

Grocon, government, Big Issue in housing affordability push



Hyecorp managing director Stephen Abolakian. Picture: Hollie Adams

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Construction giant Grocon has linked up with homelessness-focused social enterprise The Big Issue and the federal government in a bid to increase the supply of affordable housing.

The government yesterday announced \$6 million in funding for The Big Issue's Homes for Homes program, which aims to raise money to address the affordability crisis.

Through the program, parties to property transactions are invited to donate 0.1 per cent of each sale to Homes for Homes, which then invests in new housing projects by registered community housing providers.

The program aims to raise \$2.4 billion over 30 years, though individual donations.

Housing affordability has been in focus since the median dwelling price soared 75 per cent in Sydney and more than 50 per cent in Melbourne over five years, according to figures from property researcher CoreLogic.

Canberra announced a housing affordability package in the May budget, including tax breaks for first-home savers, while the NSW and Victorian governments are cutting stamp duty for first-home buyers. Several industry players have called on government, business and the community sector to work together.

Social Services Minister Christian Porter backed Grocon's partnership with Homes for Homes at its 75-apartment Greenwich Fairfield development in Melbourne's middle northeastern suburbs.

"Under this initiative, individual homeowners or national property developers are helping those who don't have a roof over their head," Mr Porter said.

A new development in Sydney's north has launched with more than half its apartments set aside for affordable housing.

Some 42 of the 74 units in Hycorp's Sienna project in Willoughby, on the city's north shore, will become part of a community housing pool.

Some affordable units were sold to investors while the developer has retained others.

Hycorp managing director Stephen Abolakian has encouraged other developers to take advantage of a state government initiative, the State Environmental Planning Proposal, which allows developers to gain an extra floor of space if they set some aside for affordable housing.

"It's a bit of a punt ... but if it's done properly it's a great outcome," Mr Abolakian said.