



Inquiry into the Public Housing Renewal Program

Submission on behalf of Banyule City Council

1.0 Introduction

On 9 August 2017, the Victorian Legislative Council resolved that the Legal and Social Issues Committee conduct an inquiry into the DHHS Public Housing Renewal Program.

The Committee has been asked to assess a number of areas including:

- The adequacy of a proposed 10% increase in public housing
- The ability to cater for all demographics including families
- The effects on current public housing tenants
- The removal of planning controls from local Councils

The Committee wrote to Council on 7 September 2017 inviting any individuals or organisations to make a submission to the Inquiry by 3 November 2017.

This submission addresses Council's response to the key assessment areas for consideration by the Committee.

2.0 Assessment Areas

2.1 The adequacy of a proposed 10% increase in public housing

The adequacy of a 10% increase in public housing will depend on the Government's key drivers for managing public housing, and whether there is scope to set a more ambitious target if waiting lists warrant a greater increase. Local housing groups would like to see a 10% increase in public housing annually for the next 5 years.

It is also considered that adequacy be coupled with 'quality' and 'quantity' indicators, with public housing not concentrated in locations - rather a more dispersed delivery model should be explored.

Adequacy might also be informed by Government investment that could be added to the program, as any reliance on leveraging land value and private sector partnerships will affect the outcome. State Government Authorities could be asked to find opportunities to add to the 10%, including Development Victoria and the Victorian Planning Authority.

The increase should also consider alternative housing options, such as cohousing and cooperative housing models as long as long as these are coupled with on-site resident support for shared-use of spaces.

As discussed within the Municipal Strategic Statement of the Banyule Planning Scheme, Council has a strong desire to deliver co-housing. In partnership with housing co-operatives and State and Local Government, the Marundaka cooperative housing project by Common Equity Housing Ltd in Heidelberg Heights, has successfully delivered a sustainable, affordable, intentional community outcome, based on shared practices including shared kitchen, lounge room, dining room, laundry, recycling space, outdoor communal space and bike shed.

At the Council meeting on Monday 26 June 2017, Council considered an urgent business item about affordable housing and co-housing in Banyule. In response to the Council resolution, letters were sent to relevant State Government Ministers, agencies and local members of Parliament to advocate for government investment and planning for affordable housing and cohousing in State Government land projects in Banyule.

More needs to be done to nurture the ability of housing associations and active resident groups, to participate in DHHS projects to provide different housing options.

Consideration should also be given to equitable home ownership, in particular transition from public housing to home ownership through a community land trust model. Ultimately more diverse housing outcomes, with opportunities for public and private housing should be a fundamental objective for future development.

2.2 The ability to cater for all demographics, including families, couples and singles within the proposed housing mix

Existing public housing tenants in specific locations may have a specific socio/cultural profile. Strengthening this profile may be desirable to support community resilience and independence from welfare. Therefore the ability to cater for all demographics might be informed by high-order principals about desired socio/cultural outcomes to support existing communities.

Discussions with the Somali community suggest that within 10 years they will not require multiple bedrooms to accommodate their families. Young people are having less children than their parents. The current proposed design of public housing with a

centre doorway between two units so a larger family can be accommodated today and the housing configuration changed at a later date is supported.

Of central importance to Banyule is that proposed development requires adequate community infrastructure, services and programs to support tenancies.

Council's strategic direction for social and community facilities is driven by the City Plan's directions for People, Place and Prosperity. The outcome of this is an overall direction that aims to protect and develop social and community facilities in a way that provides for future growth and renewal.

Council has adopted a Community Services and Facilities Strategy and endorsed the joint *Community Infrastructure Plan for the La Trobe National Employment Cluster* with City of Darebin, La Trobe university, the VPA and State government. Both reports outline recommendations for increased community infrastructure and services to accommodate population growth.

It is considered essential that a Social Impact Assessment & Infrastructure Analysis inform decision making for mix of public/private on sites and supporting infrastructure and services to help inform what community programs and services need to be provided, modified or delivered differently in the future.

Once again there is an opportunity for more collaborative design processes to be employed for provision of public housing, with opportunities provided to enable direct stakeholder engagement with Council, Housing Associations, local service providers, and active resident's groups to help shape the social impact/assessment processes.

2.3 The effects on current public housing tenants

It is considered caution should be taken to not displace tenants from any location where they already have a support network and familiarity with support services. Temporary rehousing should be as close as possible to the location of redeveloped sites where tenants are eventually relocated.

Input from existing public housing tenants on the affected sites or any transition/relocation issues for existing tenants to ensure their needs/concerns are integrated in future construction timing and relocation programs is strongly encouraged.

It is also considered that tenants should have a stronger voice in the design of new homes. Community liaison committees with resident and community agency representation can provide an avenue for residents to participate in a more collaborative design approach.

2.4 The removal of planning controls from local councils and loss of third party appeal rights

While the provision of public housing is a State planning issue and services wider community needs, Councils need comfort that any local neighbourhood character, environment and other planning and transport/traffic issues are being effectively addressed.

It is suggested that independent peer review of proposed planning scheme amendments and design concepts could be done by the State Government to foster quality outcomes, and should include involvement of local government and housing groups as early as possible in the process. Social impacts and infrastructure analysis need to be imbedded in the information collected to inform design outcomes, on-site land-use mix and any off-site community service or infrastructure implications needed to support public housing tenants.

If third party appeal rights are removed it is essential that Council's be consulted in relation to Development Plan's prior to their approval with adequate timeframes to provide meaningful input into the Development Plan by the local community.

Consideration also needs to be made for on-going compliance matters related to the development and the ongoing role of the State Government in these matters.

3.0 Conclusion

Council welcomes the opportunity to provide input into the Inquiry into the public housing renewal program. Matters that are of key importance to Banyule City Council include provision of adequate public housing to meet demand, commitment to other housing models, provision of adequate infrastructure and services and early and ongoing involvement in the design of future development.

Council also consider that the Government support the Department of Health and Human Services to explore all opportunities to provide diverse and affordable housing outcomes through all social housing projects. It is also suggested that DHHS work

with Developments Victoria and other Government departments and authorities to ensure appropriate development of all Government land with social housing outcomes.