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Objective

- To commit Mid-Western Regional Council to the investigation and delivery of quality solutions to Affordable Housing in the region.
- To outline the demand for affordable housing
- To ensure that available funding opportunities are investigated for the provision of affordable housing in the Mid-Western Region.
- To reference best practice for the provision of affordable housing solutions
- To provide a policy framework that will focus on the establishment of partnerships with local stakeholders
- To outline a regime for the ongoing monitoring of housing and land supply.

Legislative requirements

State Environmental Planning Policy (SEPP) (Affordable Rental Housing) 2009

Related policies and plans

- Mid-Western Regional Council - Community Plan
- Mid-Western Regional Council - Long Term Financial Plan
- Mid-Western Regional Council - Asset Management Strategy
- Mid-Western Regional Council – Building Asset Management Plan
- Mid-Western Regional Council - Delivery Program and Operational Plan
- Mid-Western Regional Council – Development Control Plan 2013

Policy

Demand for affordable housing

The national definition of affordable housing agreed by Australian housing, planning and local government ministers is “Housing that is appropriate for the needs of a range of very low, low and moderate-income households, priced to ensure households are able to meet other essential basic living costs”.

The significant growth in the property market in the Mid-Western Region is driven largely by the expansion of mining activities as well as other new developments. The increased number of new residents to town to take up mining positions and increase in short term contractors can place significant demands on the availability of rental accommodation in the Region.

Housing Affordability – long term trends suggest capital growth across the region of 6 percent to 8 percent, which is not only higher than other regional centres but consistent with some metropolitan regions.

Rental Affordability – has, at times, proven volatile and has seen in a 12 month period extreme shortages and therefore high rental price increases, followed by an easing of those shortages and prices within a 3 month period. This has a direct correlation to the number of short term contractors in the region at any given time.

Public Housing - Housing Plus is the local social housing provider in the Mid-Western LGA. They are focused on providing affordable long-term accommodation options; in addition, Housing Plus provides crisis accommodation in partnership with Barnardos. In 2020 Housing Plus managed 379 properties in Mid-Western Region (including approx 33 in Gulgong and 36 in Kandos area).

Crisis Accommodation - is offered through a number of agencies in the Mid-Western LGA. At least three properties operate in a partnership arrangement between Barnardos (assessment and case management) and Housing Plus (property management). Crisis housing is also provided through motels. Demand by far exceeds supply in this area of the housing market.

Projects partnering with stakeholders

Any project investigated by Mid-Western Regional Council will require the assistance and expertise that welfare organisations, housing suppliers and developers can provide. The focus when developing any project plan will be on drawing on the expertise of these organisations to deliver the most appropriate solutions for the region. Joint initiatives that may be delivered for the Mid-Western Region include:

- Domestic violence and crisis accommodation initiatives
- Development initiatives
- Use of Council land
- Community land trusts
- Lobbying

Mid-Western Regional Council may consider a Joint Venture with Community Housing Providers, Developers and/or other interested stakeholders to bring together key components such as land, funding, development expertise and skills. Community Housing Providers can also manage affordable housing properties on behalf of organisations, individuals and/or consortiums.

Funding opportunities

The funding opportunities provided below will be investigated as each funding round is opened, and a cost/risk/benefit analysis prepared for funding options considered to have merit.

Regional Development Australia (RDA) - The RDA initiative brings together all levels of government to support the development of sustainable infrastructure and services across regional Australia.

Mid-Western Regional Council - Council may consider the funding of a preferred project under the review of the Community Plan, Delivery and Operational Plan. The consideration of any project will be assessed against the other competing priorities of Council.

Best Practice

The NSW Centre for Affordable Housing (CAH) is a business division within Housing NSW which aims to achieve:

- affordability for residents
- financial viability for developers and managers
- responsiveness to community needs, and
- a more flexible approach to development and management without compromise on design or amenity.

The CAH's 'NSW Local Government Affordable Housing Kit' will be referenced when assessing any affordable housing measure being considered.

Monitoring

The rental and housing supply market has potential to be very volatile. The supply of housing has a direct impact on housing affordability and rent levels. A six monthly report will be provided to Council by the Manager, Community Services, and published on Council's website, which will monitor the following:

1. The number of residential lots approved
2. Median rental rates
3. Number of rental properties available
4. Median property prices
5. The number of construction certificates approved for affordable housing dwellings