

2015

# RESPONSE TO NSW GOVERNMENT CARAVAN AND RESIDENTIAL ESTATE REVIEW



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# Respond to NSW Government's Review to improve the regulation of manufactured homes and estates, caravan parks and camping grounds

## Comment

Overall the review is too narrow. There seems to have been little or no effort to draw opinions and suggestions from other than a select few involved in the industry. There has been no discussion in the media in particular or with the vast array of interested parties such as councils, charities, industry as a whole, community housing managers and providers, and most importantly with the potential users of these facilities – the public.

Besides adding additional Red Tape and regulation, the discussion paper is focused around existing infra structure and modifying the present rules and regulations. There is a distinct lack of innovation and presentation of ideas, and concepts that have developed in overseas countries that could be applied to Australia and/or NSW.

Nowhere in this review is any definition or guideline provided as to what is “affordable” pricewise.

Even a cursory scan of the news would reveal that there are three major areas of concern in terms of affordable housing or accommodation in NSW and these have been given only cursory address and no practical solutions have been addressed in this Government review. Yet these are the areas where a critical shortage of suitable and affordable housing exists.

These are:

- 1. Refuges for victims of domestic violence:** There is a need for (a) Crisis (immediate) accommodation needed for evacuating the victims, and in most cases the children, from untenable violent situations. This ties up an inordinate amount of police time as they search for suitable accommodation, due to the lack of stock in this area; (b) transitional accommodation for the victim and offspring during recuperation and physiological adjustment before re-entering society ; and (c) long term affordable accommodation where the parent is the sole supporter.  
This type of accommodation needs specialist accommodation embracing security and special needs. It does not fit into the accommodation provided in caravan parks, manufactured home residential parks or camping parks.  
Nowhere in the review is this situation addressed, yet government is supposedly going to fund CHP
- 2. The homeless:** Every major city and many country centres have to cope with extraordinary high numbers of homeless women, men, and children and in many cases the results of drug abuse.  
Again this type of accommodation is in desperate need, but it is regarded as “Not in my backyard”. Property owners see such centres as degrading the value and attraction of their residential areas. Providing shelter on a nightly or medium term basis is not a solution on its own. It requires programs to rehabilitate the individual, providing basic job training and

assistance in aiding the person back into society.

Again a solution to accommodating for this crisis sector has not been addressed in the review. The problem isn't going to go away and needs a practical remedy. Dome villages are one solution, but the regulations don't facilitate land being used for this purpose.

3. **The aged:** There are many aged persons, couples and singles that are being forced out of the rental market, often due to circumstance beyond their control. This is particularly so in the case of single aging women who though differential pay levels and absence from employment during the rearing of children, who then do not have the same level of savings as their male counterparts.

Here there is a vast chasm between what governments regard as affordable and what in effect these people can afford and still be able to live a quality life.

Yet again a solution has not been detailed in the review even though the Government has been pondering this review for more than a year.

The NSW Government review has given scant response or review of regulations to these sectors.

## **Land**

The government has significant amounts of idle land designated for future use; this could be leased for short or medium term to help facilitate housing for the above categories of people, which besides making affordable land available for community housing, would also yield a return for the taxpayer.

This type of practice is well established in overseas countries where portable housing is then able to be made available.

City land is expensive and is therefore not conducive to facilitating the establishment of low cost housing. The solution lies in innovation and in developing country centres and villages to provide affordable housing.

Many country towns are dying due to population drift. Yet if affordable housing can be made available in these country centres, the occupants can make a valuable contribution to revitalizing the town's economy. Many councils of these towns own land which has no use and they are prepared to sell a block of land for as little as \$1.00, provided the purchaser builds a home on it and lives in it for a given period.

Elderly people, who are being squeezed out of the city rental market, seldom have family support which is why they find themselves in this situation, so moving to a country town and being amongst people of their own age in small villages is a very amenable solution.

Victims of domestic violence live in fear of further retribution and the attraction of being able to escape from the city to an unknown and secure village in the country, is a solution strongly supported by the community agencies that cater for these victims. Providing accommodation for support infra structure does not raise a significant problem. As the majority of DV victims usually have children, this is a boost for school numbers and helps prevent small schools having to close. Creating jobs for both the recuperating DV victims and for part time incomes for some of the elderly is also not a major obstacle if overseas ideas are copied.

## **Railway land**

The NSW and other state governments have hundreds of thousands of hectares of land they have never been able to use or figured out a way to use it, because bureaucracies and Government are never very good at innovative thinking.

Building villages in the airspace above the rail tracks is now a common solution being promoted by Global NRG Ltd and adopted in overseas countries.

It is not only practical, but has roll-on benefits to the railway network in terms of new income, it has environmental benefits in that the supporting structure above the rail tracks dampens rail noise being transmitted to homes and apartments located close to the rail tracks.

Constructing combined shopping villages, parking stations and community housing above the rail tracks, with affordable accommodation on the top floors, can offset the cost of staffing railway stations; take thousands of car trips off the roads per day, easing road and city congestion and increasing rail traffic and reducing GHG emissions.

Building a platform over the rails to support a village is no more complex than building a bridge over the rail way lines. It's everyday engineering.

These are just two innovative ideas for solving the land situation.

There is nothing in the NSW Government review that takes these solutions into account.

## **Affordable housing**

Generally people look to government to provide the funding to build affordable housing, which diverts taxpayer dollars away from other projects such as health and schooling and funding of other infra structure. There is only so much money to go around and people are sick and tired of additional and rising taxes.

On the other hand developers being high cost entities and are in the business of making a profit. They don't build affordable housing.

While the NSW Review has looked at caravans and manufactured homes as a solution, there are other ways of providing solutions to the need for affordable housing. These are solutions that have been in use overseas for 50 years or more.

The first homeless village using the Global Dome was built in Los Angeles in 1963 and the domes are still in use as student accommodation at the University of California.

## **About Global Domes**

Global Domes Ltd manufacturers a geodesic portable dome which is used extensively overseas as affordable accommodation for a variety of uses that include refuges for DV victims; accommodation for the homeless; accommodation for the elderly and accommodation for refugees.



A single dome can be fitted out as a studio or 1 bedroom apartment. Two or more can be joined together to provide larger accommodation and the domes can also be used as abolition blocks, laundries, kitchens, restaurants and admin offices.

For more information on Global Domes, see [www.globaldomesltd.com](http://www.globaldomesltd.com)



**A single Global Dome in a 1 bedroom layout**



**Multiple dome configurations**

A Global Dome provides 29m<sup>2</sup> of accommodation. Any 3 people with no experience at all, can erect a Global dome in less than 3 hours using just a screw driver, socket spanner and a step ladder, and it can be taken down again in just 1 hour. See <http://www.globaldomesltd.com/domes1.html>

With no requirement for skilled tradespersons the cost of erecting a dome is negligible

A Global Dome is maintenance free. It never requires painting, is impervious to mould and fungus and the window frames and door and its frame are powder coated. The curvature of the dome facilitates air circulation and the LED lighting is energy efficient. In fact the dome can be powered off-grid.

Global domes are cyclone and hurricane proof and can withstand earthquakes.

### **Inflatable homes**

There are a range of inflatable homes available from single dome shaped structures to full 3 bedroom homes.

Made of double skinned DVL the structures will last for more than 15 years. They are inflated and deflated in minutes and fold up into easily manageable packages. A small pressure solenoid maintains the air pressure for years and is noiseless.

### **Earth sheltered homes**

Global Domes Ltd and others manufacture a shell similar to the dome structures, which are bolted together to form a multi roomed residence which is then covered in earth to provide affordable earth sheltered accommodation villages.



**A 3 bedroom inflatable home**



**Earth sheltered fibreglass home**

### **Affordability**

A fully fitted out Global Dome as a studio apartment complete with bathroom, kitchenette, insulation and LED lighting for example starts at \$16,950.

Outside of a tent nothing else can compete with it price wise.

A studio or 1 bedroom dome can be rented out for \$85 per week. Once amortized, the same dome can be rent out for \$45 per week.

A two bedroom earth shelter home starts from \$35,000 and would rent for around \$175 per week.

### **No need for Government funding**

Global Domes runs an investor program worldwide where investors buy Global domes and then rent them back to one of our subsidiaries.



The investor achieves a tax free income each year by offsetting the income against the depreciation. The dome is then on-rented so that the accumulated rent over the lease period, less the interest, will allow the dome to be repurchased at the original price after 5 years, recouping the depreciation. The domes, now fully amortized, are then placed in a pool to be made available as affordable housing. The ROI is usually in the order of 17%pa tax free, accordingly there is no shortage of willing investors.

Global Domes Ltd, then combines with a community accommodation provider to build small domes villages of 15 to 20 domes able to accommodate victims of DV, older folk looking for more affordable accommodation or for the homeless, at affordable rents.

In USA Global Domes Ltd runs a program for the Native Americans, who would not normally be able to obtain a home loan or manage the deposit, whereby by renting a dome home for 5 to 7 years they get to own the dome home. See <http://www.globaldomesltd.com/rentadome1.html>

### **Granny Flats**

The government idea of encouraging Granny Flats as a way to achieve affordable housing has fallen flat, because a manufactured home is not a cheap item, even containerised home command a price above \$60,000 and owners look to maximise the rent return, resulting in a 1 bedroom granny flat renting for between \$290 and \$360 a week. This is not affordable housing.

### **What the Government needs to do**

The government needs to develop special compliance legislation allowing small community residential villages of say no more than 30 dwellings and to allow land to be rezoned to accommodate these. In particular regulations need to be made allowing such villages to be erected on farms, sanctuaries and situations such as above rail tracks.

The review does not adequately address the legislation necessary for accommodating affordable community housing for DV victims, the elderly and the homeless.



**A 15 dome village**