

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **MINISTER VISITS NEW INNER WEST HOUSING FOR FASTEST GROWING HOMELESS GROUP: OLDER SINGLE WOMEN**

**5 May 2017**

**For immediate release**

A restored apartment block in Ashfield has become home to nine older, single women who were struggling to put a safe, affordable roof over their heads.

Developed by leading community housing provider Bridge Housing, the 1930's Art Deco block has been converted into nine studio apartments designed for the women to age in place. This adds to Bridge Housing's 1,900 properties which provide safe, secure housing including for 580 older women, over 25% of all our tenancies.

The NSW Minister for Family and Community Services, Minister for Social Housing, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, Pru Goward, met with tenants and toured the development today.

Bridge Housing CEO John Nicolades said: "Our Ashfield development demonstrates our capacity and commitment to addressing the housing crisis for older, single women, who are the fastest growing group at risk of homelessness. 2011 Census data shows 36 percent of older homeless people are women."

"We have partnered with government, the community sector and private sector to create low cost yet quality housing for older women in a model that is replicable in other established suburbs."

"Older women can find themselves homeless or at risk of homelessness for the first time. Whether they are escaping from family violence, retiring and leaving low paid jobs with little or no superannuation, or unable to afford their privately rented home when a partner dies or leaves, these women are particularly vulnerable."

The YWCA has a close partnership with Bridge Housing to provide support services to help the women sustain their tenancies and get their lives back on track.

Funding for the \$3.5 million redevelopment comprised \$700,000 in AHSEPP levy funding from the NSW Government, use of Bridge Housing capital and its debt facility with National Australia Bank, a \$500,000 grant from a private philanthropist, and the use of NRAS.

The inner west is a highly challenging market for single people trying to rent a home in the private market. In the 10 years to June 2016, the number of rental properties affordable for people on low\* incomes in Ashfield dropped from 53% of all properties to 15.1%, and for people on very low\*\* incomes from 14.2% to 4.6% \*

The women pay below-market rent for the social housing units based on their income. The renovation includes a common room so the women can come together. Ranging in age from 50 – 82 years and from seven different cultural backgrounds, they have already formed a close-knit community.

\*For people on incomes below \$40,600 a year or 50% of the median income.

\*\*For people on incomes below \$64,900 a year or 50-80% of the median income.

*Centre for Affordable Housing, Department of Family & Community Services, June 2016 data*

**For more information:**

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**Photo and interview opportunities available**

**About Bridge Housing**

Bridge Housing is a leading NSW community housing association that sources and develops social and affordable housing for people on moderate-to-low incomes across 20 local government areas in greater Sydney.

It has some 1,900 properties, housing 3,105 people, and is set to deliver an extra 350 affordable homes by 2018. Other recent developments include:

- 38 new 2 and 3-bedroom social and affordable units in Parramatta
- 65 new affordable family homes in Bungaribee, near Blacktown.

For further information on Bridge Housing please visit us at:

[www.bridgehousing.org.au](http://www.bridgehousing.org.au) Twitter: @BridgeHousingAU Facebook: Bridge Housing