

SCS 054 - Social Housing

TRIM Reference: D21/150044 Due for Review: 31 August 2023
Responsible Officer: General Manager Culture and Community

Purpose

This policy outlines Surf Coast Shire Council's (Council) commitment to increase the provision of social housing within the municipality.

Policy Principles

This policy guides Council's efforts to address the shortfall of social housing properties in the municipality within the context of the Victorian Government's Big Housing Build program.

Council recognises that:

- Access to housing is a human right
Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control. (Article 25, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, United Nations General Assembly 10 December 1948).
- Communities are stronger when everyone has an appropriate place to call home
Public spending on social and affordable housing addresses social needs however it is not social welfare; it is an investment in essential infrastructure enabling people to contribute to economic, social and cultural life which in turn leads to stronger communities. (P.Mares 2018). However, this is not a view shared by all
- The Surf Coast needs more social housing
The Surf Coast, like the rest of Australia, needs more long-term, affordable rental accommodation that does not leave people on low incomes living in a state of stress.
- Council has a key role to play as a partner alongside others
The supply of social housing is primarily a state government responsibility, however it is provided in a housing market affected by policy settings at all three levels of government. Collaboration is required between the three levels of government, local communities, and the private, the profit-for-purpose and the not-for-profit sectors.
- The history of social housing is important context for the future
A historical underinvestment in social housing and the contrasting emphasis on the importance of the private market, have combined to create a less-than-supportive environment where, for some, subsidised housing and its tenants are a source of concern and fear. This is a reality that cannot be ignored if the social housing shortfall is to be addressed.

Scope

This policy applies to the provision of social housing. Social housing provision is the domain of the Victorian Government (public housing) and the profit-for purpose and not-for profit sectors (community housing). Council's interest is in the effective functioning of local communities. The unavailability of social housing, as a subset of affordable housing, negatively impacts the functioning those communities.

Policy

Surf Coast Shire Council is committed to improving the availability of high quality social housing within the municipality via the Victorian Government’s Big Housing Build program. Council is committed to exploring opportunities to promote social housing as a means of driving economic development, providing jobs and address disadvantage.

Council recognises there is a shortfall of social housing across the shire and opportunities should be pursued in townships with the necessary facilities and public transport links being Aireys Inlet, Anglesea, Jan Juc, Lorne, Torquay and Winchelsea.

Council will:

- Participate in the G21 regional, collaborative approach to the planning and development of increased social housing stock.
- Consider housing affordability generally, and social housing in particular, across all facets of social and land use planning.
- Identify and consider the suitability of Council and other Government owned land for social housing initiatives.
 - Where there are clear opportunities to develop sustainable and supportive social housing on Council land, the Council will undertake a rigorous planning, assessment and consultation process before finalising any proposal. The assessment process will consider:
 - The purpose of the land
 - Planning controls
 - Impact on open space provision
 - Impact on community infrastructure provision
 - Council is committed to working with Homes Victoria to identify, assess, plan and develop underutilised state owned land, where this land can be used to deliver additional social housing.
- Recognise the primacy of the role of Homes Victoria in formulating, finalising and delivering any plans to develop social housing on land which is owned by not-for-profit groups, churches and private individuals.
- Advocate to Homes Victoria and housing providers to assess existing social housing properties and to maintain or upgrade these homes in accordance with the principles listed in the table below.
- Seek to positively influence the provision of social housing in greenfield developments within the legal framework established by the Victorian Government.
- Provide information and advice to parties seeking to develop opportunities for increased social housing in the municipality
- Participate in building community awareness and understanding of the need for social housing in the municipality and fostering the conditions for successfully increasing its provision to build stronger communities.
- Work with both local and regional support service providers to improve access to a range of support programs for any social or private housing residents requiring them.

Council recognises the following principles should be used in determining appropriate housing for low income households.

Parameter	Principle	Rationale
Location	Housing should be located in reasonable proximity to the range of services the resident requires including retail, education, health, employment and transport.	Many low income households may not have access to private transport and therefore it is important that locations are close to bus stops as well as existing service centres and facilities.
Design	Housing should be designed to provide adequate space and amenity appropriate to the life stage of the household.	Efficient use of resources requires the size of properties to be well matched to the residents’ needs and family composition.

Quality	Housing for low income households should not be too dissimilar in appearance to typical housing in the immediate neighbourhood.	Lower income households should not be stigmatised by being required to live in significantly lower quality housing than neighbouring properties as this can cause social isolation.
Integration	Housing should offer the potential to live in a community that is stable, supportive and safe.	Positive relationships with and the sharing of interests with neighbours and other community members can contribute to a sense of belonging and inclusion and enable stronger communities.
Affordability	Housing should be provided at a cost to the household that does not leave occupants with insufficient income to meet the other basics of life such as food, clothing, utilities, medical and education costs.	It is commonly accepted that household costs should not exceed 30% of income for those households in Very Low, Low and Moderate incomes categories.
Sustainability	Housing should be designed so that the costs of living in the dwelling are minimised.	Reducing the cost of construction via lower cost materials should not result in higher maintenance costs over time (reducing viability for the provider) and/or reduce environmental efficiency (increasing living costs for the resident).
Support	Housing should be linked to support services which are appropriate to household members and which enable them to maintain a stable tenancy.	Secure and affordable housing will automatically contribute to housing stability however some people such as those with significant physical disabilities and people with acute mental health problems may require ongoing or periodic professional support to assist them to maintain their accommodation.

Adapted from The City of Greater Geelong Social Housing Plan 2020-2041

Definitions

Big Housing Build – Victorian Government program announced in November 2020 worth \$5.3 billion to construct more than 12,000 new homes throughout metro and regional Victoria over the following four years

Homes Victoria - The state government department formed to deliver the Big Housing Build program.

Social Housing – consists of public and community housing and is regulated to ensure access to housing at less than 30% of income in a rental agreement that provides security of tenure. All public housing is owned and managed by the state government and the tenants have a lease directly with the government. All community housing is owned or managed by not-for-profit community groups who are regulated by the Housing Registrar and called Housing Agencies. They are registered under the Housing Act 1983 as either housing associations or housing providers.

Related Procedure

Nil.

References

City of Greater Geelong (2020), Social Housing Plan 2020-2041.

P. Mares (2018), No Place Like Home – Repairing Australia’s Housing Crisis, Text Publishing, Melbourne.

Document History

Version	Document History	Approved by – Date
1	<i>Created</i>	<i>Council Resolution – 24 August 2021</i>