

## Places to Call Home

### A Statement of Commitment from Victorian Local Government

#### Introduction

This draft **Victorian Local Government Social and Affordable Housing Strategic Statement** prepared by the MAV aims to develop a state-wide local government position on social and affordable housing. It articulates the important role council can play in enabling the Victorian Government to realise its 10 year Social and Affordable Housing Strategy.

It also helps define the elements and actions local government would like to see dealt with in the Social and Affordable Housing Compact, which the Victorian Government [committed](#) to developing in November 2020. A year on since the Big Housing Build was announced, it is more than timely for the details of the Compact to be progressed.

This draft draws on the extensive work undertaken by councils to address the growing issue of housing affordability. It is intended to describe the broad roles and capture the intentions of councils regarding social and affordable housing.

Councils are invited to provide feedback to the MAV ahead of its consideration by the MAV Board in early 2022.

#### Context

Councils are fundamentally concerned about the health and wellbeing of their communities. Housing is a critical determinant of health and wellbeing. Access to safe, secure and affordable housing provides the basis for improved life outcomes, access to education, jobs and services, and better mental and physical health.

When social and affordable housing is integrated into the urban landscape it is beneficial to the health and wellbeing of all.

The significant shortage of affordable housing across Victoria is a cause for considerable concern. All communities are impacted, whether it be young people not able to consider owning their own home, those unable to secure alternative housing as their needs change, or those who can't find a bed for the night.

Housing stress is increasing. The number of people who are sleeping rough is growing. Waiting lists for housing for people on low and very low incomes continue to grow. While housing affordability has always been an issue for low-income households, it is now extending to moderate income households seeking either to rent or buy housing. Young people are finding it more and more difficult to start life in secure housing. In some municipalities, there is no affordable accommodation for key and essential workers supporting local economies. Estimates that nearly 50,000 social and affordable dwellings will be needed in the next 10 years mean concerted action is needed now.

Key drivers of housing affordability involve all three levels of government. At the federal level, Commonwealth tax and income support policies and specific purpose funding to the states have a direct impact. The Victorian Government's investment in social housing dwellings, policy and community programs support direct provision of housing for people on the Housing

Register, state supported residential services and crisis accommodation. It also sets state-wide planning frameworks which influence supply and requirements councils need to comply with in their local planning frameworks and policies.

Despite their lack of direct influence over Commonwealth and state policy and investment decisions, many councils, often working in partnership with the Victorian Government and community agencies, have developed innovative solutions to local housing problems. In many cases councils have contributed their own funds, assets and expertise to facilitate an increase in affordable housing and improve outcomes for social housing tenants.

The Victorian Government's Big Housing Build is a substantial start towards addressing some of these issues. Its long-term success relies on alignment with local strategic planning frameworks, undertaken by councils in consultation with their communities to ensure that social and affordable housing is well connected to existing and planned public transport, infrastructure and services.

A coordinated response across governments, the private sector, the community housing sector, industry groups and the community is critical. It requires ambitious, bold decisions and an ongoing and shared commitment to housing equity.

The development of a Victorian Local Government Housing Compact presents an opportunity to address long standing barriers to ensuring that everyone in Victoria can have a home in our communities now and in the future.

### Strategic statement

We believe that:

- There is a significant shortage of affordable housing options for people and that this will only be addressed through close collaboration between different levels of government
- A socially, culturally and economically diverse population requires a diversity of housing, including dwellings that are affordable to households with very low or moderate incomes.
- Thoughtful and considered strategic planning across all levels of government is the foundation for high quality housing, liveable communities, and provides the best outcomes for residents.
- Every Victorian should have access to safe, secure and affordable accommodation that is appropriate to their needs

We commit to work with other levels of government to ensure that:

- Planning for new and upgrading of existing social and affordable housing is undertaken collaboratively with outcomes for people at the centre.
- There is adequate supply of accommodation for people on very low and moderate incomes
- There are optimal levels of social and affordable housing spread throughout the state

- Individuals and families feel well supported and able to access high quality affordable housing and the related support services they need to maintain this housing.

### Victorian State/Local Government Social and Affordable Housing Compact

We recognise the important role of the Victorian Government as owner, manager and developer of public housing, and funder and regulator of the community housing sector. Legislative instruments, including the Planning and Environment Act 1987, Housing Act 1983 and Residential Tenancies Act 2010 shape opportunities to increase the supply and provide better support and outcomes for private and social tenancies.

Legislation and state government policy should complement and enable local planning policy. It should support the key roles of local government established in the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement – ‘building approval, local urban planning and development approval and rates and charges that influence housing affordability’<sup>1</sup>.

The delivery of 12,000 new social and affordable housing dwellings in the next four years through the Big Housing Build means that alignment of state and local planning frameworks is essential and urgent right now – there is potential for many missed opportunities and mis-aligned service provision if the new dwellings are created out of alignment with local long-term plans and investment strategies.

The development of a Social and Affordable Housing Compact with the Victorian Government provides an opportunity to address long standing planning and program issues including:

1. Alignment of planning frameworks to ensure that the 10 Year Social and Affordable Housing Strategy and local planning policies complement each other and support best outcomes.
2. Local government and MAV participation on inter-departmental working groups to maximise local insights to inform necessary state responses.
3. Coordination of the broad range of services, supports and infrastructure for people who live in social and affordable housing, including flexibility for local arrangements for rate exemptions for social housing provided by Homes Victoria and community housing associations.
4. Shared planning around building renewal and development of state owned and managed public housing to ensure they conform to local planning schemes and are fully integrated into the urban landscape, including environmentally sustainable design.
5. Development of a shared social and affordable housing data and monitoring system that provides transparency and a basis for joint planning.
6. Trialling of different models of social and affordable housing provision including build to rent, shared equity schemes, and housing first and foyer models.

---

<sup>1</sup> National Housing and Homelessness Agreement, (2018), s. 30

### Consultation and feedback on this Statement

You can provide feedback on the Statement by:

- Providing a submission in response to the MAV by John Smith, MAV Social and Affordable Housing Adviser by **Friday, 21 January 2022** – email [jsmith@mav.asn.au](mailto:jsmith@mav.asn.au)
- Arranging a presentation and workshop discussion for your council or group of councils
- Contacting John Smith, Social and Affordable Housing Adviser ([johns@mav.asn.au](mailto:johns@mav.asn.au)) to provide feedback directly or arrange another way to share your feedback.

We're particularly interested in your feedback to these questions:

- What are the main housing affordability challenges in your municipality, and does the Statement reflect these well?
- Does the context statement above capture the key issues to be addressed through a state/local government compact?
- How well does the statement above align with established policy adopted by your council?
- Does any of the content in the Statement create impediments to your council adopting this statement? If so, how can be adapted to better reflect your council's position?
- How well does the Statement capture the respective roles of state and local governments?
- Are there planning and program issues, other than those listed, that could be addressed through a Local Government Social and Affordable Housing Compact?
- Four council roles are listed – planning, partnering, engaging, and advocating. Do these accurately reflect your council's role in housing affordability?
  - Are there other roles which should be added?