



CITY OF BALLARAT

# Social and Affordable Housing Action Plan





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The City of Ballarat acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land we live and work on, the Wadawurrung and Dja Dja Wurrung People, and recognises their continuing connection to the land and waterways.

We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging and extend this to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People.

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## Context

**The City of Ballarat recognises that housing directly impacts health and wellbeing, and plays a critical role in health, education, employment, and safety outcomes. Not only is physical shelter important, but it must also be adequate (suitable size, warm and dry), accessible (available for low-income households in a location that enables them to get to school, work, and community) and affordable (priced so households are able to meet other essential basic living costs).**

The Victorian Local Government Act 2020 requires councils provide the best outcomes for the community, whilst having regard to the long-term cumulative effects of decisions. Under the Local Government Act 2020, the role of local government in housing includes:

- Ensuring adequate planning for the future of the municipal district.
- Coordinating with other public bodies to ensure that services and facilities are provided, and resources are used effectively and efficiently,
- Representing and promoting the interests of the community and being responsive to the needs of the community.

In addition, the Planning and Environment Act 1987 includes facilitating the provision of affordable housing as a specific planning objective for Victoria.

The draft Ballarat Housing Strategy and the City of Ballarat Diverse and Affordable Housing Discussion Paper, developed in 2023, provide the background, context, and evidence to support the following action plan. Additional data, statistics and evidence regarding both affordable housing and homelessness have also contributed to the development of the Action Plan, a snapshot of which is included in the Affordable Housing and Homelessness Position Statements available on the City of Ballarat website.

The Diverse and Affordable Housing Discussion Paper found that City of Ballarat could contribute to improving housing diversity and affordability in several ways, which can be grouped into three tiers of influence, distinguished by the relative level of direct involvement and investment by City of Ballarat. The tiers are ordered according to their impact and have been considered in the development of the Draft Social and Affordable Housing Action Plan (the Plan). They do not need to be undertaken sequentially.

The identified three tiers of influence are:

- **Tier 1: Facilitating efficient housing markets** by focusing on partnerships, education and relationship building with industry and community stakeholders. Activity under this tier ensures planning and development control systems are efficient so that the supply side of the market can respond as smoothly as possible to local demand.
- **Tier 2: Facilitating affordable housing supply.** Activity under this tier would see City of Ballarat take a strong advocacy position in favour of social and affordable housing backed by a well-articulated policy and strategy.
- **Tier 3: Investing in affordable housing** as a direct agent of social and affordable housing supply, investing ratepayer funds and other assets (such as land) to this end.

As identified by the Discussion Paper, local government has a range of roles that can support the provision of affordable housing. The City of Ballarat will focus actions on delivering within the legislative responsibilities of local governments. The action plan has categorised initiatives into five key themes and roles of City of Ballarat to support increased supply of social and affordable housing including: Land; Policy and Planning; Community Engagement; Partnerships; Advocacy; and Further Investigations.

Intended outcomes of the action plan are:

- Better housing diversity that suits community needs
- Increased affordable housing supply
- Greater State and Federal Government investment and leadership
- More effective partnership arrangements with community housing providers and developers
- Improved community support for affordable housing
- Established role for local government as an advocate for social and affordable housing outcomes for residents.

Progression against the Action Plan will be reviewed bi-annually, with learnings implemented in future years.

## Principles

To underpin the actions in the Plan and to clarify City of Ballarat's role in diverse and affordable housing, the following principles will be applied:

1. City of Ballarat will support affordable housing development located in areas that have good access to schools, shops, services, public open space, and public transport.
2. City of Ballarat will support and advocate for increased investment in diverse and affordable housing development that is high quality, accessible, sustainable and climate resistant in design and construction.
3. City of Ballarat will encourage and advocate for support services be in place to ensure successful housing outcomes.
4. City of Ballarat will encourage and advocate for mixed tenure developments which support a socially cohesive community.
5. City of Ballarat will take an organisation-wide approach to ensure that actions to support diverse and affordable housing are aligned with other City of Ballarat strategies and plans including but not limited to those that focus on transport, economic development, tourism, asset planning and management.
6. City of Ballarat will seek to advocate for the inclusion of voices that reflect the diversity of our community and recognise the value of lived experience perspectives when developing social and affordable housing outcomes.

## Timescales

- **Immediate** within 12 months of adoption
- **Short** 1-3 years after adoption
- **Medium** 3-5 years after adoption
- **Ongoing** continual or as need arises

## 1.0 Land

The availability of land is the most significant enabler of social and affordable housing growth. Well located, inexpensive land is the starting point for any successful project. Diligently investigating land availability and suitability is a key role for City of Ballarat using information such as the rates database and GIS mapping. Land in greenfield areas, older suburbs, and urban areas must be considered. Underutilised land that is owned by Council, state government, churches and community groups must be included. Creative thinking around the potential for mixed use (such as community / commercial / residential) must also be part of the evaluation process.

1.0	LAND	Lead Council Team(s)	External partners	Timeframe
1.1	Develop a simple set of evaluation criteria about the suitability of sites for social and affordable housing (such as location, proximity to services, transport, cost etc).	Social Planning, Strategic Planning	N/A	Immediate
1.2	Complete an audit of City of Ballarat owned land and assets to identify any potential sites that meet the criteria. (including but not limited to, existing facilities, surplus open space, caravan parks, unused road reserves).	Property and Facilities Management, Social Planning, Strategic Planning	N/A	Immediate
1.3	Complete an audit of appropriate State-owned land to identify any potential sites that meet the criteria.	Social Planning, Strategic Planning	State Government	Immediate
1.4	Complete an audit of community owned sites (e.g., churches, community groups) to identify land that is underutilised and meets the criteria.	Social Planning, Strategic Planning	Community Organisations	Immediate
1.5	Use the evaluation criteria to rate all identified sites, grouping sites from most feasible to least feasible and identifying possible delivery models for feasible sites, including the most effective role for City of Ballarat (e.g., advocate, supporter, investor, partner etc.) and possible pathways for delivery.	Social Planning, Strategic Planning, Property and Facilities Management	Community Housing Industry Association Victoria (CHIA)	Short
1.6	Identify locally active housing providers and present them with the results of land audit / evaluation process to explore partnership and project potential.	Social Planning	Community Housing Industry Association Victoria (CHIA)	Short

## 2.0 Policy and Planning

The state government drives planning provisions and systems to ensure a consistent approach across the state. There is, however, scope for local communities to work on 'place making' to ensure liveability, amenity, and community cohesion. There is no strictly defined role for local government in the provision of social and affordable housing – which provides all Local Governments with an opportunity to determine their own position.

2.0	POLICY AND PLANNING	Lead Council Team(s)	External partners	Timeframe
2.1	Progress development of the Ballarat Housing Strategy and identify areas most suitable for diverse dwelling types.	Strategic Planning	Department of Transport and Planning	Immediate
2.2	Develop and deploy a clear set of conditions under which City of Ballarat may consider the investment of land or capital for affordable housing outcomes, with acknowledgment that each site and/ or project will be considered on an individual basis.	Strategic Planning, Social Planning	Regional Development Victoria / Community Housing Providers, Central Highlands Homelessness Alliance, Real Estate Agents and Developers	Immediate / Ongoing
2.3	Identify opportunities to secure high quality affordable housing in strategic planning projects, including consideration of inclusionary zoning in a greenfield or urban renewal context, and provide clarity on how City of Ballarat requires developers to deliver social and affordable housing outcomes.	Strategic Planning	N/A	Short / Ongoing
2.4	Consult with the developer community to increase awareness of the impacts of the current housing crisis, and encourage developers to make provision for social and affordable housing within subdivisions to assist with potential opportunities for state and federal investment.	Social Planning, Development Facilitation	Developers, Community Housing Providers	Immediate / Ongoing
2.5	Once policy and planning provision changes are endorsed, conduct an information/ training program for staff across planning, customer service, asset management and community development departments within City of Ballarat to ensure there are consistent and clear messages regarding the roles of City of Ballarat and the operation of planning provisions.	Strategic Planning	N/A	Short
2.6	Explore the financial feasibility of a City of Ballarat Officer resource for a 2-year Housing Solutions Broker, which would fast track implementation of the plan and investigate possible affordable housing sites, negotiate with the State Government around the use of State-owned land for affordable housing. This would include connecting private landowners with affordable housing developers, and supporting and advocating for projects that meet locally identified needs.	Strategic Planning, Social Planning	N/A	Immediate

## 3.0 Community Engagement

One of the barriers facing the provision of further community housing is the stigma associated with social and affordable housing. There is much long-term work to be done to challenge stereotypes and celebrate housing diversity.

3.0	COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	Lead Council Team(s)	External partners	Timeframe
3.1	Design, develop and implement a community engagement campaign which works to break down stereotypes and build understanding of the individuality of stories, to outline the problems associated with the housing crisis and the work involved in providing solutions, taking into consideration existing campaigns that can be leveraged. Ensure gender-inclusive and lived-experience engagement practices are employed in all engagement activities.	Social Planning	Community Housing Sector, Homelessness Service Providers, Community Housing Industry Association Victoria/Community leaders/ General community	Short
3.2	Where opportunities arise, deliver community information activities (e.g., forums/ social media etc.) that canvas innovation in areas such as cost-effective construction, carbon reduction in housing, housing diversity, response to climate change, and promote acceptance of local community housing projects.	Social Planning	Other Council teams and community organisations as required, Community Housing Industry Association Victoria/ Community leaders/ General community	Short/ Ongoing
3.3	Publish information on the Community Housing Sector and promote changes to legislation which support construction of small second dwellings.	Social Planning	Community Housing Sector, Community Housing Industry Association Victoria (CHIA)	Medium
3.4	Synthesise existing work and consult with the employer community to ascertain the extent of key worker housing shortages as required.	Economic Development, Tourism, Social Planning	Local businesses and organisations, Community Housing Industry Association Victoria (CHIA)	Short
3.5	Update and communicate City of Ballarat existing Homelessness and Affordable Housing Position Statements on a bi-annual basis to share key local data and evidence and to assist with advocacy for specific community needs.	Social Planning	Other Council teams and community service providers as required	Ongoing
3.6	Identify and distribute resources which support improved understanding of tenant rights, and awareness of local community health and inclusion support services for social and affordable housing residents.	Social Planning	Tenants Victoria, community organisations	Short

## 4.0 Partnerships

**Councils can work as connectors to bring together stakeholders with a shared interest in positively shaping the local community and addressing the inequities that have arisen through the housing crisis.**

4.0	PARTNERSHIPS	Lead Council Team(s)	External partners	Timeframe
4.1	Continue to work with Homes Victoria to ensure the link with State Government is geared towards building additional housing stock, and that additional housing commitments related to the Commonwealth Games are delivered within the Ballarat municipality.	Strategic Planning, Social Planning, Property and Facilities Management	State Government / Community Housing Providers / Developers	Immediate/ Ongoing
4.2	Continue to connect with community housing providers, Real estate agents, Builders, Community Housing Industry Association Victoria and developers to support an enabling / problem solving / collaborative working environment, and identifying opportunities to facilitate early communication for improved partnership outcomes.	Strategic Planning, Social Planning	Community Housing Providers, Developers, Real estate agents, Builders, Community Housing Industry Association Victoria	Ongoing
4.3	Support the work of local homelessness service providers through the Central Highlands Homelessness Alliance, increasing understanding of local issues and trends, supporting local advocacy campaigns, and supporting a 'Housing First' approach, (e.g. contributing to a local Zero project). Ensure stakeholders representing women and gender diverse individuals are included in any partnerships where possible.	Social Planning	Homelessness Service Providers, General community	Ongoing
4.4	Initiate and complete a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Aboriginal Housing Victoria, local Aboriginal Controlled Organisations and Traditional Owner Groups to better assess the housing needs of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and to identified shared actions that will contribute to the goals of Mana-na -woorn-tyeen maar-takoort (Victorian Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Framework). Consider the impacts of intersectionality and the needs of women and gender diverse individuals within any MOU developed where appropriate.	Social Planning, Community Inclusion	Aboriginal Housing Victoria, First Nations communities, BADAC, Traditional Owner groups	Short



## 5.0 Advocacy

**Councils use their peak bodies to advocate across a myriad of issues affecting their communities. Housing is no different. The Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) has extensive capacity to advocate on behalf of all municipalities and to connect with State Government on the key issues, particularly as they relate to regional areas.**

5.0	ADVOCACY	Lead Council Team(s)	External partners	Timeframe
5.1	<p>Support the MAV to take the lead on advocating for significant structural/ policy reforms including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve the mechanisms for contributions from the development process to replace the unworkable, resource intensive and ineffective voluntary system.</li> <li>• Provision to ensure that the money from taxes and levies (such as Windfall Tax) that is generated locally, stays within the municipality.</li> <li>• Expand the overall state and federal expenditure on the urgent provision of significant additional new community housing stock.</li> <li>• Accelerate the process of renewal for existing public housing stock and promote the transfer of this stock to the community housing sector.</li> <li>• Engage with the community, particularly in regional areas, to demystify social housing, challenge stereotypes and celebrate housing diversity.</li> <li>• Engage with the community to identify and advocate for the diverse housing needs, including those of CALD communities.</li> </ul>	Strategic Planning, Social Planning	Municipal Association of Victoria and State Government / Other Councils	Immediate/ Ongoing
5.2	<p>Advocate for a diverse range of high-quality affordable housing projects (crisis, transitional and long-term), including those on identified state and community owned land, which meet the needs of identified priority groups within our community. This includes women and children experiencing family violence, First Nations communities, women over 50 years, people with mental health and/ or substance misuse issues, those experiencing chronic homelessness, young people, LGBTQIA+ communities, people from CALD backgrounds, people with disabilities, and those from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds.</p>	Social Planning	State and Federal Government / Community Housing, Service Providers / Developers, Philanthropic organisations/ Community leaders	Immediate/ Ongoing

## 6.0 Further Investigation

There are several areas for further investigation which have been identified to develop a clearer understanding of community needs and opportunities in relation to social and affordable housing. These investigations may lead to further actions to be added to future iterations of the Plan.

6.0	FURTHER INVESTIGATION	Lead Council Team(s)	External partners	Timeframe
6.1	Initiate and complete an investigative process to identify the housing needs of older, low-income residents (with a particular focus on women) and assess the viability and suitability of establishing a Home Share program in the municipality.	Social Planning, Ageing Well	Housing Support Services / Neighbouring Councils	Short
6.2	Identify and communicate data relating to short stay accommodation, including the effects on housing affordability.	Social Planning, Economic Development, Tourism	N/A	Short
6.3	Investigate the social impacts of differing allocations of social and affordable housing within broader developments.	Social Planning	N/A	Immediate
6.4	Identify and communicate data to help enumerate and understand the scale of vacant residential properties.	Social Planning	N/A	Short
6.5	Consider and scope opportunities to apply for funding for affordable housing projects as they arise, including streams such as the Regional Housing Fund.	Strategic Planning, Social Planning, Property and Facilities Management	Dependant on funding stream	Ongoing
6.6	Advocate for homes that specifically meet the needs of young people who have experienced trauma and young people with complex needs. Provision of housing should be paired with the delivery of ongoing, long-term and targeted support.	Social Planning, Youth Services	Homelessness and Youth Service Providers	Ongoing
6.7	Advocate for safe, stable and supported housing options which respond to the needs of local women and children experiencing family violence and all forms of violence against women.	Social Planning	Homelessness and family violence support services, alliances and committees	Ongoing
6.8	Advocate to State Government to ensure that existing public housing stock is being utilised in the most efficient way, with appropriate service supports in place to ensure positive tenancies and neighbourhoods.	Social Planning	State Government	Short
6.9	Consider the feasibility and implications to both Council and community of alternative housing models, innovative solutions, and community led initiatives including cohousing, Build to Rent, 3D printing, and others as required.	Social Planning, Strategic Planning, Statutory Planning	N/A	Ongoing
6.10	Consider opportunities through the review of the Community Local Law 2017 to support those experiencing housing crisis, including clauses related to camping and caravan parks.	Regulatory Services, Social Planning	N/A	Short
6.11	Explore opportunities to support registered Community Housing Providers and Associations to deliver social and affordable housing in Ballarat by considering the feasibility of concessional or reduced Council rates and fees, (i.e. planning or engineering fees), and offering a planning application concierge service to streamline and expedite delivery of social and affordable housing.	Statutory Planning, Strategic Planning, Social Planning.	N/A	Medium

# Glossary

## Diverse housing

Refers to a broad range of dwelling types (size, style and tenure type) within a neighbourhood or developments.

## Social housing

A subset of affordable housing, typically referring to housing that is owned by government or a not-for-profit organisation (including but not limited to Housing Associations or Housing Providers which are collectively referred to as 'Registered Housing Agencies') and made available at affordable rents for eligible households. In Social Housing, rent is generally set at no more than 30% of gross household income.

## Affordable housing

Housing that is appropriate for very low, low and moderate income households (as defined in the Planning and Environment Act 1987 Section 3AB Order in Council), with households still able to meet other essential basic living costs after rent or mortgage payments. [Income brackets can be viewed here.](#)

## Developer

A company or individual that purchases land, and constructs properties on that land.

## Community Housing Sector

Not-for-profit organisations that manage Social and Affordable Housing. Community Housing Organisations include but are not limited to Registered Housing Agencies.





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