Meanwhile use: unlikely alliance unlocking vacant properties to address Australia's housing shortage

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A new alliance of corporate, government and community leaders is unlocking a rapid-response housing solution that transforms vacant residential properties into safe, transitional homes in 12 weeks at a fraction of the cost of new developments.

The National Alliance for Meanwhile Use brings together property developers, industry bodies and community sector groups to directly address Australia's housing crisis.

On the last Census night, ABS data shows more than 122,000 people across Australia were experiencing homelessness. At the same time, analysis of housing data suggests there are tens of thousands of inactive or vacant homes across New South Wales alone, including more than 22,000 in Greater Sydney.

The Alliance's main goal is to rapidly scale "Meanwhile Use" housing - the temporary activation of vacant or underutilised properties to provide safe, short-term accommodation.

The model connects property owners with experienced charities and community housing providers who refurbish, manage and support the properties as transitional accommodation while it awaits its next permanent use. This solves the operational bottleneck that has deterred private property owners from participating in the past.

The National Alliance for Meanwhile Use represents the first coordinated national effort to scale Meanwhile Use housing across Australia and **will be chaired by Jackson Hills, CEO of National Shelter, Australia's peak housing body.**

"There's a persistent myth that activating a vacant property for housing is risky, slow or expensive. It's none of those things when you have the right partners in place," Mr Hills said.

"What this alliance has done is bring corporate, industry and government together, sectors that don't normally sit around the same table, to make the case that this is no longer just an issue for the housing sector to solve on its own. It will help identify practical pathways to unlock these assets and build strong partnerships to expand Meanwhile Use initiatives nationally.

"The reason it works is because property owners don't have to become social workers. Frontline service providers and charities can do what they do best and manage tenancies while providing trauma-informed care. Every vacant property represents another opportunity to support people and create housing outcomes while longer-term solutions are being planned, funded, and delivered.

"Australia needs more homes and a broader range of housing responses. This Alliance represents a collaborative approach that can help bridge gaps, reduce waste and create immediate social value from assets that would otherwise sit idle."

The Alliance was formally established with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), which was supported by the NSW Minister for Housing and Homelessness, the Hon. Rose Jackson and

attended by National Shelter, Habitat for Humanity Australia, Property Industry Foundation, Coronation Property, Faith Housing Australia, Jewish House, Shelter NSW, Homelessness NSW, Australian Alliance to End Homelessness, My Foundations Youth Housing, Toga, Lendlease, Link Wentworth Housing, Social Ventures Australia and Women's Community Shelter.

Minister Jackson welcomed the establishment of the Alliance and the role it could play in expanding innovative housing responses and attended the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which established the Australian Alliance for Meanwhile Use.

"There is no single solution to the housing crisis, and we should be pursuing every opportunity to help people access safe, secure housing. That means building more homes, delivering more social and affordable housing, and supporting practical initiatives like Meanwhile Use that can make a difference now," said Minister Jackson.

"The Australian Alliance for Meanwhile Use is bringing together government, the community sector and industry around a shared goal: turning underutilised properties into homes for people who need them.

"No one wants to see homes sitting empty while people are sleeping rough or escaping violence with nowhere safe to go. Meanwhile Use is exactly the kind of practical initiative we want to support alongside our record investment in new housing."

The National Alliance for Meanwhile Use was born from the momentum generated at the Concept to Community: Lessons in Meanwhile Use forum held at NSW Parliament House, which saw a cross sector panel hosted by Habitat for Humanity Australia, Coronation Property, Shelter NSW, Aboriginal Women and Children's Crisis Service and Property Industry Foundation. The Alliance has grown organically from within the sector, rather than being mandated by government.

Penny Kaleta, CEO, Habitat for Humanity Australia, said the momentum behind the National Alliance for Meanwhile Use grew from seeing what was possible when organisations came together with a shared commitment to addressing housing insecurity.

"Attending the Concept to Community forum alongside Coronation Property and Property Industry Foundation and other sector leaders was a pivotal moment. It demonstrated that there is a genuine willingness across community, government and industry to think differently about how we use existing housing assets to support people in need."

"At Habitat for Humanity, we see firsthand the devastating impact that housing insecurity has on individuals and families. The creation of the National Alliance for Meanwhile Use is a natural next step, allowing us to take those lessons, strengthen partnerships and unlock more underutilised properties to help address Australia's housing shortage and homelessness challenges."

Through the MOU, members have committed to working together to remove systemic barriers, share evidence and best practice, advocate for policy reform, and create pathways for more properties to be rapidly transformed into safe and stable homes.

"If we're serious about supporting women and children escaping crisis, we need to think differently about the housing that already exists, including homes that may otherwise sit vacant while awaiting future use," **Joe Nahas, Managing Director of Coronation Property said.**

“That is why I asked our team to include Coronation House in our Meanwhile Use portfolio. With the right partners, safeguards and support in place, an underutilised property can become a place of safety, stability and dignity.

“Housing insecurity is not someone else's problem to solve. Every organisation has the capacity to contribute in some way, and I would encourage others to consider the role they can play in creating practical housing solutions.”

For those who have accessed the housing, the impact can be immediate and profound. One of the first residents placed through the Coronation House initiative, a woman and her son escaping domestic violence, described the experience as a turning point.

“Before this, we were moving constantly and didn’t feel safe,” she said. “Having a secure place, even for a short time, meant my child could sleep, go to school, and feel normal again. It gave us space to breathe and start planning what comes next, instead of just surviving day to day.”

Designed strictly as a transitional model, Meanwhile Use provides a crucial stepping stone by empowering residents with a clear exit pathway to ensure they transition into a better and more permanent position.

The Coronation House initiative, a partnership between Coronation Property, Habitat for Humanity Australia and the Aboriginal Women and Children's Crisis Service, has delivered more than 1,500 nights of accommodation, with thousands more committed. From property identification to the first family moving in took less than three months, at a refurbishment cost of around $20,000, a fraction of the cost of delivering equivalent new housing in the same area.

Supporters say the Meanwhile Use model says it is proven and ready to expand, particularly through residential housing.

Property Industry Foundation CEO Kate Mills said the sector already has the tools needed.

“We know the property industry has both the capacity and the capability to make a meaningful contribution,” Ms Mills said. “Our Meanwhile Use Platform will make the tools and frameworks available to all participants, making it possible to activate more homes at scale.”

With Meanwhile Use now recognised across government, community and industry as a viable, low cost complement to new housing supply, supporters of the Alliance say the more pressing question is no longer whether the model works, but how quickly it can be scaled to match the pace of the housing crisis.

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About National Shelter
National Shelter is a peak organisation that aims to improve housing access, affordability, appropriateness, safety and security for people on low incomes. Since 1976, National Shelter has worked towards this goal by influencing government policy and action, and by raising public awareness about housing issues. National Shelter's aim is to work towards every Australian having access to housing that is safe.

About Property Industry Foundation
The Property Industry Foundation is dedicated to ending youth homelessness by accelerating the delivery of safe, stable housing in partnership with the property and construction industry. Through the Haven Project and Amplify Project, the Foundation combines practical action, like building homes, with long-term, systemic change. The Meanwhile Use Platform is the Foundation's commitment to act now: connecting charities and community organisations with commercial property owners to put idle spaces to work for people who need them most. Find out more at meanwhileuse.com.au

About Habitat for Humanity Australia
Habitat for Humanity Australia is part of a movement of people in our local area and around the world, working together to build more prosperous and vibrant communities by making sure everyone has a decent, safe, affordable place to call home. . In Australia, the organisation partners with government, community groups and industry to deliver practical housing solutions, combining on-the-ground delivery expertise with a focus on resilience, stability and long-term pathways out of housing insecurity. To learn more, visit
habitat.org.au

About Aboriginal Women and Children Crisis Centre
Aboriginal Women and Children's Crisis Service (AWCCS) is a specialist, Aboriginal-led organisation providing crisis accommodation, advocacy and support to Aboriginal women and children experiencing domestic and family violence. AWCCS delivers culturally safe, trauma-informed services that prioritise immediate protection while supporting long-term healing, stability and independence.

About Coronation
Coronation Property is a privately owned, vertically integrated property group specialising in mixed-use precincts, residential, retail, commercial, Build-to-Rent and hotels. With placemaking at its core, Coronation creates neighbourhoods that combine design excellence with long-term community value. Completed projects include The Paper Mill precinct in Liverpool, Mason & Main in Merrylands, and Charlie Parker in Parramatta. Current projects include Ashbury Terraces, 8 Phillip Street in Parramatta, Erskineville, and Moore Point in Moorebank.
coronation.com.au