

# A Home in Hepburn Shire

## Summary of findings

What we found out about housing affordability, availability, and Social and Affordable Housing in Hepburn Shire.

Each night in Hepburn Shire there are people who do not have a safe, secure home

- staying in emergency accommodation, couch surfing, sleeping in their car, or rough sleeping. In addition, many people are experiencing housing stress - where the cost of rent is so high they can't afford to pay for food, medical care or other basic living expenses.

**Adequate housing for all residents is the foundation of a vibrant local economy and a cohesive community.**



Without the certainty of a home that is affordable and suitable, people aren't able to participate in, and contribute to, the local community.



This has a flow on effect to businesses, which find it hard to find and keep staff, and local groups which miss out on the energy and skills of volunteers.



Which in turn then impacts the services, programs and retail options available to the local community.

# 1> DEVELOPING A STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

Hepburn Shire Council is developing an Affordable Housing Strategy and Action Plan.

In Stage 1 we prepared an Issues and Options Paper and sought feedback from the community on the ideas and options it presented. A detailed Background Report was also developed to inform the Draft Strategy and Action Plan.

This document summarises the findings of the Stage 1 research and engagement. You can read the full Background Report, Issues and Options Paper and Community Engagement Findings Summary Report at [www.participate.hepburn.vic.gov.au/affordable-housing](http://www.participate.hepburn.vic.gov.au/affordable-housing)

You can access the Participate Hepburn webpage by scanning this QR code



## What is Affordable Housing?

Affordable Housing is a type of housing that is allocated to eligible households with very-low to moderate incomes. It includes social housing, which is either managed by the State Government (known as public housing) or managed by community housing providers (known as community housing).

In addition to the need for Affordable Housing, there are significant challenges around housing affordability – the cost of renting or owning a property, and housing availability – the ability for people to find and secure housing even when they can afford it.

# 2> RESEARCH

## FACTS AND FIGURES

The Background Report draws together research and information on housing need in Hepburn Shire. It shows:



306

Dwellings

is the estimated unmet need for Affordable Housing in 2021



only 10

Rental lettings

were affordable to low income households in June 2022

369

Households

in Hepburn Shire are in rental stress – that is 36.8% of all renting households



228

People

received Specialist Homeless Services in 2020-2021

10%

of properties in Hepburn Shire are short-stay accommodation listed on websites, by comparison

7.6%

of properties are rented out as long-term leases



20%

Reduction

of new private rental lettings in 2020-2021

The data also shows that in Hepburn Shire:



There is little to no crisis and **emergency accommodation**

– leaving people who are at risk of, or experiencing, homelessness, and people escaping family violence, particularly vulnerable.

1.7%

of dwellings are **social housing**

compared with an average of 2.6% for Victoria and 3.6% for Australia.



**Affordable Housing** should be located in existing townships where people can walk to shops and services. This includes Daylesford, Creswick and Clunes.

\*Refer to Housing data snapshot on page 18 of the Background Report for data sources.

# 3> COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

## YOUR PERSPECTIVES & IDEAS

The Community Engagement Findings Summary Report outlines the feedback received through a range of community consultation activities we delivered.



The majority of participants

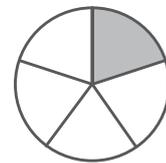
# 55.6%

were extremely concerned about the availability and cost of housing in Hepburn Shire. Overall, more than three-quarters of participants had a moderate or higher level of concern, and 16% had only slight or no concerns.



The top 3 concerns were:

- > Having enough workers to deliver services in the community (51%)
- > The impact on local shops and businesses (46.5%)
  - > Keeping a mix of different people in the community (42%)



More than one-fifth of respondents had

## personal housing concerns

16.6% were concerned about being able to downsize and stay living locally, and 11.5% were worried their adult children wouldn't be able to move out and stay living in the area.

## Issues

The key issues raised by the community were:

- Insecure, unaffordable and lack of rental housing supply - the lack of rental properties was a dominant theme. Participants reported that tenancies are insecure and/or unaffordable and that low supply meant they meaning people are struggling to remain in the area.
- Housing stock that is inappropriate for needs – housing is too large or too small making it difficult for people to downsize or find affordable properties.
- Rising mortgage, rates and cost of living pressures – some people use their properties for short stay accommodation to help cover the high cost of mortgage payments.
- Short-stay rental accommodation and vacant properties – many felt these are impacting housing supply, but others noted it was important that property owners can make choices with their investments.
- Land-use planning processes – some suggested planning processes were inhibiting housing development.
- A lack of housing impacts businesses and services – local business told us they had difficulty attracting and retaining staff because local housing was unaffordable, lower in quality than other regions and there was a lack of smaller, low maintenance housing types.

# Options for Action

When considering actions that council could take, people told us the priority was:

- 1 > Partnerships and incentives (50% of participants)
- 2 > Using the planning system (33.6%), and
- 3 > Advocating to others for action (16.43%).

Actions that people predominantly agreed with:

-  Make Council land available for Affordable (Social) Housing (81.4%)
-  Using Council resources to set up partnership opportunities (78.3%)
-  Focus housing growth within townships rather than extending into farms or bushland (67.1%)
-  Allow additional development in townships (small apartments or townhouses) if it was guaranteed to support those who need it, especially for people working locally (75%)

Actions where there was a mixed response from people:

Action		
Require developers to contribute to subsidised Affordable Housing (through money, land or housing)	68%	21%
Provide financial incentive to encourage short-stay to long term rental	39%	31%
Allow additional development in townships (small apartments and townhouses) to improve housing options in general	65%	25%
Fewer onsite carparks if that encouraged Affordable Housing	50%	33%

\*percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number

The top three advocacy priorities were:

- State/Federal Government for funding for social housing, crisis and emergency accommodation emerged as the most important advocacy option (67%).
- Hepburn Shire property owners to offer long-term leases instead of short-term rentals (48.2%).
- State government for the provision of land for social housing (47%).

# Your Ideas

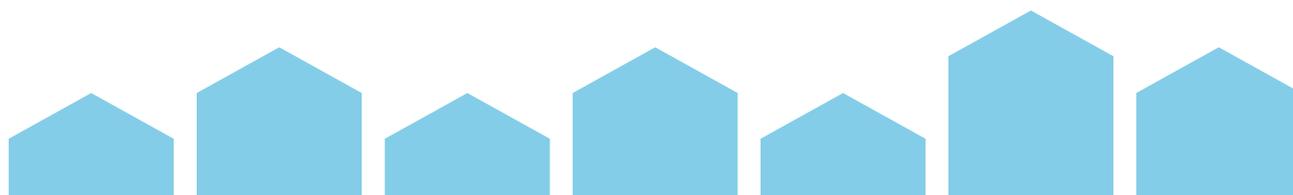
More than 100 people suggested additional ideas about how Council and/or the community could encourage more housing options in Hepburn Shire.

## The ten most common ideas (grouped into themes) were:

- 1 > Regulate short-stay rental accommodation
- 2 > Use land-use planning levers to facilitate infill/second dwellings while maintaining character of the town
- 3 > Facilitate tiny houses/small houses
- 4 > Provide a rates incentives for Affordable Housing and long-term rental accommodation
- 5 > DO NOT implement action that would disincentivise short-stay rental accommodation
- 6 > Improve land-use planning processes so that they facilitate development
- 7 > Council to invest directly in Affordable Housing primarily through the use of their land
- 8 > Facilitate key worker housing
- 9 > Facilitate apartments or higher density developments through land use planning levers
- 10 > Advocate for funding for Affordable Housing (not delivered by Council)



\*Refer to Participant ideas on page 31 of the Community Engagement Findings Summary Report for more detail.



# 4> PARTICIPATION

The Issues and Options Paper and engagement activities were promoted broadly in the community through a webinar, direct mail, the Shire's Participate Hepburn online engagement platform, and Council's other online and print communications channels.



689

unique visitors  
went to the  
'Participate Hepburn'  
consultation webpage



220

provided feedback  
through surveys,  
pop-ups, meetings,  
written submissions,  
interviews and sharing  
lived experience stories



158

times  
the Issues and  
Options Paper  
was downloaded



we

heard from

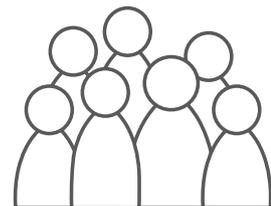
residents, visitors, landlords,  
businesses and service  
providers, community  
organisations, and  
housing providers



0-19<sub>Yrs</sub>

Younger voices

were significantly  
less represented, as  
were those for whom  
English was their  
second language and  
Aboriginal and Torres  
Strait Islander people.



There was a high-proportion of  
participants from Birch Ward

over 50%

which includes Daylesford and  
surrounds, and lower-levels of  
participation from other Wards  
within the Shire, particularly  
Cameron Ward which includes  
Clunes and surrounds (4.1%).

This is not unexpected given  
the demand for housing is  
being acutely experienced in  
Daylesford & Hepburn Springs.

# 5 > WHAT'S NEXT?

The challenges are clear and there is community energy and interest in finding solutions.

Stage 2 of the project is an Affordable Housing Solutions Forum. The Forum will bring together a range of people with different perspectives and experiences to consider, refine and prioritise potential actions to address housing affordability issues in Hepburn Shire. It will include community organisations, landowners, people in need of housing, local businesses, and general community members.

The Forum will help inform the development of Council's Draft Affordable Housing Strategy and Action Plan, and give Councillors another opportunity to hear and understand the community's perspectives to inform the Council's decision-making.

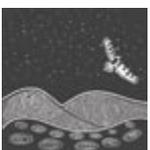
Following the Forum the Draft Affordable Housing Strategy and Action Plan will be developed and will go out to the community for further feedback.

The Final Affordable Housing Strategy and Action Plan will go to a Council meeting for adoption (anticipated to be in May).



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#### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY**

*Hepburn Shire Council acknowledges the Dja Dja Wurrung as the Traditional Owners of the lands and waters on which we live and work.*