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Submission from Shelter NSW

Byron Shire Councils Draft Local Strategic Planning Statement

Introduction

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Byron Shire Council's Draft Local Strategic Planning Statement (LSPS). Shelter NSW congratulates the council on its work setting the strategic aims and objectives for land use over the next 20 years.

As the peak body for housing policy in NSW, Shelter NSW is making submissions on all draft statements in regional councils expecting significant residential growth. The LSPSs will build a bridge between state and local government plans for land use which makes this a key opportunity to promote dialogue about creating a better housing system. The purpose of this submission is to ensure that the LSPS process helps to create a secure home for all.

Having reviewed Council's Draft LSPS we have identified a number of practical policy and planning mechanisms that could be used to either support or strengthen the final LSPS in its aim to deliver both affordable and more diverse housing options.

Our submission is structured in four parts. We have provided an overview of Shelter NSW's role as the state's peak body for housing policy advocacy; a summary of the key messages we heard throughout our recent consultation sessions across NSW to develop a new vision for the future of our housing system; an overview of the critical housing Actions in the draft LSPS with comments; and finally, we make several recommendations seeking endorsement from the council to be included as Actions for the final LSPS.

About Shelter NSW

Shelter NSW is the state's peak body for housing policy advocacy. Established in 1975, we represent broad interests across the housing system rather than a specific industry or sector. Our diverse network of partners, including organisational and individual members, share our vision of a secure home for all which we pursue through critical engagement with policy and practice and thought leadership

As an independent non-profit organisation, our work involves advocating for systemic housing policy reform and providing advice on policy and legislation. We do this by researching the causes of inequity within the housing system and promoting solutions that focus on the needs of lower and medium income households. Leveraging this expertise, we then engage and collaborate with our members and stakeholders to work towards an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable housing system.

Key messages from Shelter NSW's visioning sessions

In 2019, Shelter NSW held seven workshops across regional NSW and Greater Sydney to develop a shared vision for a better housing system. Close to 200 community members spoke at these sessions about the problems they see as facing the housing system and the actions they want to see to address them. Here is a summary of the key messages we heard that are relevant to all levels of government.

1. Make plans that emphasise housing as a home, not just an investment

The concept of 'home' should be at the core of housing policy. A home provides safety, stability and security. It underpins health, social connections and participation in work and society. However, speculative investment housing and the standard model of development is not delivering housing people need or can afford. Government needs to talk with communities about housing issues and discuss solutions. Once they do, they should make plans for cities and regions that address the issues they can control and work with other levels of government on the ones they cannot.

2. Build places and communities, not just houses and towers

New housing should be located close to jobs and services and improve the quality of existing neighbourhoods. Well-connected and well-designed homes make it easy for people to access the services they need; get to the jobs they want and move between various stages of their lives. However, new development seems to deliver either car-dependent suburbia or poor-quality density. Both result in different kinds of environmental and social challenges. Instead, we need to find a middle ground to win community support. Governments can help them do so through land use planning, support for innovative designs and investment in quality local infrastructure.

3. Create diverse housing that everyone can afford, not just high-income earners

The housing system should be as diverse as the community to give people the options they need. Ageing households can then downsize and young people can become independent. Women can then leave abusive relationships and First Nations people can live on Country. Students can focus on their education and essential workers can live closer to their jobs. Most important, people experiencing homelessness can find a secure home. To provide these options, governments need to invest in social and affordable housing as well as create more diversity in the housing market.

4. Make renting a genuine alternative to ownership, not just a transition phase

Tenants should be able to expect security and a high level of service when they rent their home. This is especially true now that homeownership is in decline. However, the possibility of no-grounds evictions makes it hard for tenants to put down roots or request repairs. Equally, social housing has become a temporary safety net which is rationed and run-down. Government needs to ensure rental housing is both secure and high quality. It can do so by with laws and policies that support long-term renters and ensure providers deliver appropriate housing.

5. Address climate change through the housing system, not exacerbate it

Our built environment should help us transition to a zero-carbon economy. Housing design and construction techniques can reduce our energy consumption and resource use. Good planning and subdivision can protect our homes from natural hazards and limit our reliance on cars. Trees can cool our streets and infrastructure can make them walkable. Existing homes can be made more efficient in terms of their energy and water use. All of this improves our health and saves us money. Governments need to actively support all of these tools to prevent and avoid the worst effects of climate change which we are starting to see and feel in our daily lives.

Shelter NSW's comments on Drafts LSPS Housing Related Actions

Shelter NSW acknowledges that the council's Draft LSPS aims to take into consideration long-term trends in the local housing system and identify what is essential in terms of future community needs. We also note the efforts made to identify and mitigate any negative trends concerning recreation, employment, housing, and goods and services provision.

The following Table outlines the proposed strategic actions in the LSPS related to sustainability, housing choice and affordability. It highlights the Council's strategic Actions and provides feedback on ways to support or strengthen any proposed Action to address local housing-related issues in an effective, inclusive manner. In the case that our suggestions go beyond the direct control of the council, we are happy to offer our support in an advocacy capacity on any future work or developments.

Table - Proposed Council Actions & Shelter NSW Comments
Proposed Council Action SA5. Work towards Council's zero emissions target.
Shelters NSW - Comments for Consideration by Council Shelter NSW supports this Action as it recognises that land use, housing, transport and infrastructure planning interventions play a significant role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. In line with this, we suggest that the Council consider the following actions: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Support for a consolidated land use strategy based on reducing emissions,2. Encourage shaded walkways, footpaths and bike routes,3. Council develop a Green Building Policy to ensure new assets are designed and built to maximise energy efficiency outcomes,4. Council work with the Department of Community and Justice and local Community Housing organisation to encourage them to retrofit their existing housing stock or delivery new stock with renewable energy-efficient initiatives such as solar panels.

Proposed Council Actions

- **LA3. Update Council's Community Participation Plan ('Strategic Planning' section) to include specific engagement strategies with local Aboriginal communities.**
- **LA4. Develop local heritage studies in consultation with the local Aboriginal community, and adopt appropriate measures in planning strategies and local plans to protect Aboriginal heritage**

Shelter NSW Comments for Consideration by Council

- Shelter NSW would like to see a commitment by Council to work with the Local Aboriginal Land Councils (LALC) on ways to deliver additional housing opportunities on their landholders as part of Council broader engagement strategies with Aboriginal communities.

Proposed Council Actions LA6. Investigate opportunities in the local planning framework (LEP and DCP provisions) to support liveable neighbourhood principles when assessing new subdivision and infill development proposals [draft Residential Strategy Action 5]**Shelter NSW Comments for Consideration by Council**

- Shelter NSW supports this Action due to its emphasis on delivering greater lot variety, housing diversity, choice and affordability as well as encouraging climate-responsive dwellings and design.

Proposed Council Actions LA7. Finalise draft Byron Shire Residential Strategy and implement relevant priority actions.

We understand that the Byron Shire Residential Strategy aims to guide the long-term provision of housing in the Shire and will identify land suitable for particular types of residential growth, from new 'greenfield' area to infill development. We also understand that the LGA has a level of unmet housing need. Based on this, we suggest that the Council explore some of the following actions.

1. To define affordable housing as an essential infrastructure (including public and community housing) in any future infrastructure plan (Note: this definition is from the Australian Infrastructure Audit 2019).
2. Explore ways to capture the increased land value associated with a rezoning with the aim of delivering new affordable housing. This could be achieved by implementing a value capture system tied to a Planning Agreement framework.
3. Council to work in partnership with Community Housing Providers and the Department of Communities and Justice to facilitate the delivery of new affordable housing options within the LGA.
4. Council commits to collecting information and advocating on the housing needs of vulnerable communities or those at risk of homelessness in collaboration with local support service.
5. Council work in partnership with the local Community Housing providers and the Department of Community and Justice to facilitate the deliver new affordable housing stock.

6. Council to include in its Residential Strategy the following incentives for organisations or authorities that provide affordable housing in perpetuity: a fast track DA process, fee reduction or waiver, density bonus, car parking reduction bonus, waving or varying s7.11 contributions. Note: we recommend that any exemption or incentive should be targeted at public housing or not-for-profit developers (CHPs), linked to the affordable housing being secured in perpetuity, not for a minimum of ten years.

Proposed Council Actions LA8. Prepare and implement planning controls to define and regulate Short Term Rental Accommodation in the Byron Shire.

Shelter NSW Comments for Consideration by Council

- Many key regional housing markets have seen the loss of low-cost rental housing stock to short-term visitor accommodation. The Council could consider investigating opportunities to mitigate these impacts by applying a cap similar to the short-term accommodation rules for greater Sydney. Shelter NSW would be happy to collaborate with the Council on working with the NSW Government to expand the short-term accommodation rules for greater Sydney to critical regional Local Government Area.

Proposed Council Actions LA9. Investigate and implement planning controls to encourage an increase in the supply of affordable and inclusive housing stock.

Shelter NSW Comments for Consideration by Council

We understand that the LGA has a level of unmet housing need. Based on this we suggest that Council explore some of the following Actions to support the delivery of more diverse housing options.

1. To support opportunities for more housing choice Council consider replacing all Low-Density Residential Zone (R2) with General Residential Zone (R1) across the LGA.
2. Council consider the development of precinct plans linked to expanding housing choice in critical locations connected with essential services such as town centres, shopping centre facilities, educational and University facilities, medical facilities and transport infrastructure.
3. Consider mandating for a proportion of bedroom types, especially in town centre developments to support more housing choice.
4. Council investigates how its assets could provide affordable housing alternatives. One possibility is to support the development of Community Land Trust (CLT) models or co-operative housing. (A CLT is a form of shared land ownership, we're a community-based entity owns the land component and the building are owned by individual household (or leased long-term).
5. That Council look at ways to deliver a percentage of affordable housing in any new development precinct.
6. Council consider providing the following incentives to organisation or authorities that offer affordable housing in perpetuity: create a fast track DA process, DA fee reduction or waiver, density bonus, car parking reduction, waving or varying s7.11 contributions. Note: we recommend that any exemption or incentive should be for public housing or not-for-profit developers (CHPs), linked to the affordable housing being secured in perpetuity, not for a minimum of ten years.

Thank you

We hope that the comments and insights we have provided bring some value to the council's strategic planning work in the housing policy space. We are also happy to continue our engagement with the council on the issues raised in our submission. If you wish to discuss our submission in more detail, please contact our Principal Policy Officer Stacey Miers on 0410 633 272 or by email at stacey@shelternsw.org.au.

Sincerely,

Principal Policy Officer Shelter NSW Stacey
Miers

Handwritten signature of Stacey Miers in black ink.

Sincerely,

Chief Executive Officer Shelter NSW

John Engeler

Handwritten signature of John Engeler in black ink.