

Sydney, Australia Hosts the International Housing Partnership's 8th Annual Leadership Exchange

Leaders from more than 50 leading housing organizations in Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States gathered in Sydney, Australia in October for four days of high-level peer exchange, a forum focused on philanthropy and social investment, and related site visits. The meeting was hosted by PowerHousing Australia, a network of the top community housing providers from throughout Australia.

This was the eighth annual leadership exchange of the International Housing Partnership (IHP), which brings together 175 nonprofits from the four countries, with a collective portfolio of more than one million affordable homes serving more than two and a half million people.



The meeting began with a special forum on housing philanthropy, social investment, and policy, which was sponsored by the MacArthur Foundation. In addition to IHP members, the forum was attended by Australian philanthropic leaders, as well as housing investors and local officials. It featured interactive discussions on philanthropic practices, enterprise financing, social impact bonds, community reinvestment initiatives, and other innovative efforts to access support and capital for affordable housing in IHP countries. The forum concluded with an update on current policy issues in the four countries. There was consensus on the need for housing providers to integrate housing, health, and social services to re-energize housing policy at the national level. There was also wide agreement that housing providers have to tell a better story to government and funders that paints the value equation of housing – including the positive impacts on health, employment, education, and outcomes for children – far more effectively than we are doing currently.



The central theme of the CEO Exchange that followed over the next two days was focused on leadership and its impact on business transformation and strategic and business planning. An organizational leadership discussion was grounded on a leadership survey completed by 75 IHP member groups, which was conducted by Geraldine Howley, chief executive of Incommunities in northern England. “The leadership work identified some common areas across the four countries that we can work on jointly to improve,” said Howley. “I have attended these IHP events for the last six years and I thought that the Sydney exchange moved the partnership to another level in terms of identifying areas that we can all learn from,” she added.

The exchange was also built on the year-long efforts of three cross-country work groups that tackled key areas of interest: housing for seniors, new sources of capital, and strategic asset management. The housing for seniors discussion highlighted the importance for housing providers to engage with the

health and social care policy agendas and budgets. The new sources of capital session focused on bonds and private placements, the use of real estate investment trusts (REITs) for affordable housing, innovative homeownership initiatives, and government and philanthropic roles in capital-raising. One of the intriguing conclusions reached was that given that it can be relatively easier to raise more money than less, there might be some potential for a cross-country capital raise among IHP members.



There was significant interest in the UK's approach to the bond markets, where housing associations have raised \$10 billion pounds in the past two years. There was also some interest in the US Housing Partnership Network's new social purpose REIT, though UK groups said that the REIT approach had been explored in the UK but the bond markets seemed to present better opportunities. The exchange ended with a conversation about IHP Marketplace, which will feature a web-based platform to promote peer exchange and business collaborations among IHP members, and is expected to be launched in 2014.



The exchange also featured a twilight reception at Sydney's iconic Opera House, which was hosted by Lucy Turnbull, former Lord Mayor of Sydney and current chair of the Committee for Sydney. Additionally, there was a Penfolds wines master class presented by Penfolds winemaker Andrew Baldwin.

Property tours conducted by Bridge Housing Corporation and St. George Community Housing provided participants with a hands-on view of some of the work being done by PowerHousing Australia members. And before and after the Sydney meeting, several participants took part in the "Thinker in Residence" program, which matched visitors with various PowerHousing members throughout the country and a variety of learning and sharing opportunities.



Eighty percent of participants responded to a follow-up evaluation survey, with 67% giving the meeting the top rating of "very valuable" and the remaining 33% considering it "valuable." As meeting host and outgoing IHP Chair Ken Marchingo, who is CEO of Haven; Home, Safe in Bendigo (Victoria) put it in handing over the chairmanship to Hunter Johnson, CEO of LINC Housing (Long Beach, California): "What we do is very powerful because of who we help, and we should always keep that in mind. Our chief challenge is to better promote and communicate the positive outcomes we are achieving on a daily basis."

The 2014 IHP Leadership Exchange will be held in London, England the week of October 6th. For more information, contact [Manuel Muelle](#).