**Boarding House Roundtable**

**Minutes**

**Tuesday 4th September 2019**

**Present:** Mischa Gwaspari (NNC), Paul Adabie (NNC), Liz Yeo (NNC), Melanie Bradfield, Tim Ngui (PIAC), Michelle Apschner (NNC), Leo Patterson-Ross (Tenants Union), Elizabeth Priestley (Way Ahead), Paul Clenaghan (Sydney Health District), Julia Murray (Marrickville Legal Centre), Elizabeth Defreitas (Tenants Union), Peter Dormia (Property Owners Association), Simon Watts (IWC), Adam Farrar (NNC), Ben Gray (All Saints), Rory O’Neill (DCJ), Giancarlo De Vera (PWDA), Timothy Counter, Jessica Bell (PWDA),, Rosalie Graham, Divna Marjanovic (DCJ), Janice Denehy (DCJ), Nancy Gangi (NSW Finance, Services & Innovation), Anna Wade (NSW Finance, Services & Innovation), Jon Atkins (Inner West Council), Alex Kresovic, Sunil Fernando (PWDA), Chris Martin (USW)

**Apologies:**

**Minutes:** Michelle Apschner

**Overview of Review Process – Rory (DCJ)**

* All submissions will go to the NSW Department of Customer Services unless residents are using the ‘Easy Read’ version.
* The issues questions are not exhaustive and the language is deliberately neutral.
* DCJ and DCS will read each submission and compile a report by the end of the year to be tabled in parliament early next year.
* All submissions will be published unless there is a request not to.
* Depending on the contents of the report there may need to be another round of consultations.

**Tenants Union – Leo**

* The boarding house sector does not deliver on the concept of safety, affordability and security.
* Real dispute resolution is currently not provided by NCAT and there is no protection against evictions as residents cannot get access to NCAT in time.
* Problem with the RTA - very little government oversight or regulation and the expectation that residents will ‘do all the hard work’.
* This issue is magnified in the boarding house sector and the balance of power is not being resolved by the Act.
* New generation boarding houses – would like a change in the language as they are not boarding houses.

**Health – Paul**

* In health the three issues to focus on are access, tenancy (quality) and exit.
* The health status in general boarding houses is not as good as the general population (in the inner west).
* Interested in looking at what the access points are for people for safe accommodation
* The concept of people with additional needs living in a general boarding house when additional needs are unmet.
* It is incorrect to say that they don’t live in general boarding houses because they do.

**Inner West Council – Jon**

* City of Sydney has the highest concentration of boarding houses at 20% followed by Inner West at 19%.
* According to the NNC database there are 329 boarding houses in the old Marrickville LGA with 145 of those unregistered.
* Potentially then there are 3300 boarding house residents in the inner west.

The key issues for Council;

* Funding of Council compliance and enforcement activities, there was no consideration of how those functions would be funded.
* Reform of the Boarding House Act, currently there is a lack of definition of boarding houses. New generation boarding houses that use the RTA should be excluded from the definition.
* Boarding House register, does not include all boarding houses. Council needs full access to the register and the public should also have full access.
* Accreditation of boarding houses similar to the model in QLD with three levels of accreditation.
* Boarding house support programs, there needs to be effective programs to support vulnerable people. While some may be able to access NDIS many can’t.
* Affordability – boarding houses under the Act should be affordable and managed by community housing providers.

**Landlords – Peter**

* Registered general boarding houses are not a lesser form of housing but are a different form of housing providing easily accessed accommodation.
* There has been a 12.6% reduction in the supply of registrable boarding houses
* Many local councils are currently not carrying out initial inspections.
* The current register is unreliable
* Illegal non-compliant boarding houses are the number one failing of the reforms.
* We need a regulatory framework that fuels healthy compliant supply not illegal supply.
* We are opposed to measures that will force boarding house operators to standardize their supply or that curtail their capacity to manage the property.
* We support the reasonable occupancy principles as they are central to enabling suppliers to provide diversity and flexibility.
* We propose the inclusion of reasonable occupant obligations in the occupancy principles
* We support a broadening of the Act to include other forms of shared housing.

**Presentation – Chris**

* Boarding houses are a distinct form of housing – there is more sharing and while it is more accessible and transitory it is less secure.
* “Lodging” is still the defining element of what a boarding house is.
* The built form of a boarding house has changed, they may have shared space or self-contained space.
* New generation boarding houses should really be considered as a block of very small flats.
* The number of boarding houses that have registered has doubled however census data does not reflect this.
* Existing boarding houses may be taking their time to register.
* Need to clear up the definition of lodger versus tenant.
* The distinguishing aspect should be around sharing – if there has been no decision by residents as to who they share with then this should be regulated differently.
* Regulation of proprietors of shared accommodation should perhaps have more regulation than the private rental sector.

**Final Wrap Up - Anyone interested in workshopping common areas for a joint submission**

* Julia Murray
* Paul Clenaghan
* Leo Pattinson Ross
* Will regroup when there is something to respond to.