

MyHome in Canberra - proposal to ACT Ministers

This is being addressed by email to –

- Yvette Berry, Deputy Chief Minister
- Rebecca Vassarotti, Minister for Homelessness and Housing Services
- Emma Davidson, Minister for Mental Health

with copies emailed to –

- Andrew Barr, Chief Minister and Treasurer
- Mick Gentleman, Minister for Planning and Land Management
- Shane Rattenbury, Attorney-General
- Rachel Stephen-Smith, Minister for Health

Dear Ministers

This is to propose the next steps for implementing together the commitment in the ACT Government's current Parliamentary Agreement to the proposal for MyHome in Canberra.

As part of this we're asking for several actions by the Government, including funding in the 2021-22 budget for design and documentation of the MyHome buildings.

The steps we propose are intended to lead to having MyHome in Canberra built and in operation by mid-2024.

MyHome campaign

We believe that you, the Chief Minister and the other Ministers to whom this is copied have been briefed on the proposal for MyHome in Canberra, through previous submissions by our committee and through inclusion of the reference to MyHome in the Parliamentary Agreement.

- MyHome's mission is to provide long-term, secure accommodation for people with chronic mental illnesses, in self-contained home units but with a common area for shared meals and activities.
- You can obtain more background if you wish from us or from our [website](#).

The MyHome team is already active in –

- community engagement, fund-raising and publicity, led since mid-2020 by our Patron, the Hon Dr Mike Kelly AM,
- adding expertise to our committee with specialist advice provided by [KB West Advisory](#), and
- led by the Woden Valley Uniting Church (WVUC) and with the affordable-housing provider [CHC](#) and officials of ACT Housing, commissioning an indicative development plan for the Curtin site to identify the best way of building and landscaping both MyHome and affordable housing, in line with the 2018 [Master Plan](#) for the Curtin Group Centre.

WVUC and CHC are exploring options for affordable housing to be developed on the rest of the site, but this is likely to be after the MyHome development.

Support for this proposal

The following documents are attached to inform your consideration of this proposal:

- A. brief for indicative development plan for Curtin site

- B. model of care at MyHome in Canberra (drafted in 2017)
- C. plan for further community engagement
- D. draft business plan
- E. financial spreadsheet
- F. evaluation proposal.

Requests of Government

What we're asking from the ACT Government is three-fold.

First, we request inclusion in the 2021-22 budget of \$1 million (exclusive of GST) for the design and documentation of the MyHome units and facilities –

- following from the site development plan noted above, and
- to fund preparation of a full design and consultation on it with the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (EPSD) in order to obtain approval of a development application.

The suggested sum of \$1 million is just under 10% of the estimated cost of building MyHome.

Secondly, we request inclusion in forward estimates for the 2022-23 and 2023-24 budgets of funds for the construction of the MyHome buildings and their fit-out, to be confirmed if the key conditions noted below are fulfilled.

On the basis of an estimate we obtained some years ago, we expect the total construction cost in 2022-23 prices, including basic fit-out and a conservative provision for vehicular access and parking, would be around \$12 million (excluding GST).

Thirdly, we seek your and your officials' collaboration in three streams of work intended to fulfil the key conditions for commitment to construction funding, addressing:

- a) the design for MyHome units and facilities – notably the brief for and selection of an architect or developer, and further consultation with the local community and EPSD;
- b) MyHome's place in ACT mental health services – the choice of agency to provide tenancy-support services for residents, consultation with mental-health practitioner teams and National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA), and preparing for evaluation of MyHome; and
- c) the business plan for MyHome – including drafting operational agreements and an accountability framework, establishment of a back-up fund, and risk-management plans.

Our understanding of key conditions for construction funding

We expect that any funding commitment by the ACT Government in the 2022-23 and later budgets will be contingent on fulfilment of key conditions, with a target date of March 2022 ahead of budget preparation. While we recognise that it will be for yourselves and your fellow Ministers to formulate these conditions, we propose the following as a starting point:

- 1) firm commitments from the Uniting Church, the selected architect or developer, and the selected service-providing agency,
- 2) a building plan with a development approval from EPSD obtained or expected quickly, and generally accepted by the local community,
- 3) a business plan which is robust, in terms of input from the selected service-providing agency and if necessary NDIA, in conjunction with a back-up fund to cover expected gaps between operating costs and income from or on behalf of residents,
- 4) sufficient contributions or commitments to the back-up fund, and

- 5) a MyHome committee or board appropriately constituted and suitably qualified for its role in establishing and operating the MyHome units and facilities.

Following up

We expect that the indicative development plan which the WVUC is commissioning will be prepared and available to ACT Housing, CHC and ourselves in the next three or four months. If you agree that the three workstreams noted above are needed, we hope this collaborative work can start right away, concurrently with preparation of that indicative development plan, and provide the basis for a policy proposal to be included in the 2021-22 budget and its accompanying forward estimates.

Our principal contact is our President, Shukry Sahhar – sahhars@bigpond.com or 0491 644 134.

Shukry Sahhar, President

Matt Jackson, Vice-President

Evan Mann, Uniting Church Representative

Bob Ellison, Treasurer

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Committee members of MyHome in Canberra Inc.

16 March 2021