

INQUIRY INTO SOCIAL, PUBLIC AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Organisation: Muswellbrook Shire Council

Date received: 28/02/2014

28 February 2014

**The Hon Paul Green MLC
Chairperson
Select Committee on Social, Public and Affordable Housing
NSW Legislative Council
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000**

Dear Mr Green,

REF: Social, public and affordable housing inquiry

I refer to the inquiry of the NSW Legislative Council Select Committee on Social, Public and Affordable House into Social, Public and Affordable Housing. I am pleased to provide for the consideration of the Committee Muswellbrook Shire Council's submission to that inquiry.

Muswellbrook is situated in the Upper Hunter sub-region of the Hunter region of New South Wales, is located 3.5 hours by road from Sydney and up to two hours from Newcastle, and is a regional centre supporting a variety of industrial activities, a growing population and expanding business and community opportunities. Muswellbrook is the major population centre in the Muswellbrook Local Government Area (LGA).

Council understands that Muswellbrook's concentration of social housing is relatively high, for a town of its size, much of which is isolated and highly concentrated to the southern side of the town – the Wollombi Road Residential Precinct. The area presents a range of social issues driven by past poor planning decision making and the density of social housing in one small area. Council strongly supports the need to improve the amenity of densely stocked social housing estates, and has recently embarked upon a masterplanning exercise to help identify and resolve a number of the physical constraints that lead to anti-social behaviour. This body of work will identify opportunities to improve the connectivity into and through the estate.

The Muswellbrook LGA continues to enjoy relatively high wages and low unemployment as a direct result of the mining industry. The density of social housing has had the unintended consequence of compounding the disadvantage experienced by tenants on fixed incomes in an economy which has been for some time overheated by the impacts of the mining industry, and the relatively high costs of living it brings. Council is concerned that the relatively low demand for social housing from the local population drives migration from other towns around NSW, which exposes our new residents to higher costs of living pressures.

The NSW Land and Housing Corporation (LAHC) is a major land holder in the Wollombi Road Residential Precinct. Council supports the disaggregation of highly concentrated areas of social housing and would support the redistribution by the LAHC of the concentration of social housing to those parts of the State where demand is higher.

Council would also strongly support moves for the NSW Government to pursue a scheme that encouraged tenants in social and affordable housing to "rent to buy".

Council submits that addressing the issues as identified in this submission will assist the NSW Government meet its *NSW 2021* objective of breaking the cycle of disadvantage.

If you require further information please contact Joshua Brown, Policy Officer on

Council appreciates the opportunity to comment.

Yours faithfully,

Neil Pope
Acting General Manager