

Submission

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**Response to the City of Cockburn
Draft Housing Affordability and
Diversity Strategy**



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About Shelter WA

Shelter WA is the peak body for affordable housing in Western Australia, funded to provide policy advice, stakeholder engagement and influencing services. It was founded in 1979 as an independent community based peak body committed to accessible, affordable and secure housing for Western Australians. Shelter WA provides a link between government and the community through consultation, research, systemic advocacy, and policy advice and development. Our role is to provide an independent voice on housing rights and options in the state along the housing continuum, based on stakeholder consultation and research of housing market and homelessness trends. Our work focuses on promoting the development of appropriate affordable housing options for low to moderate income earners, those who are otherwise disadvantaged in the housing market and people experiencing homelessness.

Shelter WA promotes a diverse range of affordable housing options including social housing, housing within the private rental market and affordable home ownership. Shelter WA also provides community education, and advice to government on housing policy issues. Our development of policy recommendations is based on sound research and consultation with housing consumers and organisations working on housing and related issues.

Shelter WA's Response

Shelter WA welcomes the opportunity to provide this response to the City of Cockburn Draft Housing Affordability and Diversity Strategy. Shelter WA recognises that land use planning and decision making plays a central role in the supply and availability of affordable housing.

Shelter WA believes that clear planning mechanisms are needed to ensure increased housing supply is affordable and accessible to low and moderate income households. Without specific provisions to ensure additional dwellings are targeted to these households, there is a risk of developing housing in new and existing areas without increasing the social and economic mix needed for the health and vitality of Western Australian communities.

Local governments are in a strong position to influence the provision of affordable housing, as they have the ability to integrate strategic policy objectives with urban planning responsibilities that lead to tangible outcomes. The Local Government Act, 1995, suggests that each local government has a responsibility to plan for the

current and future needs of its community and Shelter WA considers this to include the need to plan for affordable housing (State of Western Australia, 1995).

Shelter WA commends the City of Cockburn on the key objectives of its Housing Affordability and Diversity Strategy. These are:

- a) To provide households with access to housing that is appropriate to their needs in terms of size, physical attributes and location;
- b) To provide housing that is affordable to households of varying financial capacity;
- c) To provide a variety of housing types in locations that have good accessibility to public transport and essential services;
- d) To promote affordable living, taking into consideration the total cost of living in a dwelling, including energy and water consumption, the price of transport to access employment and essential services, and other daily needs impacted by location.

The City of Cockburn, through the Draft Housing Affordability and Diversity Strategy, has acknowledged its responsibility to effectively plan for the future housing needs of its community. It is also evident that the City of Cockburn is committed to the present and future housing challenges within the region and in Western Australia. This can be seen through proposed amendments to their Town Planning Scheme, which will now include affordable housing as an objective and consideration. It can also be seen through the commitment to lobby State Government to extinguish restrictive covenants that work to reduce affordability and diversity, for example requiring particular built form and mandating minimum floor areas. It is also evident through the City of Cockburn's commitment to lobby for a State Government review of planning mechanisms which can deliver more affordable housing. This includes a review of mandatory inclusionary zoning, which has the potential to deliver a significant amount of affordable housing across Western Australia. Shelter WA supports this mechanism in our [Submission to Department of Planning: Planning Provisions for Affordable Housing](#).

Shelter WA is encouraged by other elements of the Draft Housing Affordability and Diversity Strategy. These are:

- An acknowledgement that a more diverse range of housing types must be delivered at significantly lower costs to meet the needs of low to moderate income earners;
- A comprehensive demographical analysis, including the assessment of the prevalence of housing stress within the City of Cockburn;
- A broad strategy to promote the creation of residential dwellings within mixed-use commercial zones, including the assessment of whether higher density should be encouraged;
- A provision which encourages development of ancillary accommodation through making it exempt from planning approval;

- Specified developer incentives, including graduated planning standards, which have already been utilised in the Cockburn Coast Affordable Housing Strategy;
- A wide-ranging communications strategy to inform the community of the need for housing affordability, and to improve negative perceptions of diverse and higher density developments;
- The acknowledgement that Structure Plans need to better respond to site characteristics. The Strategy explains that residential development will be avoided on land which is subject to noise and/or bushfire risk. Buildings located on these areas are required to conform to increased design requirements, which often reduces affordability;
- That the City of Cockburn have utilised the Shelter WA [Local Government Guide to Developing an Affordable Housing Strategy](#). This document was created to assist local governments' formulation of housing strategies, especially to determine appropriate ways to facilitate affordable housing in a defined local housing market.

Shelter WA considers it is imperative that all levels of government, and broader society, recognise that affordable housing and homelessness are intangibly connected. The continued increase in homelessness within Western Australia is greatly impacted by the current shortage of affordable housing.

As a part of the Draft Housing Affordability and Diversity Strategy, the City of Cockburn has identified a shortage of crisis accommodation in its locality. This is considered especially important for youth and those with a disability in the area (City of Cockburn, 2014). The Strategy recommends that the council should continue to identify opportunities for crisis accommodation in the City of Cockburn as a priority (City of Cockburn, 2014, p. 55). The City of Cockburn also states that one of its strategies for council owned land is to maximise the provision of new land for residential development within established suburbs, through a review of its Land Management Strategy (City of Cockburn, 2014, p. 50). Shelter WA believes that these two objectives could be managed simultaneously.

Shelter WA recommends the Draft Housing Affordability and Diversity Strategy detail a commitment by the City of Cockburn to partner with affordable housing providers, including those providing crisis accommodation. This could assist the City of Cockburn in realising the potential of undeveloped and underutilised land, and also provide added social benefits for the community. The City of Cockburn could pursue this commitment in a number of ways. These include:

- Crown land transfers for social housing development;
- Partnering in joint venture housing initiatives and management for long term affordability requirements;

- Transferring existing management opportunities of existing LGA affordable housing dwellings to social housing providers, enabling asset leveraging opportunities for social housing providers;
- Tendering the sale of local government land with affordable housing outcomes forming part of the tender evaluation process.

Shelter WA believes there are also other opportunities for the City of Cockburn to support and deliver affordable housing through the Draft Housing Affordability and Diversity Strategy. Shelter WA would recommend that the City of Cockburn explores:

- A best use analysis of whether to sell, transfer or lease Council-owned land to support affordable housing developments;
- Innovative approaches to deliver affordable housing, including community land trusts and housing co-operatives, which are promoted in the State Planning Strategy (Department of Planning, 2014);
- More detailed identification of preferred locations for affordable housing within the local government area through the use of its Land Management Strategy;
- Provision of an affordable housing percentage target, based on a demographical needs analysis;
- Liaison with the Department of Housing to ensure public housing stock is adequately provided for the future residents of the City of Cockburn;
- Development of performance indicators to assess whether objectives contained in this document are being achieved, with reporting responsibility assigned to local government employees;
- The use of working groups to further the issues covered in this document, and to ensure housing affordability and affordable housing is kept on the local agenda;
- The opportunity to organise, attend and support events for local government housing and community organisations and support services.

Conclusion

Shelter WA research suggests that strategies, such as City of Cockburn's Draft Housing Affordability and Diversity Strategy, can be effective in bringing about positive housing outcomes at a local government level. Shelter WA proposes these types of strategies are utilised appropriately and reviewed frequently in order to be effective, and would encourage the City of Cockburn to continue to refer to and update this strategy on an ongoing basis.

Shelter WA commends the City of Cockburn for encouraging, facilitating and emphasising affordable housing in its Draft Housing Affordability and Diversity Strategy. The strategy provides a clear message to developers, the general public,

internally to its council and staff, and to other government bodies, that the need for housing, including affordable housing, is necessary to ensure the health and vitality of future communities. The access to safe, secure, and affordable housing should be a right of every community member. Shelter WA believes this strategy will provide the guidance necessary to ensure diverse and affordable housing is a key feature in the future planning of the City of Cockburn.

Shelter WA looks forward to the City of Cockburn working with key stakeholders, including Shelter WA, to ensure the strategy is implemented effectively. Shelter WA would be happy to provide support, wherever possible, to ensure this and other projects within the City of Cockburn bring about an increase in the supply of affordable housing and also lead to a reduction in the homeless population in Western Australia.

References

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