

**Submission
No 60**

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

Organisation: Muswellbrook Shire Council

Date Received: 13 August 2021



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Ms W. Lindsay
Chair
Legislative Assembly Committee on Community Services
Parliament House
6 Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Email: communityservices@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam,

Committee of Community Services

Thank you for seeking input from Muswellbrook Shire Council to improve access to existing and alternate accommodation to address the social housing shortage.

Muswellbrook Shire Council Profile

- Muswellbrook Shire Council is in the Upper Hunter Valley.
- The estimated population for the Muswellbrook Local Government Area in 2019 was 16 377 people (ABS).
- The annual population growth over the last decade was 5.3% the majority of this growth has been concentrated in the town of Muswellbrook.
- The 2016 census indicated that Muswellbrook Shire Council has a high proportion of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people residing in our community at 8.1% compared to 2.7% in NSW.
- The medium age of people in our community is 35years of age.
- In 2016 our population consisted of 7.7% aged 0-4 years compared to 6.2% in NSW, while 21.0% were aged 5-19 years compared to 18.2% in NSW.
- At the other end of the spectrum the proportion of the population aged 60 years represents 18.2% of the population compared to 22.1% in NSW.

Muswellbrook Shire Councils role in supporting Social Housing Providers

Muswellbrook Shire Council does not directly provide direct provision of social housing to vulnerable people who reside in our community.

Muswellbrook Shire Council resource and support social housing service providers in our community through Strategic Regional Working Groups that has developed partnerships and networks with local and regional social housing providers and relevant funding providers. Previously Council has resourced and supported the Muswellbrook CREATE Coalition Group which was convened and facilitated by NSW Government Premiers & Cabinet.

Council provides resources and support to social housing providers through its Community Partnerships Section, this section of Council is responsible for the coordination of Upper Hunter Community Services Interagency and Upper Hunter Domestic Violence Committee, these networks improve information and service referral processes.

Muswellbrook Shire Council's elected representatives advocate for the improved standard and condition of social housing in our local community with NSW State agencies, this is a measurable action in its 2021/22 Operational Plan.

Terms of Reference

Muswellbrook Shire Council as per the Committee of Community Services Terms of Reference would like to directly respond to point *d) barriers to additional supply across NSW, including for smaller non-CHP housing providers;*

Barriers - Local Housing Stress

Muswellbrook Local Government Area has a proportion of social housing 12.3% compared to 4.6% for NSW. Muswellbrook Local Government Area townships of Muswellbrook and Denman are experiencing significant housing stress due to the demand for housing, this demand is primarily driven by the increased mining activity in the local government area.

This housing stress and demand on the rental market impacts on people earning low to moderate incomes, increasingly people's ability to access secure and affordable housing is becoming difficult and in some cases not achievable. Often families are required to reside with other families until affordable housing becomes available. If housing is secured a direct effect is the impact on individual and family household budgets where a disproportionately amount of money is allocated to rental.

The high proportion of social housing creates a significant amount of pressure on the provision of support services provided locally. Upper Hunter Homeless Support Services Inc is our local not for profit specialist homeless services provider providing a small stock of affordable housing that is supported with case management and support programs.

Upper Hunter Homeless Services 2019-20 AGM Report reported that the Muswellbrook area has experienced significant housing stress for very low-income families and individuals. Since this reporting period the organisation has expressed in the media that there has been an increased demand for crisis assistance.

Small Community Housing Providers

Wanaruah Local Aboriginal Land Council and Hunter Valley Aboriginal Corporation provide social housing to our Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community members.

This provision of housing is highly valued in the Aboriginal Community, it has been Councils observation that the governance bodies of these organisations struggle within their current funding models to adequately maintain and budget for repair and maintenance of their social housing assets.

These management committees often struggle for skilled board members and have minimal funding to upskill and train board members so that existing social housing assets can be adequately managed or respond to the demand and growth of social housing.

Local Ideas

Muswellbrook Shire Council has identified the need for a locally developed housing strategy that would provide better housing outcomes for community members.

The development of a local strategy would establish housing evidence to better guide decision making processes; focus on increasing security and tenure of rentals; strengthen partnerships and collaboration between councils and for profit and not for profit developers and social housing providers; determine the future mix of housing types required in our

community and identify partnership opportunities that would provide better housing outcomes for community members.

Muswellbrook Shire Council is open to exploring opportunities to address the increasing need and demand for social housing opportunities and welcome discussions with relevant stakeholders.

