

## Regions need fair housing funding to address record workforce shortages

The Regional Australia Institute (RAI) is backing a proposal to see regional, rural and remote Australia assured an equitable distribution of the Federal Government's \$10 billion housing fund, and local governments better supported in new development projects.

Independent Member for Indi, Dr Helen Haines, introduced the 'Unlocking Regional Housing Bill' Private Members Bill in Parliament today, which calls for at least 30% of the Housing Australia Future Fund to be directed to rural, regional and remote housing annually and for the regions to be specifically referenced in the objects of the enabling legislation.

The Bill seeks amendments to the National Housing Finance and Investment Corporation Act, the enabling legislation for the Housing Australia Future Fund.

RAI CEO Liz Ritchie said rental availability in many regional towns was at, or below 1%.

"A lack of housing is at the centre of the region's record workforce shortages, in which demand is most acute for GPs, nurses, aged care workers and early childhood educators," Ms Ritchie said.

"Research by the RAI reveals 1 in 5 capital city Australians aspire to make the move to the regions and in fact, our recently released *Big Movers 2023* report revealed millennials, those aged between 29-39, are moving in record numbers.

"Limited housing options threatens to put a handbrake on regional Australia's population growth at a time when we badly need more people."

*Big Movers* found between 2016 and 2021 more than 600,000 metropolitan Australians moved to regional communities – 120,000 more people than between 2011 and 2016. In addition, more than 720,000 people moved in between regional communities in the same time frame.

Ms Ritchie said the 'Unlocking Regional Housing Bill' acknowledged the challenges many regional and remote local governments faced when bringing new land to development.

"Unlike metropolitan LGAs, land availability for regional councils is often not the problem, it's the cost of completing the necessary headworks such as sewerage, water, electricity, transportation, and roads," Ms Ritchie said.

Importantly the proposed amendments also include a stipulation for regional housing expertise on the National Housing Finance and Investment Corporation Board.



“Like many policy areas, the region’s housing challenges are nuanced and complex and a solution that works in metropolitan Australia may not work in the regions. It’s critical the leadership of the NHFIC is equipped with knowledge and experience that can ensure regional Australia’s bespoke housing needed are recognised and fixed,” Ms Ritchie said.

Addressing housing issues is one of the key goals of the Institute’s [Regionalisation Ambition](#) – a 10 year, 20 goal framework to better life in regional Australia.

By 2032, the Ambition aims to see rental vacancy rates increase to above 3% and for annual building approvals to keep pace with population growth.

On Wednesday, at the [Regions Rising National Summit – Shifting Our Gaze](#), the RAI will release the first progress report into the [Regionalisation Ambition 2032](#), which will highlight how we as a nation have moved the dial on 20 targets set for regional Australia. The event will be held at Hotel Realm in Canberra on 13-14 September. For more information, please [click here](#).

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