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Social housing wins major state award for design

The Bigge Street social housing project in Warwick Farm in Sydney's West has received an award in the Residential Architecture – Multiple Housing category at the recent Australian Institute of Architects NSW Awards.

The project, designed by Sydney architecture and design practice [TURNER](#), answers NSW's urgent need for social housing, particularly in the Liverpool area, where the wait time exceeds 10 years.

TURNER Director Stephen Cox says the Bigge Street project's recognition by the design industry is an indication that social housing can and should be designed at the highest level.

"It was important to us not to lower expectations or aspirations of what an apartment building should be, simply because it's social housing," Stephen says. "This award win demonstrates that the quality of the design stands on its own."

The designers say one of the key drivers of the project was the idea of 'blind tenure', where social housing relates to its urban context and is of comparable or better quality than other housing in the area. The project is an exemplar of what is possible in a suburban setting while still working with the specific requirements of social housing.

"Residents of social housing should love where they live as much as people in private housing. We wanted to make sure the residents were proud of their apartments, and that the building wasn't identifiable as social housing."

TURNER's client, Land and Housing Corporation (LAHC), was particularly interested in the long-term performance of the project, including maintenance, longevity and the diverse and sensitive needs of social housing residents.

The balancing of these criteria was different to other multi-residential projects and led to innovations that are rare in this housing type including the elimination of paint on the exteriors of the building to simplify maintenance, cleverly screened clothes lines on each balcony to avoid energy consumption, and the achievement of 100% 'Livable Housing' standard features to provide greater equity for residents and to allow ageing-in-place.

Another innovation is the use of concrete to create character, rather than relying on expensive decorative elements. The main material of the building is precast concrete, which allows different textures and shapes to be imprinted into the form. The lobby features an oversized address imprinted into the precast panels which is word play about the 'Bigge Street' address.

In contrast, the interiors are softer, including coloured highlights and finer grain details. The ground floor landscaped areas and communal open spaces provide amenities that respond to the diverse needs of residents.

"Social housing celebrates the very best parts of our city's diversity. We look forward to helping many other people into homes they're proud of in coming years," says Stephen.

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For more information and high-resolution images please contact:

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