



NEWS

Housing stress ‘a canary in the coalmine’

TIM BARLASS

A growing corridor of housing stress that runs from Sydney’s west to the city has been highlighted in a submission to the Legislative Council select committee inquiry into social, public and affordable housing.

Martin Thomas, a spokesman for Mission Australia, said the high level of housing stress was like “a canary in the coalmine” for homelessness.

“People across NSW are struggling to afford the cost of putting a roof over their heads, and in hot spots across Sydney’s west, central and mid-north coast, it’s reaching crisis point,” Mr Thomas said. “As more individuals and families are pushed to their limits, we’re facing a significant increase in our already staggering homeless population.”

Hearings took place last week, with more than 150 submissions to the inquiry – and following a *Sun-Herald* report that the number of people sleeping rough in Sydney had increased by 26 per cent.

The chronic under-supply of affordable housing was the recurrent theme of submissions.

Sydney MP Alex Greenwich said current NSW government targets for major redevelopment sites would provide minimal benefit.

“The requirement to include key worker housing of 2.3 per cent of res-

idential gross floor area in Barangaroo South and 2.7 per cent to 3.1 per cent of total costs at the former Chippendale Brewery site will do little to address the lack of inner-city affordable housing,” he said.

One business model that appears to work well is City West Housing. From a standing start in 1994, it has built 547 affordable apartments and housed thousands in the inner-city areas of Ultimo and Pyrmont.

The non-profit company is building another 190 apartments in North Eveleigh and Zetland. It has no debt and the construction is funded through contributions from private developers to state coffers.

Croupiers on salaries of about \$30,000, police constables and firemen are some of those who have

been able to keep their jobs in the area through affordable housing.

Chief executive Janelle Goulding said: “We are helping people who would not have a job otherwise ... These are the people that keep our community going.”

‘In hot spots ... it’s reaching crisis point.’

Martin Thomas, Mission Australia