

Quality Development on the Coast: Pacific Link Housing



Based on the Central Coast, **Pacific Link Housing** is a **not-for-profit community housing provider** that has spent more than 40 years working to provide **safe, secure and affordable homes for those in need**, and helping to build **thriving and inclusive** communities that benefit everyone. As the cost of living crisis deepens and with record numbers of **women aged 55 and over now experiencing homelessness**, we spoke to the organisation's **CEO, Ian Lynch**, about how his team is working to help.



How long has Pacific Link Housing been in operation, and what are some of the key values or philosophies that guide the development of your projects?

Pacific Link Housing is a highly regarded community housing provider with a rich history over almost 40 years of serving the local community. Our unwavering mission is to provide safe, secure and affordable homes to those in need.

We understand that a home serves as the foundation from which individuals can build exciting futures, and we are dedicated to ensuring our tenants have the security of a home and the necessary support to achieve their aspirations.

In addition to our core focus on tenancy management, we have expanded our operations to include development projects. Since 2017, we have successfully completed 129 units of housing, spanning the full continuum of social, affordable and market-rate rentals. These projects have allowed us to cater to the diverse housing needs of our community.

We have an ongoing commitment to developing mixed tenancy projects, with a pipeline of over 100 units in varying levels of progress from active construction, planning, or development application stage. These future developments align with our strong belief that thriving and inclusive communities benefit everyone.



Every individual deserves to have access to a safe, secure and affordable home, and you've already completed a number of projects in the Woy Woy and Canton Beach areas.

Is there one memory or story you can share that demonstrates how these projects have benefited the Central Coast community?

A memorable story that showcases the positive impact of our projects involves Jan, an 80-year-old retired school teacher.

Jan found herself in a challenging situation when the two-bedroom house she was renting suddenly went on the market, leaving her with just six weeks to find a new home.

Despite her efforts, Jan quickly discovered that private rental prices were beyond her financial reach, leaving her upset and shocked. She applied for social housing but was disheartened to learn that there was a 10 to 15 year waitlist.

This left Jan homeless and uncertain about her future.

Fortunately, Jan found temporary housing in Pacific Link Housing's meanwhile-use accommodation called Allawah House, which is located in East Gosford.

When she moved in, the relief she felt was overwhelming, and she couldn't help but cry tears of gratitude. Allawah House provided her with a safe and stable environment, giving her the chance to gather herself and plan her next step towards securing long-term housing.

In May 2023, Jan had the opportunity to share her story at the opening of Fernleigh, Pacific Link Housing's mixed tenancy development in Belmont.

As the first resident of Fernleigh, Jan expressed her deep appreciation for being given the opportunity to live in a brand-new, modern building. Jan feels a sense of gratitude and believes that the completion of Fernleigh is a cause for great celebration.

With renewed optimism, she looks forward to making connections within her new community and embracing the opportunities that lie ahead.

Jan's story exemplifies the transformative impact of our developments. By providing safe, secure and affordable housing options, we have the opportunity to positively change the lives of individuals like Jan, offering them hope, stability and a sense of belonging within their community.

Your Adira Apartments project in Woy Woy is targeted towards older women, and unfortunately, this group is often reported to be the fastest-growing cohort of homeless people in Australia today.

In your view, how serious is this crisis, and how do projects like yours help to alleviate it?

The homelessness crisis among older women in Australia is a grave concern that demands immediate attention. The escalating numbers highlight the urgent need for tailored solutions to address the specific challenges faced by this vulnerable group.

Projects like Adira Apartments play a crucial role in alleviating the homelessness crisis for older women by providing safe, secure and affordable housing options.

By offering a mixed-tenancy model that includes social housing, affordable housing and market-rate rentals, Adira Apartments caters to older women at different stages of their housing journey or need. This approach recognises the diverse circumstances of this demographic and ensures that they have access to suitable housing options.

Adira Apartments serves as a beacon of hope by creating a supportive and inclusive environment where older women can thrive. It fosters a strong sense of community, promoting social connections and a support network for its residents.

This sense of belonging is instrumental in breaking the cycle of homelessness and empowering older women to regain stability and independence.

Projects like Adira Apartments not only address the immediate housing needs of older women but also contribute to long-term solutions by raising awareness, inspiring innovation and advocating for policy changes that prioritise affordable and inclusive housing for this vulnerable population.

What have been some of the challenges you've experienced with your developments in the current climate? How have you overcome them?

The property development industry as a whole is currently facing significant challenges and Pacific Link Housing is not immune to these impacts. Factors such as rising interest rates, escalating land values, building material costs and a shortage of available trades have affected our developments, just like any other property developer.

One of the key challenges we face is the persistent lack of investment and support from governments at all levels. This poses a hindrance to our efforts to increase the supply of housing, particularly in the sub-market rental segment.

Despite our dedication to providing affordable housing solutions, the limited financial backing presents additional obstacles in meeting the growing demand for affordable rentals.

Despite these impacts, we remain resolute in finding innovative solutions and advocating for increased support of our developments. Our commitment to our mission of providing safe, secure and affordable homes for those in need remains unwavering.

We will continue to work diligently to navigate these obstacles by seeking out alternative approaches, collaborating with stakeholders and raising awareness about the importance of affordable housing in our region.



Your Central Coast developments have been named as finalists in many prestigious award categories, including the Property Council of Australia's 'Landcom Award for Best Affordable Housing Development'. What does this kind of recognition mean to you?

The recognition of our development projects through prestigious awards is a tremendous honour for Pacific Link Housing which we humbly accept. It signifies that our projects meet and even surpass the standards set by private developers.

Winning a national award with the Property Council of Australia for our mixed-tenancy development in Lake Macquarie exemplifies the exceptional quality we consistently deliver.

This kind of recognition plays a crucial role in our advocacy efforts to secure funding support from all levels of government for our developments. The awards highlight our achievements and lend credibility to our cause, demonstrating our ability to create high-quality housing solutions.

As evidence of our success, we have secured \$8.6 million in cash grants from the NSW Government's Community Housing Innovation Fund (CHIF) for five current projects since mid-2021. Pacific Link Housing has been one of the most successful recipients of CHIF funding, enabling us to expand our capacity to deliver urgently needed affordable housing.

Our reputation as a community housing provider and our award-winning projects also help us secure debt finance through the National Housing Finance and Investment Corporation (NHFIC).

This additional financial support amplifies the impact of grant funds, enabling us to develop more affordable housing.

Ultimately, these awards validate the exceptional efforts of Pacific Link Housing as a leading community housing provider and the journey we look to take the community on with us. We take great pride in being at the forefront of delivering innovative and affordable mixed-tenancy developments that make a positive impact in the communities we serve.



Glendale, NSW



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