

# Housing falls well behind

A NATIONWIDE community of housing providers has released a report that aims to improve the dire situation of social housing in Australia.

PowerHousing Australia's *A Vision and Plan for Social Housing in Australia* outlines a plan to expand and revitalise the social housing sector by applying uniform policy and two regulator bodies to oversee the housing sector.

PowerHousing chairman Ken Marchingo said Australia was a long way behind other developed nations in the percentage of houses that were affordable for low-income people.

Fifteen per cent of Australians need subsidised housing and presently only 4 per cent of Australian houses fall into this category.

Mr Marchingo said that with the exception of America, this was well below the Western average of between 15-20 per cent.

"We are well below world standards which have seen an increase in homelessness," Mr Marchingo said.

"The time is right to put



Ken Marchingo

the voice of practical reality into the debates and policy developments under way at a federal level.

"We need a national approach to what is a national crisis.

"There are between 500,000 and 600,000 families paying more than 30 per cent of their low income on rent in this country and that is unsustainable.

"There has been a shortfall in new public housing construction by 260,000 houses since 1996; we know that is because nearly \$4 billion has gone missing from funding."

Mr Marchingo said inves-

tors buying property rather than new stock had created a cut-throat rental market.

The report was released on the eve of the first round of funding from the Federal Government's \$6.4 billion social housing stimulus package — an amount Mr Marchingo said was inadequate.

Two authorities are proposed by PowerHousing Australia — The Australian Social Housing Regulation and Prudential Supervision Authority and the Australian Social Housing Development Agency.

The Authority would advise government on investments in social housing; and register and monitor the finances and performance of social housing providers including State Housing Authorities, not-for-profit organisations and the private sector.

The Australian Social Housing Development Agency would be a building institution jointly funded by the Commonwealth, the states and territories and subscriptions from non-registered housing providers.