



Select Committee on the 2026 Commonwealth Games Bid

Hearing Date: 14 February 2024

Questions taken on notice

Directed to: Central Highlands Homelessness Alliance

Received Date: 28 February 2024

1. **Joe McCracken, page 59-60**

Question Asked:

I was going to ask you about the point before that you raised. You said that there have been discussions amongst your contemporaries about the idea of purchasing houses that probably do not fit the rental standards because they are quite difficult compared to perhaps the government buying those properties and making them to standard. Is there any correspondence or anything that you have had with the minister that says, 'Here's our idea laid out', or could you get a copy of that or something for the committee? I ask that because I have previously served on the housing inquiry as well where we had that sort of feedback and through the evidence heard a similar sort of thing. I am interested to hear if you are able to help us out.

Michelle TWIGGER: I can approach the councils. I know that the Northern Grampians are also very proactive in this space, and they have Stawell in their catchment. The Northern Grampians and the Yarriambiack councils are both very active and have applied for big build houses. I lived up in Rupanyup, one of the small towns up that way –

Joe McCracken: Yes, I know Rupanyup.

Michelle TWIGGER: Yes. They have got the land, but they only got funding for one property, and there are no properties to rent up there. So I guess where we are going with this is – yes, I suggest that we bring the councils into the conversation as well, because they are the ones who can get those sites developed.

Joe McCracken: If you have got any copies of any correspondence raising those ideas, we would love to see it.

Jerry HAM: Okay.

Michelle TWIGGER: We will take that on notice.

Response:

There is no correspondence, however, in a meeting with Yarriambiack CEO Tammy Smith and Manager of Development Adam Moar in October 2023 Tammy and Adam advised me that they had placed a number of submissions to various state government initiatives such as The Big Build for funding to build social and affordable housing in the shire, and that

they had limited success, despite having land put aside. Yarriambiack has a housing crisis and the social and public housing available in the shire is lower than the state average. The funding requests had been to build social and affordable housing in a number of towns across the shire. Similar experiences were also reported by North Grampian Shire Coordinator of Community Futures David Hwang in a meeting with me in December, who had little or no success in the submissions the Shire had made to the state government for housing to be built in towns such as Stawell where there are severe housing shortages.

2. **Joe McCracken, page 61-2**

Question Asked:

Yes. With that meeting you had with Michaela Settle, are you able to provide any documents around that? It would be good to know about the assurances that the housing is actually going to be out this way and not in Gippsland.

Tom McINTOSH: Sorry, is this in regard to –

Michelle TWIGGER: This was the original dispersal of the housing –

Joe McCracken: Yes, the housing spend that we were inquiring on.

Adam LIVERSAGE: This is around the discussion where they were talking about dispersing the modular units from the Comm Games village across the regions, and then we later heard around Gippsland.

Tom McINTOSH: Yes, of course.

Adam LIVERSAGE: I think that is when we sought the attention of Michaela Settle to discuss that.

The CHAIR: If it would be possible to provide that on notice, that would be wonderful.

Response:

The documentation available is the letter written by Chair of CHHA, Jerry Ham to request a meeting with Michaela Settle M.P as attached.

Michaela granted a meeting which occurred at her offices in Ballarat on Monday 7 August 2023 – the first day of Homelessness week.

The meeting was a verbal discussion with Michaela and Jerry Ham (Chair of CHHA), Adam Liversage, Senior Manager Western Homelessness, Uniting and Michelle Twigger, Regional Homelessness Network Coordinator.

There are no documents available regarding this meeting or discussion.

A verbal record of the meeting is that it addressed commitments from the government that modular housing built for the Commonwealth Games would be retained in the regions for social and affordable housing, including Gippsland.

As the Old Saleyards site in Ballarat where housing was to be built for athletes was known to be contaminated this accommodation was planned to be modular homes and were due to be relocated after the Games.

There were rumours all modular units from Ballarat were going to Gippsland due to the houses lost in the floods.

Michaela Settle advised us she agreed with CHHA's position that legacy housing should be retained within the region.

She assured us she would be advocating to the Housing Minister, from within Parliament, for the legacy commitment to be honoured and for a fair proportion of the promised housing to be built in the Ballarat region.

Att: 1 – CHHA Letter to Michaela Settle

Minister Michaela Settle,
15 Main Road, Bakery Hill, Victoria 3350

14 July 2023

Dear Ms Settle,

I chair the Central Highlands Homelessness Alliance (CHHA) Executive Group and am writing to you as Member for Eureka in relation to the accommodation being built in Ballarat to house Commonwealth Games (Games) officials and athletes. "The new Games villages in... Ballarat ... will also deliver a legacy that includes social and affordable housing, and will be designed in consultation with Traditional Owners, local business and the community", (CGA, acc 12/5/2023).

While the Games will bring social and economic benefits to some in the region, the CHHA requests an opportunity to work with you and the Ballarat and Eureka Councils to ensure the accommodation constructed for the Games remains in the Central Highlands region as social and affordable housing, as a legacy to offset the increased cost of living caused by the Games in these communities.

In a country as wealthy as Australia, nobody should be homeless, yet each night 30,000 Victorians have no home and the chances of finding one are worsening. This is true for increasing numbers of people in Ballarat with a rental vacancy rate of 0.8%, amongst the lowest in regional and metropolitan Victoria. The 2021 Census identified 638 people who were homeless in the Ballarat LGA, a 58% increase from 2011, and a rate of 5.8 per 1000 people. The state average is 4.7 per 1000.

Agencies of the CHHA work daily with increasing numbers of people in rental and financial distress experiencing homelessness and family violence in the Central Highlands, with few and diminishing accommodation options. With the severe shortage of suitable housing, local people in crisis, experiencing homelessness and escaping family violence are placed in unsuitable hotel or motel rooms with no prospects of a long term home. Stress is being put on the region's accommodation market due to the influx of Games related government, construction and hospitality workers and spectators pre-booking motel and short stay accommodation. With this increased demand, motels are full, and properties previously offered for lease to local people are now short term rentals, limiting long term rental stock and increasing rent. There is no crisis accommodation.

The social impact of the Games on this region's communities is increasing financial stress on low to mid income families and individuals, forcing more into homelessness and women and children to remain in family violence relationships to have a home. To redress this, the eleven agencies of the CHHA wish to ensure the Games legacy for the people of the Central Highlands is to retain the Games accommodation for social housing in the region, to provide affordable homes for locals.

I request a meeting between CHHA and you to discuss how we can work together to achieve this.

Kind regards,

Jerry Ham
Chair – CHHA Executive Group

