

**OPTIONS TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO EXISTING AND ALTERNATE
ACCOMMODATION TO ADDRESS THE SOCIAL HOUSING SHORTAGE**

Organisation: Balranald Shire Council

Date Received: 2 August 2021



BALRANALD SHIRE COUNCIL

ALL COMMUNICATIONS
MUST BE ADDRESSED TO
THE GENERAL MANAGER

Contact: OM:CH:D:20.46248

70 Market Street, Balranald NSW 2715
PO Box 120, Balranald NSW 2715

Tel: 03 5020 1300

Fax: 03 5020 1620

Email: council@balranald.nsw.gov.au

Web: www.visitbalranald.com.au

Potential inquiry into options to improve access to existing and alternate accommodation to address the social housing shortage

Terms of Reference

Vacant buildings that are suitable could be repurposed to offer short-term social housing to people who require temporary accommodation. Repurposing empty accommodation or other appropriate buildings could lead to a large increase in the amount of social and community housing that is available.

That the Committee inquire into and report on options to improve access to existing and alternate accommodation in order to help address the social housing shortage in NSW, with particular reference to:

- a) options to better support 'meanwhile use' (temporary supportive accommodation), and the current major planning barriers to 'meanwhile use';
- b) options to improve access to existing accommodation to provide community housing;
- c) options for crisis, key-worker and other short term accommodation models;
- d) barriers to additional supply across NSW, including for smaller non-CHP housing

The Committee is looking at the provision of community housing, and also options for crisis, key-worker and other short-term accommodation models. It will also inquire into the accountability of registered community housing providers.

Key background considered by the Strengthening Community Access, Inclusion & Wellbeing Advisory Committee:

- Based on 2016 Census data the Balranald Shire area has a proportionally lower rate of social housing than seen at the State level, 3.5% of all housing across the Balranald LGA is identified as social housing compared to 4% of all housing across NSW being identified as social housing (General Community Profiles – Balranald LGA and NSW State, 2016 ABS Census of Population and Housing)
- Increased demand for all housing types in the Shire centres of Balranald and Euston due to industry growth (mineral sands mining, solar farming, almond plantations, large scale horticulture and growth of existing local industries) has created pricing pressure which means many locals can no longer afford to buy or even rent locally
- The reality is the people most affected by high housing pricing are also often least able to capitalise on the benefits of an industry boom through higher employment levels, salaries and business growth

- Under-resourced, marginalised and vulnerable individuals and families who wish to remain living locally and did not already have stable housing have been forced into increasingly sub-standard accommodation (including poorly heated and cooled, unsafe and impossible to securely lock, sloping floors which become increasingly hazardous for elderly residents)
- The private nature of rental management in small rural communities can result in the 'squeezing out' of perceived non-preferred tenants and a lack of transparency and independence in decision making
- Unoccupied Private Dwellings across the Balranald Shire area constitute 23.4% of all private dwellings compared to a proportion of only 9.9% at the NSW State level (note this may have changed significantly since the 2016 Census however given the increasing demand for housing over the past 5 years) (General Community Profiles – Balranald LGA and NSW State, 2016 ABS Census of Population and Housing)
- This higher rate of unoccupied dwellings (assuming 2021 Census data confirms this) gives rise to the potential repurposing of existing housing. It is also noted that a proportion of these homes will be on properties too far from town centres to be an option for people seeking accommodation or of a standard below what is considered acceptable
- Social housing dedicated for our local Aboriginal community is owned by the Balranald Aboriginal Lands Council but managed by Homes Out West. Recently concerns have been expressed regarding the frequency of rent price hikes. This is compounded by an already inadequate supply as there is usually a waiting list for any Aboriginal housing in Balranald
- Private rentals are unobtainable for most of the local Aboriginal community

Key thoughts suggested by the Strengthening Community Access, Inclusion & Wellbeing Advisory Committee:

- Critical observation that key, high quality local housing owned and reserved by departments and agencies (such as the DET, Local government etc) can sit empty for long periods of time when it could be instead utilised at times of shortage (for key cohorts) and on compassionate grounds
- That key organisations partner to retro fit existing properties (where they are of a reasonable standard) to increase the available housing market
- BSC continue to advocate to secure additional housing and associated funding to ensure social housing is a State level priority for the Shire. This recognises that the 'squeezing out' of locals due to economic 'booms' is doubly inequitable and results in their dislocation from key connections and supports
- That Balranald Shire Council support an arrangement for the Balranald Caravan Park to be utilised in times of need for crisis accommodation, if available, even if it has to be at the cost of key agencies
- Vacant land be considered for new builds

ABS Census Data supporting this document (2016 Census)

AUSTRALIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS 2016 Census of Population and Housing		List of tables
Balranald (A) (LGA10300) 21690.7 sq Kms		Find out more:
		Dwelling Structure
G32 DWELLING STRUCTURE		
Count of Private dwellings and Persons(a) in occupied(b) private dwellings		
	<i>Dwellings</i>	<i>Persons</i>
Occupied private dwellings:		
Separate house	734	1,907
Semi-detached, row or terrace house, townhouse etc. with:		
One storey	15	23
Two or more storeys	3	3
<i>Total</i>	22	24
Flat or apartment:		
In a one or two storey block	34	52
In a three storey block	0	0
In a four or more storey block	0	0
Attached to a house	0	0
<i>Total</i>	34	52
Other dwelling:		
Caravan	14	20
Cabin, houseboat	0	0
Improvised home, tent, sleepers out	0	0
House or flat attached to a shop, office, etc.	7	10
<i>Total</i>	19	32
Dwelling structure not stated	3	7
Total occupied private dwellings	807	2,024
Unoccupied private dwellings	248	..
Total private dwellings	1,059	2,024
This table is based on place of enumeration.		
(a) Count of all persons enumerated in the dwelling on Census Night, including visitors from within Australia. Excludes usual residents who were temporarily absent on Census Night.		
(b) Excludes 'Visitors only' and 'Other non-classifiable' households.		
.. Not applicable		
AUSTRALIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS 2016 Census of Population and Housing		List of tables

Balranald (A) (LGA10300) 21690.7 sq Kms						Find out more:	
						Tenure Type	
G33 TENURE AND LANDLORD TYPE BY DWELLING STRUCTURE						Landlord Type	
Count of occupied private dwellings(a)						Dwelling Structure	
	Dwelling structure						
		Semi-detached, row or terrace house, townhouse etc.	Flat or apartment	Other dwelling		Not stated	Total
Owned outright	326	3	0	3	0		333
Owned with a mortgage(b)	191	0	0	0	0		198
Rented:							
Real estate agent	33	4	13	0	0		48
State or territory housing authority	18	3	8	0	0		28
Person not in same household(c)	86	7	0	5	0		96
Housing co-operative/ community church group	9	0	3	0	0		13
Other landlord type(d)	40	0	10	6	0		56
Landlord type not stated	10	0	0	0	0		7
Total	190	12	29	7	0		239
Other tenure type(e)	8	0	0	0	0		8
Tenure type not stated	29	0	0	0	0		28
Total	734	22	34	19	3		807
This table is based on place of enumeration.							
(a) Excludes 'Visitors only' and 'Other non-classifiable' households.							
(b) Includes dwellings being purchased under a shared equity scheme.							
(c) Comprises dwellings being rented from a parent/other relative or other person.							
(d) Comprises dwellings being rented through a 'Residential park (includes caravan parks and marinas)', 'Employer - Government (includes Defence Housing Authority)' and 'Employer - other employer'.							

(e) Includes dwellings being occupied under a life tenure scheme.					
---	--	--	--	--	--

Please note that there are small random adjustments made to all cell values to protect the confidentiality of data. These adjustments may cause the sum of rows or columns to differ by small amounts from table totals.

AUSTRALIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS 2016 Census of Population and Housing		List of tables
New South Wales (1) 800810.8 sq Kms		<u>Find out more:</u>
		Dwelling Structure
G32 DWELLING STRUCTURE		
Count of Private dwellings and Persons(a) in occupied(b) private dwellings		
	<i>Dwellings</i>	<i>Persons</i>
Occupied private dwellings:		
Separate house	1,729,820	4,989,476
Semi-detached, row or terrace house, townhouse etc. with:		
One storey	141,744	292,525
Two or more storeys	175,709	461,960
<i>Total</i>	<i>317,447</i>	<i>754,482</i>
Flat or apartment:		
In a one or two storey block	136,617	265,437
In a three storey block	162,457	346,111
In a four or more storey block	218,075	475,027
Attached to a house	2,241	4,801
<i>Total</i>	<i>519,380</i>	<i>1,091,377</i>
Other dwelling:		
Caravan	5,618	8,906
Cabin, houseboat	6,694	10,718
Improvised home, tent, sleepers out	1,310	2,728
House or flat attached to a shop, office, etc.	9,958	24,539
<i>Total</i>	<i>23,583</i>	<i>46,899</i>
Dwelling structure not stated	14,077	30,567
Total occupied private dwellings	2,604,314	6,912,803
Unoccupied private dwellings	284,741	..
Total private dwellings	2,889,057	6,912,803

This table is based on place of enumeration.						
(a) Count of all persons enumerated in the dwelling on Census Night, including visitors from within Australia. Excludes usual residents who were temporarily absent on Census Night.						
(b) Excludes 'Visitors only' and 'Other non-classifiable' households.						
.. Not applicable						
AUSTRALIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS 2016 Census of Population and Housing						
New South Wales (1) 800810.8 sq Kms						List of tables
						Find out more:
						Tenure Type
G33 TENURE AND LANDLORD TYPE BY DWELLING STRUCTURE						Landlord Type
Count of occupied private dwellings(a)						Dwelling Structure
	<i>Dwelling structure</i>					
		<i>Semi-detached, row or terrace house, townhouse etc.</i>	<i>Flat or apartment</i>	<i>Other dwelling</i>	<i>Not stated</i>	<i>Total</i>
Owned outright	671,527	79,523	76,283	9,424	2,910	839,665
Owned with a mortgage(b)	656,146	83,088	95,879	2,516	2,375	840,004
Rented:						
Real estate agent	195,783	80,922	235,681	4,455	2,686	519,539
State or territory housing authority	41,407	28,951	34,092	200	252	104,902
Person not in same household(c)	83,157	18,575	39,989	2,069	1,531	145,327
Housing co-operative/community/church group	5,218	5,098	6,727	78	299	17,414
Other landlord type(d)	14,857	3,107	4,536	2,595	732	25,827
Landlord type not stated	8,862	1,648	2,869	301	235	13,909
<i>Total</i>	<i>349,289</i>	<i>138,303</i>	<i>323,897</i>	<i>9,695</i>	<i>5,730</i>	<i>826,922</i>
Other tenure type(e)	10,151	6,347	6,664	278	523	23,968
Tenure type not stated	42,706	10,196	16,660	1,666	2,535	73,763
Total	1,729,820	317,447	519,380	23,583	14,077	2,604,314
This table is based on place of enumeration.						

(a) Excludes 'Visitors only' and 'Other non-classifiable' households.					
(b) Includes dwellings being purchased under a shared equity scheme.					
(c) Comprises dwellings being rented from a parent/other relative or other person.					
(d) Comprises dwellings being rented through a 'Residential park (includes caravan parks and marinas)', 'Employer - Government (includes Defence Housing Authority)' and 'Employer - other employer'.					
(e) Includes dwellings being occupied under a life tenure scheme.					
Please note that there are small random adjustments made to all cell values to protect the confidentiality of data. These adjustments may cause the sum of rows or columns to differ by small amounts from table totals.					



ISSUE – HOUSING & SKILLED LABOUR IN BALRANALD SHIRE

Balranald Shire Council has three main population centres within LGA (from Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016);

• Balranald	Population	1343
• Euston	Population	839
• Kyalite	Population	82

There has been limited positive growth or change in population in the centres over the past 20-30 years. Indicatively, this population across Balranald Shire Council has dropped by approximately 11% over the past ten years. However, this has been partly offset by short-term and seasonal workers engaged in the agriculture sector as well as construction of infrastructure such as Solar Farms. Temporary workers also need housing.

Recent developments outlined within this document is set to have a positive impact on the region with anticipated population growth.

Balranald

There is very limited housing stock available in Balranald. There is limited rental properties and the quality of the houses is poor, with the existing housing stock significantly aged.

There is zoned land capable of development with over 90 available blocks. The majority of these are double blocks as the Balranald community have a lifestyle preference for larger blocks. Council has made approaches in the past to encourage development with limited success.

There is land suitable for development adjacent to the Golf Course in Balranald that has land tenure and zoning issues, specifically Crown Land tenure. There have been discussion with the State Planning Department in relation to tenure and zoning opportunities.

Another limiting issue is due to the lack of building in the region there is limited access to competitive tenders. The cost to build a house in Balranald is up to 20% more expensive than other regional centres.

Utilities and Services across Balranald will need upgrading to support new development.

Euston

- Limited growth over the past number of years.
- Limited, accessible suitable land for development.
- There is land zoned but a large proportion of this is utilised for table grapes, which is more lucrative than housing development, so that this land is effectively unavailable.

There are currently 20 blocks subdivided and available. These are selling well.

Any growth will require significant upgrades to the Water & Sewer facility.

Kyalite

There is land potentially available for subdivision, No public water or sewer

Opportunity

Council is continuing to be in contact with local Industry and Service providers to support them to grow with the region. Over the past number of years industry has grown across the region and more specifically within the Balranald Shire Council area.

Industry, such as Mining, Horticulture and Viticulture has seen significant growth. Service providers such as the hospital, Council, Aged Care Service providers and the Police have all indicated potential

growth in the area. Each of these industries have indicated that there are risks to the growth of their industry and two of the highest risks are;

- Housing
- Skilled Labour (People)

It has been conservatively estimated that these industries could generate up to 100 new full time positions across the Balranald Shire Council area over the next two years.

Action to Date

Housing

Council officers have set up an internal working group to discuss blockages to housing development within each of the three main population centres. This will assist in the development of a project plan, action plan to try to mitigate their blockages and support housing development.

The General Manager has had discussions with adjoining Councils in both NSW and Victoria to try and develop collaborative plans to support each council in what is a regional issue.

In support of this Council will commence development of an

- Advocacy Strategy
- Housing Strategy
- Attraction & Investment Policy

Council have also met with Industry representation to discuss options to progress and support housing development, including opportunities such as Public Private Agreements.

Skilled Labour

Another risk to development across the region identified is the lack of skilled labour. This is not only the availability of resources but also the skills and capacity of the existing workforce.

Council, like all industries in the region, struggle to attract and retain skilled labour. This is exacerbated by the lack of suitable housing in Balranald Shire Council.

There are perceived difficulties for school leavers identifying career pathways and in accessing education opportunities. This is exacerbated due to Balranald Shire Council locality and that some courses are available in Victoria rather than in NSW and there are issues with NSW residents accessing courses in Victoria.

- NSW Tafe (Wagga Wagga 400km, Broken Hill 450km, Deniliquin 205km)
- Vic Tafe (Mildure 150km, Swanhill 95km)

Council has commenced discussions with local schools and neighbouring Councils in both NSW and Victoria to identify road blocks and identify opportunities to resolve these issues.

Next Steps

Council will continue to work with industry providers and stakeholders to identify opportunities to try and resolve the issue and to mitigate constraints on housing and labour.

Council requests the support from both Federal and State Government to advise them on the correct channels to discuss and develop plans to resolve these issues.

Council would also request funding opportunities to support them in entering the market to develop housing to stimulate the housing market. Funding support will also be needed to upgrade and improve services and utilities to support growth.