



HOMING IN: Maree McKenzie, Belinda Kotris and Jeff Fulton were among dozens of locals to meet and discuss the issue of long social housing waiting lists in Tamworth. Photo: **Barry Smith** 180215BSE02

Waiting on scarce resources

By **Erin Handley**

LOCAL peak bodies met this week to discuss strategies and clamp down on long waiting lists for social housing.

The forum comes after troubling figures last year revealed locals were typically waiting up to five years on a community or public housing unit.

Homes North chief executive officer Maree McKenzie said our region was feeling the strain but had not yet hit dire straits.

"There needs to be focus on a scarce resource used for those who most need housing," Ms McKenzie said.

"One of the key issues is the rate that people are exiting is slowing down. People are staying longer, so there is less opportunity for people who need it to move into social housing.

"Part of that could be around the low affordability of the private rental market."

Ms McKenzie said more support was needed to help people transition and address the wider problem of housing, rather than social housing being the only solution.

She said financial distress could impact locals from all walks of life and there should be more support in place for people with high needs.

"It's exciting to hear the NSW government talking about social housing as a pathway to independence, not a home for life."

She said it was "absolutely critical" for the government to speak with frontline workers in the region.

Feedback to the state government on the issue of social housing closed yesterday.

Community members can read the discussion paper through the facs.nsw.gov.au website.