

MEDIA RELEASE

Faith Housing Alliance



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A DISRUPTIVE VOICE needed in Housing Crisis

Are we becoming desensitized to the rising crisis across our communities? Who is responsible? Do we really care? Fervent affordable housing and tenant advocate and Executive leader Michele Adair, says emphatically ‘we are, and we must care!’

“I’ve never been able to walk past injustice or ignore things that aren’t right. Whether it was challenging my uncle’s gender bias as a teenager or a Minister who is talking nonsense, I have always felt compelled to call that stuff out”.

Ms Adair explored some of the personal attributes needed to survive the process of affecting positive social change with guests who are ‘up for the fight’ against homelessness and rising affordability and tenancy security challenges at an event in the *Experts in Conversation* series hosted by FHA.

She says a lesson learned early in her career, ‘to never surprise the boss’, ensures her adversaries are always shown respect and have advance warning of what they’ll hear in the media or see online. “It doesn’t mean they’ll like the message, but they should never feel blindsided” she says.

By its very nature advocating for change will disrupt the status quo. That means the leaders and beneficiaries of the current state may experience a loss of power or feel threatened. Being an advocate almost always means becoming a target for public and private criticism. With the increased utilisation of social media attacks from trolls also goes with the territory.

Being an advocate is different to being a lobbyist although the approaches do have similarities, and both try to affect change. Ms Adair believes much of the criticism directed at political lobbyists arises from a key difference between the two: lobbying almost always occurs in private using personal influence and avoiding public scrutiny. Recommendations are made behind closed doors and typically serve a narrow interest group rather than the public interest.

Ms Adair presented case studies of some of the impactful programs she has led in recent years that tackles this issue. These include Land and Housing Corporation (LAHC) uplift and renewal policy, structural risk in new build releases, 2021 NSW local government election scorecards, and calling out the ex-Prime Minister on National Housing Finance and Investment Corporation (NHFIC).

She also explored some of the personal attributes that are needed to survive the process of affecting positive social change.

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