

# Social and Affordable Housing Policy

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2020



**MORNINGTON  
PENINSULA**  
*Shire*

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 The role of social and affordable housing

An adequate supply of rental social and affordable housing together with housing support and homelessness services, is considered the best means of preventing homelessness and central to maintaining the diversity of the Mornington Peninsula population and enhancing the quality of life of all residents.

## 1.2 Homelessness and housing stress

People experience homelessness differently, they may have no home, no secure tenure, an overcrowded home or a home in which they have no personal space for normal social relations. Others will be in housing stress, fearing the loss of their home (e.g. not being able to afford rent upon retirement) or living in an unsafe or unsuitable home (e.g. unsuited to their mobility needs). Some people will have their own resources to avoid or recover from homelessness or housing stress and others will need assistance.

The best assistance is an adequate supply of social and affordable housing and pathways that enable people who have changed circumstances to quickly move from one place to another, more suitable, long term home with adequate support services in place. This is a housing first approach, but even within this approach there is arguably a role for “last resort” or temporary housing (e.g. a motel, crisis accommodation, refuge, caravan park, staying with a friend or relative) that a person may seek as they try to help themselves or access assistance to find a pathway to a suitable long term home.

Preventing homelessness is fundamental to a community's health and wellbeing. This is a major challenge given:

- The current under supply of social and affordable housing.
- The associated level of homelessness that includes a relatively high number of rough sleepers in comparison to other interface municipalities.
- The size of vulnerable groups who are living in housing stress.
- The social impediments to house sharing.

## 1.3 Factors in attracting social and affordable housing

It is expected that the Mornington Peninsula will be better placed to secure projects for new social or affordable housing if:

- If there is increased State and Federal funding, as current funding is insufficient to meet demand.
- The needs of an at risk group of people within the Mornington Peninsula justify a regional or State priority.
- The people in need are able to have their voice heard in a public debate.
- There is available government or public land.
- There is a “champion” in the local community driving a project with the incentive of discounted land or a funding source. This could be Council or another organisation or organisations acting in partnership.
- Opportunities for impact investment are promoted.

- There is a risk appetite for innovative funding streams (e.g. for bespoke solutions for particular housing needs associated with social impact investment or social impact bonds).
- There is a timely, positive response to funding opportunities.
- There is community acceptance and support of proposed projects.
- There is greater certainty about timelines and available incentives.
- A range of land, financial, in-kind and other incentives are provided.

## 1.4 Policy context

The Council Plan Vision is to value, protect and improve the unique characteristics and way of life on our peninsula. One of its strategies is to advocate for and facilitate sustainable housing options for our community.

Other plans and policies which serve to implement the Council Plan include:

- Mornington Peninsula Planning Scheme,
- Health and Wellbeing Plan Our Peninsula 2021;
- Reconciliation Action Plan;
- Disability Inclusion Plan;
- Housing and Settlement Strategy;
- Positive Ageing Strategy;
- Property Strategy; and,
- Triple A Housing Plan 2020- 2030

This Social and Affordable Housing Policy is another one in the suite of housing related policies and its implementation is assisted by the Triple A Housing Plan 2020 -2030.

This Social and Affordable Housing Policy supercedes the earlier Triple A Housing Policy of 2002, Social and Affordable Housing Policy and its associated Action Plan that were adopted on 26 September 2011 and the Homelessness Policy and Action Plan that were adopted on 25 August 2008.

## 2 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to guide Council decision making in relation to matters of social and affordable housing, including homelessness.

## 3 Objectives

1. To provide a framework for advocacy on social and affordable housing and homelessness issues.
2. To set a vision for the form of social and affordable housing.
3. To provide guidelines for Council direct contributions to social and affordable housing, including scoping the range of innovative actions that may be required to incentivise housing or support homelessness services.

## 4 Owner

Council is responsible for this policy and its implementation will be carried out primarily by the following Shire teams:

- Social Planning and Community Development
- Property
- Planning Services

## 5 Scope

This policy applies to all Council decision making that \_ impact upon the provision of resources, whether financial, land or staffing, for matters pertaining to social and affordable housing, including services and facilities for persons who are homeless or in housing stress.

## 6 Definitions

**Social housing** is a type of rental housing that is provided and/or managed by the government (public housing) or by a not-for profit organisation (community housing). Social housing is an overarching term that covers both public housing and community housing. (Metropolitan Planning Strategy, p55)

### **Affordable housing**

Housing including social housing, that is appropriate for the housing needs of any of the following— (a) very low income households; (b) low income households; (c) moderate income households where an Order in Council under Section 3AB of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* specifies the ranges of household incomes for those categories.

**Homelessness:** When a person does not have suitable accommodation alternatives they are considered homeless if their current living arrangement:

- Is in a dwelling that is inadequate; or
- Has no tenure, or if their initial tenure is short and not extendable; or
- Does not allow them to have control of, and access to space for social relations.

It is informed by an understanding of homelessness as 'home'lessness, not 'roof'lessness. (The brief ABS statistical definition)

## 7 Policy

### Advocacy framework

1. Council acknowledges that the primary responsibility for the provision of social and affordable housing, matched with funding capability, lies with Federal and State Governments. However, Council also acknowledges that it has an important, although limited, role to play in facilitating social and affordable housing and will actively work to develop strategies to address gaps in the housing market.
2. The Council role in advocating for sustainable housing options for our community includes a commitment to:
  - Supported by evidence, advocating for equitable reforms and resourcing of the public housing, welfare, financial, taxation, residential tenancy, foreign investment, government surplus land, land use planning and building systems to bring affordable, appropriate and available housing to the nation, Victoria and the Mornington Peninsula.

- Advocating for an end to homelessness.
- Encouraging the voice of, and otherwise supporting people who are homeless or in housing stress
- Advocating and influencing Federal and State Governments to use their land for social and affordable housing provision.
- Advocating for a fairer deal for renters and people owning mobile homes in caravan parks.
- Maintaining the diversity of the population through advocating for social housing.
- Advocating for a diverse range of housing options to respond to the needs of the community.
- Advocating for a mix of private and social housing in keeping with planning and community considerations.
- Advocating for State government support for changes to the planning system which would ensure equitable contributions from major developments to addressing social and affordable housing needs.
- Advocating for change to the Victoria Planning Provisions that would create a faster, special pathway for the provision of social housing, having regard to the protection of neighbourhood character
- Advocating for and influencing the construction of social and affordable housing in accordance with Universally Accessible and Environmentally Sustainable design principles.
- Advocating for inclusion, understanding, acceptance and respect within the community for people who are homeless or may reside in social housing.
- Advocating for social and affordable housing to be located close to essential services and public transport.
- Advocating for the integration of appropriate services for social and affordable housing tenants who have support needs and for those living in communal living situations.
- Advocating for adequate services and crisis accommodation for people who are homeless, including an extreme weather response.
- Advocating for and assisting the community and housing providers to undertake new social and affordable housing projects.
- Advocating to assist and encourage private developers to include affordable housing into their projects underpinned by processing incentives and Section 173 agreements.

## Form of social and affordable housing

3. That within the context of the Mornington Peninsula Planning Scheme, Council supports increasing the diversity of social and affordable housing with a mixed range of accommodation types to cater for the diverse needs of people requiring affordable housing including rooming houses, caravan parks, shared housing, supported accommodation, step down accommodation from hospital admissions, crisis accommodation, co-housing, bungalows or second dwellings and independent living units.
4. That Council supports utilising discretionary planning mechanisms (e.g. reduction in car parking requirements) and other processes, as appropriate, to provide for, assist and expedite social and affordable housing development.
5. That Council supports social and affordable housing provision that encourages medium density development which limits urban sprawl and protects the Green Wedge.
6. That Council supports social and affordable housing being integrated into residential areas inside the Urban Growth Boundary, ideally within twenty minutes walk of Rosebud, Mornington or Hastings town centres or public transport stops but not rejected in other locations if other reasonable transport options are available for the proposed residents.
7. That Council supports neighbourhoods having a blend of different household types (preferably including older people, young families, singles housing and special needs groups) to promote a diverse, balanced community for optimal wellbeing.
8. That Council supports good quality, energy efficient architectural and landscape design for social and affordable housing, including application of Universal Housing Design principles (e.g. Liveable Housing Design Guidelines Gold Level for new buildings and large alterations of existing buildings.) for accessibility and adaptability and Environmentally Sustainable Design principles.

## Guidelines for Council direct contributions

9. For any proposed planning scheme amendment that could potentially increase residential density, that Council seek a developer's contribution in the form of social or affordable housing on the land or a financial contribution for the provision of off-site social or affordable housing.
10. For Federal or State funding opportunities aimed at boosting the supply of social or affordable housing, that Council, where feasible, act to facilitate a local response, including, where appropriate acting in partnership with other organisations.
11. That Council incentivise additional social and affordable housing with flexibility for timely initiatives responding to new opportunities, particularly ones that benefit people on very low incomes or increase the range of affordable housing types. Incentives may include:
  - Discounted, lease or disposal, of Council property,

- Entering into partnerships etc. with housing providers to:
  - Obtain external funding for renewal of Council's social housing; or,
  - Acquire surplus public land, or other land, for housing projects.
- Other housing assistance mechanisms for funding through Council's normal budgeting process (e.g. rate rebates, grants, financial subsidies)
- In-kind support of projects.

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12. That Council deliver land, at least once every three years, such as through one the following methods or, if not feasible, consider a triennial budget bid equivalent to 25% of the median house price all for the purpose of a contribution to a social or affordable housing project particularly one that benefits people on very low incomes or increases the range of affordable housing types.
  - Facilitating new social housing on Council-owned properties.
  - For any suitable surplus land that is subject to disposal, imposing a condition for a component of permanent social housing.
  - Acquiring private land or surplus public land from the State and its agencies and making it available for social or affordable housing.
13. The use of an Expression of Interest process is generally supported. That where reasonable, Council seeks to secure any direct investment in social or affordable housing for perpetuity and so that the benefit cannot be transferred out of the municipality over time. Leasing or joint ownership, if feasible, would be generally preferred to land disposal.
14. In offering any lease of Council owned land for social or affordable housing and associated support services, Council will consider:
  - The potential rate of return and the need for a discounted or peppercorn lease to make the proposal viable.
  - The level of net community benefit.
  - The opportunity the proposal presents to complement other Council policy initiatives or services.
15. In disposing of any Council owned land for social or affordable housing, Council will consider a discounted rate of 15% to 25% of market value. In determining the discount, Council will consider:
  - The size of the site and the proportion of the site to be utilised for social and / or affordable housing.
  - The level of net community benefit.
  - The opportunity the development presents to complement other Council policy initiatives or services.
16. Council recognises there are other means of attracting social or affordable housing on the Mornington Peninsula and will consider offering support to alternative affordable housing programs which may include:
  - Habitat for Humanity projects.
  - Subsidised programs for the private rental sector, where Council's financial support will be limited to private sector subsidy programs that have a life span of not less than 25 years.
  - Community ownership proposals (such as Community Land Trusts or Cohousing).
  - Financial support for infrastructure costs.

17. For a development of Council land in a town centre, that the opportunity for inclusion of a social housing component be assessed.
18. A Council direct contribution for a housing project should be conditional upon the general application of the Liveable Housing Design Guidelines Gold Level for new buildings and large alterations of existing buildings and a higher standard of accessibility for operating controls for automatic windows, blinds, doors, air conditioning/heating having regard to site and affordability constraints.

## Other resourcing and coordination

19. Council will provide secretarial/technical resources to service the operation of the Triple A Housing Committee and the Mornington Peninsula Housing Network.
20. Council will continue to support the operation of three community information and support centres at Hastings, Mornington and Rosebud.
21. Within limited resources, the Shire will advise and assist, as appropriate, any community group embarking upon a housing or homelessness related project.
22. All Shire Services will operate in a coordinated, informed and integrated manner in relation to housing and homelessness issues including training and regular progress review and the Shire will have a general lead contact officer for housing and homelessness issues.
23. A housing first, assertive outreach approach to review any cases of concern will be pursued in a regular manner with other relevant agencies.

## 8 Procedure

1. For planning permit applications that provide for social or affordable housing, Council should assign priority and resources to expedite processing and avoid delay.
2. In investigating whether any Council owned land is surplus to requirements, the Shire's Manager Property must refer the matter to the Director Communities for advice about whether the land should be made available for social or affordable housing and if so, the preferred method for facilitating this use.
3. In reporting upon which social or affordable housing or homelessness service projects to facilitate, provide or assist; the following matters should be considered:

### Justice and fairness

- (1) Has there been opportunity for competing proponents to put forward their proposals? (e.g. an Expression of Interest process)
- (2) Are the beneficiaries on the Victorian Housing Register – Priority Access List?
- (3) To what extent are the beneficiaries being denied their fair share of affordable housing on the Peninsula?

- (4) Are the beneficiaries lacking the social power and ability to voice their need?
- (5) What capacity would the beneficiaries have to find alternative housing and establish new health and wellbeing supports if they were otherwise forced to find housing outside their local community?
- (6) Are respect for human life and quality of life matters appropriately recognised?
- (7) How sustainable is this project? Will future generations also receive a direct benefit?

#### Autonomy

- (8) Has the project been developed with people who are representative of future residents?
- (9) Are there effective structures and processes in place to assist future residents gaining any future support that they need? (e.g. local service or community support for inclusion of residents)
- (10) What is the general community awareness of the need for the project? (e.g. local fundraising or advocacy)

#### Efficiency

- (11) The social return on investment from a local government perspective? (The accuracy and limitations of any assessments should be considered with regard to the findings of Infrastructure Victoria, 2018.) This should address matters including:
  - The number of beds, and the number of households, that would be offered in the project.
  - The extent to which the project could reduce demand for other related Council services.
  - The extent of any financial leverage provided by the Council investment.
  - The extent to which the project could prevent future homelessness or adverse impacts upon other health and wellbeing determinants.
- (12) For any non-competitive process, what additional benefits might be offered?

#### Other

- (13) To what extent has Council previously assisted similar beneficiaries?
- (14) Will the project increase the diversity in the offering of social housing types?
- (15) To what extent is the proposal consistent with Council's suite of housing plans including the Mornington Peninsula Planning Scheme<sup>2</sup> and Mornington Peninsula Triple A Housing Plan 2020 – 2030, in particular, the Triple A Strategic Outcomes and Triple A Strategic Objectives.?
- (16) What risks are there to achieving the potential benefits of the project, including any perpetual benefits?
- (17) What is the net community benefit?

## 9 Roles and Responsibilities

The following table sets out the key roles and responsibilities under the policy:

| Roles  | Responsibilities  |
|--|---|
| Social Planning and Community Development Team | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To have a dedicated officer for matters of Housing Justice and Advocacy</li> <li>• To lead the review and implementation of this policy.</li> <li>• To provide referral advice to the Planning Services and Property teams about social and affordable housing matters.</li> <li>• To make budget bids as required.</li> </ul>   |
| Property                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To lead property management processes in accordance with this policy and the Property Strategy. To refer property matters (i.e. proposed leases or proposed disposals of surplus land to the Manager for Social Planning and Community Development for advice about social and affordable housing.)</li> </ul>   |
| Strategic Planning                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To lead planning scheme amendment processes to better provide for developer contributions.</li> </ul>  |
| Planning Services                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To have a dedicated officer to lead processing of applications for social or affordable housing</li> <li>• To set up, operate and advertise a fast track planning application process with fee waiver opportunities for applications relating to the use or development of land for the purpose of social or affordable housing.</li> <li>• To negotiate developer contributions for social and affordable housing.</li> <li>• To apply discretionary planning mechanisms (e.g. car parking dispensations) in a manner that helps to secure the provision of affordable or social housing in a sustainable way.</li> </ul> |

## 10 Communication

This policy will be displayed on the Shire's website and communicated in the training and management processes of relevant Shire teams.

## 11 Review

This policy will be reviewed within 12 months of the adoption the next Council Plan.