Dear approved participants

**Information relating to amendments to the *National Rental Affordability Scheme Act 2008* (NRAS Act)**

I am writing to inform you of amendments to the NRAS Act introduced in Parliament today as part of the Social Services Legislative Amendment (Housing Affordability) Bill 2017.
The amendments are part of a multi-staged approach to reforming the NRAS legislative framework to strengthen and simplify the administration of the Scheme until it ceases operation in 2026-27.

The amendments include minor technical changes to clarify ambiguous provisions, and the introduction of two new provisions.

The first amendment provides express legislative authority to transfer an allocation from one approved rental dwelling to another. The ability to transfer dwellings is crucial to achieving the objects of the Scheme and to ensure the level of NRAS housing stock is maintained.

The second amendment removes the prescriptive nature of the current vacancy provisions to allow greater flexibility for the NRAS Regulations to prescribe the permitted vacancy period of an NRAS dwelling before it has an impact on the incentive payable.

The third amendment supports the correct interpretation of the term ‘at all times during the year’, which is that each time rent is charged it is to be at least 20 per cent less than the market rent.

The minor technical amendments will come into effect from 1 May 2018.

The amendments also introduce new provisions to provide express legislative authority for the NRAS Regulations to vary conditions after an allocation has been made. If passed by Parliament, these provisions will come into force the day after the Bill receives Royal Assent, and will be given effect through future amendments to the NRAS Regulations.

If you require further guidance on the contents of this letter, please contact the Department at nras@dss.gov.au.

Yours sincerely

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Branch Manager

Housing Programs and Homelessness Branch

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