

## Select Committee on Social and Affordable Housing

### Inquiry into Social and Affordable Housing

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#### **Responses to Supplementary Questions: Shoalhaven City Council**

1. *P4 – In response to comments from Mr Clark, can you clarify and or identify how many approved residential dwellings are used for tourism purposes e.g. Holiday letting. How many homes were vacant on Census night*

In 2012 an audit located 4,194 properties in Shoalhaven that are actively marketed on the internet for holiday rental purposes. We know that there are a lot more than that which are privately rented and as such the figure is likely to be up to 4,500 properties.

26% of dwellings (13,632 dwellings out of a total of 51,487 dwellings) in Shoalhaven were “unoccupied” at the time of the Census in 2011. This compares to 12% generally for the same period in Regional NSW as a whole. However in some of the coastal settlements in Shoalhaven the “unoccupied” percentage was as high as 64% (Currarong), 40% (Huskisson), 58% (Cudmirrah/Berrara) and 68% (Manyana) at the time of the 2011 Census.

2. *Has council recognised the use of dwellings for tourism purposes as a compliance issue? Has Council taken any actions?*

Council recognises the importance that holiday homes play in the tourism economy of Shoalhaven. As a result steps were taken to enable the practice of renting an existing dwelling for short term holiday use to continue without the need for development consent via an amendment to its former LEP in 2006. . By and large the majority of holiday homes in Shoalhaven are not problematic and do not raise significant compliance issues. However Council has managed compliance issues associated with holiday homes as they arise through existing legislative powers e.g. Noise abatement.

Through our new Shoalhaven LEP 2014 we have enabled the practice of short term rental of a residential dwelling to continue without the need for development consent, provided it does not impact on the amenity of the neighbourhood in any way, including noise and traffic generation. This new provision, supported by a detailed DCP, will enable us to step in and require particularly problematic dwellings to obtain development consent and comply with the DCP provisions (noise, overcrowding, parking etc.).

3. *Is Council concerned about the use of motels or caravan parks for emergency housing?*

Council has some concerns with the use of motels and caravan parks for emergency housing, primarily related to the health and wellbeing of those using these venues for temporary emergency accommodation. Concerns are as follows:

- Usually, motels and caravan parks are not equipped with necessary infrastructure to support a range of homeless people with a range of needs. For example:

- Few motels are equipped with kitchens that guests are able to access for their personal use. This will result in a need for guests to resort to takeaway fast food for meals. Not only is this an additional cost but also comes at a high cost to the person's health if it forms the greater part of their diet.
  - A number of motels are not equipped with safe children's play areas. This may result in children playing in high risk locations such as car parks or close to roads.
  - The types of venues have the potential for families to be living in accommodation that is not appropriate for family use. This is especially relevant for families staying in motel rooms designed for 2 people. This can have a range of consequences for family members such as not sleeping well and a heightened risk of an escalation in family disharmony.
- Often support services are not involved with guests in motels and caravan parks. This will mean that homeless people will not have access to case management and other support services. Not having access to such services will have an adverse impact on opportunities and guidance for people to move on from being homeless. This type of situation means there is no structured intervention for the homeless person.
  - Motels and caravan parks as an option for homeless people presents a real difficulty with there being no control on the mix of guests. This can result to children being exposed to higher levels of risk; or victims of domestic violence being housed in proximity to perpetrators of violence etc. This can provide an unsafe environment.
  - The type of accommodation options used for a lengthy period of time place people in close proximity to each other. This may lead to difficulties with personal relationships and high risk of interaction with the criminal justice system.

However is also acknowledged that the use of motels/caravan parks for a strictly limited time i.e. No longer than a week, can provide a useful initial emergency response to families who have absolutely nowhere to go. However, any longer stays will raise the issues detailed above. Under the provisions of the Standard LEP Instrument, we will find it difficult to regulate such use for periods of up to three months if it occurs in an established motel, because of the definitions etc. used in this instrument.

Accommodation options for homeless people really need to be selected with the needs of the homeless person being central. They need to be safe for all involved with a low risk of danger or injury. They need to be supported by service providers who can assist with case management and other supports for the homeless person to enable them to move on from being homeless.