to the housing problems of South Australians ?

As per Minister's answers.

Marylou Corcoran – Labor Candidate for Finniss

1. Are you aware of the Community Housing Organisations which operate in your electorate ? - Yes
2. Have you arranged to meet with representatives of these Community Housing Organisations ? - Yes

3. If not, would you like to be put in touch with the Community Housing Organisations which operate in your electorate (with their consent)? – N/A

4. What do you think are the critical housing issues facing South Australians who cannot afford or who do not wish to become home owners ? What are the solutions ?

As per Minister's answer.

5. What role do you see for community housing in providing solutions to the housing problems of South Australians ?

As per Minister's answer.

Kevin Phelan (The Australian Greens)

1. Are you aware of the Community Housing Organisations which operate in your electorate ? – Yes. The Greens are fielding candidates in all electorates.

2. Have you arranged to meet with representatives of these Community Housing Organisations ? – Yes. Mark Parnell met with representatives from the Shelter SA Housing Forum at the Governor Hindmarsh Hotel on the 22nd February.

3. If not, would you like to be put in touch with the Community Housing Organisations which operate in your electorate (with their consent)? – All candidates for the Greens would be interested in meeting with representatives from CHOs that are located in their electorate.

4. What do you think are the critical housing issues facing South Australians who cannot afford or who do not wish to become home owners ? What are the solutions ?

Obviously, the two most pressing issues for South Australians who cannot afford to buy a house or do not wish to own a house are affordability and availability of 'decent' rental housing. With regards to the affordability of housing for those on low incomes, the Greens Social Citizenship and Welfare policy highlights how "... administrative restrictions and tightening of welfare provision have further excluded and stigmatised income support recipients and created unprecedented demand on community welfare agencies and charities. The aggregate effect is driving numbers of Australians into absolute poverty and social isolation". The Greens are committed to principles that a socially just and sustainable society rests on the "... provision of a guaranteed adequate income for all its citizens" and that "... strong communities are built on equal and respectful relationships. Power imbalances must be corrected so that individuals and small and not for profit organisations can fully participate in community building. The Greens view increased employment opportunities and 'adequate' welfare benefits as the best way forward in empowering those on low incomes or government benefits.

With regards to the availability of housing for those on low income or not wishing to own a house, the Greens are committed to the increased availability of 'decent' rental housing. The greens issued a media release on the 22nd February 2006 declaring their commitment to reforming rental laws so that they are fairer for both landlords and tenants. The Greens are also committed to more energy and water efficient houses.

Under their Housing and Urban Planning policies, the Greens are committed to the following goals :

- Ensure that people unable to provide for their own housing are given assistance to do so by the Government
- Eliminate housing-related poverty by increased provision of public housing
- Increase tenant participation in decisions about services to be provided, review building codes so that houses are constructed in accordance with energy efficient design criteria and so that building materials are selected for their low environmental impact
- Encourage the development of urban villages in consultation with local communities to allow people to live in ecologically and socially satisfying ways within cities.

5. What role do you see for community housing in providing solutions to the housing problems of South Australians ?

The Greens are committed to "... supporting sustainable community development initiatives and planning." The greens are fully supportive of any community co-op that aims to provide affordable 'decent' rental housing for South Australians. The greens believe that community housing is a vehicle for the empowerment of those within the community that are often voiceless with regards to their housing needs. By enabling people to directly contribute to all aspects of their housing, you are allowing individuals to have a voice, that you are allowing their 'story' to be heard. By doing so, not only will an inclusive community environment be fostered, but individuals will also be encouraged to take responsibility for their and other housing requirements.

Marcus Reseigh – Australian Democrats Candidate for Frome

1. Are you aware of the Community Housing Organisations which operate in your electorate ? – as far as I am aware, CHCSA does not operate in the electorate of Frome.
2. Have you arranged to meet with representatives of these Community Housing Organisations ? – See above
3. If not, would you like to be put in touch with the Community Housing Organisations which operate in your electorate (with their consent)? - See above
4. What do you think are the critical housing issues facing South Australians who cannot afford or who do not wish to become home owners ? What are the solutions ?
 - low rent housing
 - availability of housing
 - unemployment
 - solution – obviously government infrastructure and a planned approach backed by adequate resources.
5. What role do you see for community housing in providing solutions to the housing problems of South Australians ?
 - As necessity
 - Long term problem that won't go away

- Need to play a role to stimulate action

Ron Watts Liberal Candidate for Little Para

1. Are you aware of the Community Housing Organisations which operate in your electorate ? - Yes
2. Have you arranged to meet with representatives of these Community Housing Organisations ? - No
3. If not, would you like to be put in touch with the Community Housing Organisations which operate in your electorate (with their consent)? - Yes
4. What do you think are the critical housing issues facing South Australians who cannot afford or who do not wish to become home owners ? What are the solutions ?

Education and employment outcomes. Awareness and understanding. Empowerment and consultation in decision making processed and to be involved.

5. What role do you see for community housing in providing solutions to the housing problems of South Australians ?

Access and affordability.

Liz Penfold MP – Member for Flinders

1. Are you aware of the Community Housing Organisations which operate in your electorate ? - Yes
2. Have you arranged to meet with representatives of these Community Housing Organisations ? - Yes
3. If not, would you like to be put in touch with the Community Housing Organisations which operate in your electorate (with their consent)? – I am in regular contact as we have many housing issues.
4. What do you think are the critical housing issues facing South Australians who cannot afford or who do not wish to become home owners ? What are the solutions ?

Allow renters who have shown they are reliable to buy the Housing Trust home without a deposit and adequate increased repayments so funds can be ploughed back into more houses enabling more disadvantaged the opportunity and security of home ownership and making more homes available for rent to those without. HomeStart loan without a deposit.

5. What role do you see for community housing in providing solutions to the housing problems of South Australians ?

Lots of opportunities for aged/disabled and disadvantaged people. In my electorate this would particularly cover aboriginal housing.

Hon John Hill MP – Member for Kaurana, Minister for Health, Environment and Conservation, Southern Suburbs and assisting the Premier in the Arts

1. Are you aware of the Community Housing Organisations which operate in your electorate ? - Yes
2. Have you arranged to meet with representatives of these Community Housing Organisations ? – No – Minister for Community Housing regularly meets with key CHOs and keeps me informed.
3. If not, would you like to be put in touch with the Community Housing Organisations which operate in your electorate (with their consent)?

I am aware of the CHOs that operate within my electorate and look forward to continuing a productive working relationship with them.

4. What do you think are the critical housing issues facing South Australians who cannot afford or who do not wish to become home owners ? What are the solutions ?

As per Minister's answers.

5. What role do you see for community housing in providing solutions to the housing problems of South Australians ?

As per Minister's answers.

Mr Justin Jarvis – Labor Candidate for Stuart

1. Are you aware of the Community Housing Organisations which operate in your electorate ? – Yes, the Eudunda Lutheran Parish Housing Association is located within the electorate of Stuart.
2. Have you arranged to meet with representatives of these Community Housing Organisations ? The Minister for Community Housing regularly meets with key CHOs and the CHCSA and keeps me informed of his discussions.
3. If not, would you like to be put in touch with the Community Housing Organisations which operate in your electorate (with their consent)? I appreciate the CHCSA's offer of assistance and look forward to working with the Council and the Eudunda Lutheran parish Housing Association in the future.

4. What do you think are the critical housing issues facing South Australians who cannot afford or who do not wish to become home owners ? What are the solutions ?

As per Minister's answers

5. What role do you see for community housing in providing solutions to the housing problems of South Australians ?

As per Minister's answers

Ms Jennifer Rankine – Labor Member for Wright

1. Are you aware of the Community Housing Organisations which operate in your electorate ? Yes I am aware of those that operate in the Salisbury area.
2. Have you arranged to meet with representatives of these Community Housing Organisations ? No I have not met with their representatives.
3. If not, would you like to be put in touch with the Community Housing Organisations which operate in your electorate (with their consent)? I would be happy to develop a productive working relationship with them in the future.
4. What do you think are the critical housing issues facing South Australians who cannot afford or who do not wish to become home owners ? What are the solutions ?

As per Minister's answers

5. What role do you see for community housing in providing solutions to the housing problems of South Australians ?

As per Minister's answers

Mr Leon Bignall, Labor Candidate for Mawson

1. Are you aware of the Community Housing Organisations which operate in your electorate ? – Yes. The following CHOs are in Mawson :
Australian Salvadorean Housing Co-operative, Noarlunga Centre
Glencoe Housing Co-op, Hackham
ONKHA, Noarlunga Centre
Moana and Southern Housing Co-op
Slavonic Life Housing Co-op, Hackham
Southbound Housing Co-op, Woodcroft

I am not are of any community housing associations in my electorate.
2. Have you arranged to meet with representatives of these Community Housing Organisations ? – No, I have not yet arranged to meet with representatives from any CHOs in my electorate.
3. If not, would you like to be put in touch with the Community Housing Organisations which operate in your electorate (with their consent)? – although I have yet to meet with CHOs in Mawson, I appreciate the CHCSA's offer of assistance and look forward to a productive working relationship with them in future.
4. What do you think are the critical housing issues facing South Australians who cannot afford or who do not wish to become home owners ? What are the solutions ?

As per Minister's answers

5. What role do you see for community housing in providing solutions to the housing problems of South Australians ?

As per Minister's answers

Ms Brigid Medder, Australian Democrats Candidate for Davenport

1. Are you aware of the Community Housing Organisations which operate in your electorate ? - Yes
2. Have you arranged to meet with representatives of these Community Housing Organisations ? - No
3. If not, would you like to be put in touch with the Community Housing Organisations which operate in your electorate (with their consent)? - Yes
4. What do you think are the critical housing issues facing South Australians who cannot afford or who do not wish to become home owners ? What are the solutions ?

Unavailability of low cost rental accommodation in convenient locations. Inadequate funding to community housing program. Lack of a State Community Housing Plan.

5. What role do you see for community housing in providing solutions to the housing problems of South Australians ?

Role should be supported and expanded based on what has and is being done successfully. Need to develop a strong working relationship between the Community Housing Program and the Affordable Housing Innovations Program. Reinstate funding to expand the program to meet needs.

Hon Patrick Conlon MP, Labor Member for Elder

1. Are you aware of the Community Housing Organisations which operate in your electorate ? – Yes I am aware of the CHOs that operate in my Electorate. On many occasions I have had the opportunity to refer constituents in need of accommodation to these organisations.
2. Have you arranged to meet with representatives of these Community Housing Organisations ? – Through the assistance I provide to constituents I have met with CHOs, one such example is *Housing Spectrum Inc.*
3. If not, would you like to be put in touch with the Community Housing Organisations which operate in your electorate (with their consent)? – Not applicable, see above.
4. What do you think are the critical housing issues facing South Australians who cannot afford or who do not wish to become home owners ? What are the solutions ?

As per Minister's answers.

5. What role do you see for community housing in providing solutions to the housing problems of South Australians ?

As per Minister's answers

Hon Trish White MP, Labor Member for Taylor

1. Are you aware of the Community Housing Organisations which operate in your electorate ? - Yes
2. Have you arranged to meet with representatives of these Community Housing Organisations ? – Over the years I have met on several occasions with many of these organisations. Indeed, I worked closely with organisations such as Shelter SA and SACOSS in the development of legislation to protect caravan park residents.
3. If not, would you like to be put in touch with the Community Housing Organisations which operate in your electorate (with their consent)? – I appreciate the CHCSA's offer of assistance and look forward to continuing to work productively with them in future.
4. What do you think are the critical housing issues facing South Australians who cannot afford or who do not wish to become home owners ? What are the solutions ?

As per Minister's answers.

5. What role do you see for community housing in providing solutions to the housing problems of South Australians ?

As per Minister's answers.

Ms Gay Thompson MP, Labor Member for Reynell

1. Are you aware of the Community Housing Organisations which operate in your electorate ? - Yes
2. Have you arranged to meet with representatives of these Community Housing Organisations ? –At certain times I have assisted CHOs in my electorate.
3. If not, would you like to be put in touch with the Community Housing Organisations which operate in your electorate (with their consent)? N/A
4. What do you think are the critical housing issues facing South Australians who cannot afford or who do not wish to become home owners ? What are the solutions ?

As per Minister's answers

5. What role do you see for community housing in providing solutions to the housing problems of South Australians ?

As per Minister's answers.

Ms Robin Geraghty, Labor Member for Torrens

1. Are you aware of the Community Housing Organisations which operate in your electorate ? – Yes. Two such organisations are the Acacia Housing Co-op and the Eco Housing CO-op, both based within my electorate of Torrens.
2. Have you arranged to meet with representatives of these Community Housing Organisations ? – Yes. I have had recent conversations with representatives of the Acacia Housing Co-op and the Eco housing Co-op and regularly make available information on grant programs the organisations might be eligible for.
3. If not, would you like to be put in touch with the Community Housing Organisations which operate in your electorate (with their consent)? – I am on contact with these co-ops but am always happy to meet and speak with representatives regardless of the issue.
4. What do you think are the critical housing issues facing South Australians who cannot afford or who do not wish to become home owners ? What are the solutions ?

As per Minister's answers.

5. What role do you see for community housing in providing solutions to the housing problems of South Australians ?

As per Minister's answers.

Ms Rosemary Drabsch, Democrats Candidate for Heyson

1. Are you aware of the Community Housing Organisations which operate in your electorate ? - No
2. Have you arranged to meet with representatives of these Community Housing Organisations ? - No
3. If not, would you like to be put in touch with the Community Housing Organisations which operate in your electorate (with their consent)? - Yes
4. What do you think are the critical housing issues facing South Australians who cannot afford or who do not wish to become home owners ? What are the solutions ?

1) They cannot afford the high rents currently asked for private rental, so they have to wait, often for many years, to be allocated a home from the Housing Trust. 2) More, cheaper housing from government agencies.

5. What role do you see for community housing in providing solutions to the housing problems of South Australians ?

Liase with the relevant government authority.

Ms Kate Reynolds MLC, Democrats Candidate for the Legislative Council

1. Are you aware of the Community Housing Organisations which operate in your electorate ?

All our candidates have been referred to the CHCSA website so they can familiarise themselves with Community Housing Associations and Co-operatives in their area.

2. Have you arranged to meet with representatives of these Community Housing Organisations ?

As Democrats' spokesperson on Housing, I regularly attend housing forums and functions and have met with some individual associations about specific issues.

3. If not, would you like to be put in touch with the Community Housing Organisations which operate in your electorate (with their consent)?

As the party's Housing and Social Justice spokesperson, I am always to happy to meet with community organisations, including housing associations!

4. What do you think are the critical housing issues facing South Australians who cannot afford or who do not wish to become home owners ? What are the solutions ?

Every South Australian has the right to live affordably in secure housing close to the services they need. If you aren't able to access affordable housing, it is almost impossible to maximise your opportunities in life. If we don't address the basic issue of housing affordability we are putting people not just behind the 8 ball, but out of the game altogether. The lack of affordable, appropriate, safe and secure housing is one of the clearest examples of the growing divide in the South Australian community between those who can live a decent life and those who are being left behind. The majority of the 40,000 South Australians in housing stress are either very young, sole parents, or age or disability pensioners – people who are already doing it tough. These people have the same right as a wealthy CEO of a major corporation to live with dignity. But without secure and safe housing their basic human rights are being compromised every day. How can vulnerable people be expected to succeed in education, get or keep a job, or maintain their physical or mental health, avoid unsafe situations or avoid falling into the destructive cycle of poverty without secure housing? The State Housing Plan was finally released early last year. The injection of \$15 million for the Affordable Housing Fund was welcome but less than a third has been announced in projects. The South Australian Housing Trust says it is a provider of high need housing and yet we have seen over the last decade a rapid decline in its housing stock and a loss of confidence in its ability to meet growing demand. The Democrats revealed in the Parliament in September 2004 that the Government was planning to sell 1500 inner suburbs Trust homes. Public outcry caused that decision to be reversed and the loss of SAHT homes has now slowed, but what we need is an increase. 47,000 properties is simply not enough, and further sales (when waiting lists are out of control), at any pace, makes no sense. We need 10,000 more houses, not fewer. Our population is ageing at a rapid rate, and the percentage of people with disabilities is increasing. The South Australian Democrats know that we need a continuum of housing types and tenures in both metropolitan and regional SA. The Housing Plan calls only for research and monitoring of outcomes in the private rental market. This research must be extended so that the social housing sector can mount winnable arguments to Treasury. The Rann Labor Government said in 2002 it would reduce homelessness by half. On any and every measure this has not been achieved. Even the Social Inclusion Unit has reduced its target to “reducing homelessness by half by 2011”. The social cost of homelessness around this state is enormous – and growing – and requires serious and sustained investment – not just pea and thimble tricks.

We note with disappointment that the State Housing Plan has failed to support the development of Community Housing sector as a key strategy to strengthen social housing in South Australia. To our shame, South Australia is the only state without an independent, non-government tenants' advice and advocacy service available to all renters despite the fact that such services decrease housing stress, dislocation and homelessness. Experience interstate has shown that both tenants and landlords benefit from access to education about their rights and responsibilities. The cost to government of administering the Residential Tenancies Tribunal could be expected to decrease as a result of diverting tenants and landlords away from dispute hearings. The South Australian Democrats recognise that the rental market has changed considerably in recent years. Private rental is no longer seen as a short-term stepping stone to home ownership. The number of long-term renters is growing, with more than 40 per cent of people in Australia renting for 10 years or more. The lack of truly affordable housing, difficulties in gaining home loans through growing casualisation of the work force and an increasing number of low income and single occupant households has offset any benefits of the first homeowners grant. The continuing loss of social housing for low income earners in South Australia compounds the problem, while at the same time the federal government is spending more than \$1 billion every year on commonwealth rental assistance to subsidise people in private rental accommodation, ie. subsidising private landlords. Approximately one quarter of dwellings in South Australia are rented privately, and even with commonwealth rent assistance most of the 100 000 households in the private rental market pay more than 25 per cent of their weekly income in rent. Vacancy rates for the private rental market have been very low at 1 to 2 per cent for some years now, with very few homes available at the lower cost end of the market, while at the same time the number of low income families in this state continues to increase. This means that those groups in society who are already doing it tough, including indigenous people, sole parents, people receiving Centrelink payments and young people find it increasingly hard to compete in the private rental market. Few residents or proprietors of boarding houses understand their rights and responsibilities, and long-term caravan park residents are still waiting for legislative protection. The lack of security of tenure in the private rental market, affordability issues and limited consumer protection all point towards the need for an independent advisory and advocacy service. Of those tenants who do understand their rights, many fear eviction or persecution if they exercise those rights. This frequently results in people being forced to live in inadequate or precarious housing, suffering loss of tenancy and, increasingly, the homelessness of individuals and families. The Office of Consumer and Business Affairs cannot provide interpretation of the Residential Tenancies Act or the tribunal, nor can it advocate on behalf of renters. Housing Advice and Support SA provides only a limited service to clients of the Housing Trust, the Aboriginal Housing Authority and some community housing tenants. The Residential Tenancies Advisory Service's 24-hour hotline is a private business operating nationally from an office in Adelaide. It costs 90 cents per minute, and no state government has any opportunity to monitor the nature or the accuracy of its advice. The South Australian Democrats call on both major parties to commit before the election to bring South Australia into line with other states by funding an independent consumer focused advice and advocacy service to help tenants understand their rights and responsibilities as they relate to starting a tenancy, bond issues, discrimination, access, privacy, repairs, maintenance, share accommodation, rent, termination of tenancy and eviction. The Government has finally released for comment a discussion paper about a Residential Parks Bill to regulate the rights and responsibilities of residents and caravan park operators. But there is no news on the long promised review of Residential Tenancies Act even though submissions were due in February 2003. Residents of retirement villages, supported residential tenancies and boarding houses are no closer to having the legislative protection they deserve. The South Australian Democrats are calling on both major parties to commit to legislative reform by the end of 2006. If these bills have not been introduced to the

Parliament by mid 2006, the South Australian Democrats will introduce their own private members bills in the Spring session. In 2005 the South Australian Democrats gave up waiting for the Rann Labor Government to keep its promise to update SA's Equal Opportunity law, and introduced our own Private Members Bill (the Equal Opportunity Bill 2005). Our bill added a new clause which would have prevented discrimination on the grounds of social status (homelessness, unemployment etc) to address the issue of applicants being denied tenancy of the grounds of offering a Housing Trust Bond guarantee. The Rann Labor Government refused to support our bill and has still not committed to updating our equal opportunity laws which are now the most outdated in the country. We have committed to re-introducing our bill after the March election. Above all, good housing is essential for the most basic wellbeing of women and children. The absence of safe, accessible, affordable and secure housing impacts on every other area of living and is the main contributing factor to the poverty trap, where the majority of those caught are women. In recent times, there have been reviews, consultants' findings, implementation plans and countless recommendations suggesting specific changes to the Women's Housing Association – the largest provider of specialised housing for women in South Australia. The Women's Housing Association itself has gone through many changes in the past 10 years and has progressed from a mortgage based system in partnership with the Housing Trust and building societies to a perpetual debenture system with the South Australian Community Housing Authority. It has also had major structural changes, particularly in management and has grown from having 140 properties to almost 300 properties in erratic and often intense periods of growth, although in some years there has been no growth. There have also been numerous reviews, when consultants analysed, watched, measured, recorded and reported back to SACHA about the association. On a positive note, it has moved from having a comparatively high rent arrears and evictions record to a system in which both are now minimal, despite the very large number of tenants, and the complex needs of those tenants. Throughout all this, the focus has remained on the association's clients, who need safe, secure and affordable housing for themselves and their children — many of whom are survivors of domestic violence. Women often come to the association with very little, and they need to rebuild their lives to heal, to feel safe and to get on with making a decent life for themselves and their children. Many of the women arrive with multiple and complex needs and because of the turnover of stock and the age of that stock, this particular association costs considerably more to operate. Escalating and uncontrollable costs is a major issue facing the Women's Housing Association - which is totally dependent on funding from government. Being forced to return 40 per cent of the rent received to the government is unsustainable. The South Australian Democrats are calling on both major parties to commit to providing sustainable funding for the Women's Housing Association, which includes funding to provide more homes in regional South Australia.

5. What role do you see for community housing in providing solutions to the housing problems of South Australians ?

It makes no sense that funding for community housing has decreased since it peaked in 2002. In fact funding is now less than half what it was a decade ago, despite the fact that need has increased. Community Housing has unique benefits:

- Breaks the revolving door of unstable housing for individuals and families
- Offers much needed flexibility in meeting housing needs and responsible asset management
- Value adds through the links to and the support of other organisations and service delivery agencies
- Value adds to government investment through the investment of private capital, GST benefits and Commonwealth Rent Assistance

- Successfully uses community development principles to solve housing needs in specific communities
- Unites, builds and maintains communities of interest
- Provides affordable, practical and cost effective housing support
- Helps to build the skills and resources of tenants and committee members
- Prevents or reduces demand on other social welfare and health services.

The slowdown in the growth of Community Housing in the recent years means that supply cannot keep pace with demand. The waiting list for Community Housing increased by 10% between 30th June 2002 and 30th June 2005 and that same time the number of new tenancies declined by 44%. It makes economic and social sense to expand the availability of Community Housing stock in response to unmet need. The South Australian Democrats call on both major parties to commit to an investment of funds for Community Housing to achieve 300 new dwellings each year for the next five years. Over half of all applicants are in the highest need category at present so their need for housing is both severe and urgent.

But we must build the capacity of Community Housing Organisations so they are in the best position to access the Affordable Housing Innovations Program.

In particular we believe that the Community Housing Council of SA should be funded to employ a technical services officer who can assist Community Housing Organisations with the preparation of detailed development applications. In the past the Community Housing Council of SA had enough resources to assist Community Housing Organisations improve their governance and management skills. Under a Liberal Government funding was drastically reduced and the role taken over by SACHA (who in our view should specialise in planning, funding and regulating the community housing sector).

In the last five years a number of community organisations have ‘fallen over’. We are calling on both major parties to commit to increasing recurrent funding to the Community Housing Council of SA to establish a properly resourced Sector Development Unit. It is essential that those Community Housing Organisations who want to participate in the new Affordable Housing Innovation Programme are freed up from the current debenture and rent return arrangements with SACHA if the much needed growth is to be achieved. This would also bring us into line with other states which have more far flexible and innovative arrangements. Currently Community Housing Organisations are funded according to the type and size of the organisation but this doesn’t take into account the differences between organisations in terms of meeting client needs, stock types and condition, stock location etc. A different and more equitable funding model is needed.

The State Housing Plan and the new policy environment does not pay sufficient attention to the capacity of the community housing. There needs to be an improved commitment to link community housing to other areas of housing and support services, to clarifying the long-term size and structure of the sector and Community Housing Organisations, to specifying capital and recurrent financing arrangements, identifying the sector’s infrastructure requirements, and clarifying government and non-government roles and responsibilities in the sector. Our complete Goals for Housing Platform Statement is available on our website at <http://www.sa.democrats.org.au>