

## Submission

### Draft Local Strategic Planning Statement

Planning Newcastle 2040: Global City, Local Character



### Introduction

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on City of Newcastle's Local Strategic Planning Statement (LSPS). Shelter NSW congratulates City of Newcastle on its draft LSPS which sets the strategic aims and objectives for land use over the next 20 years. We commend its vision of becoming a smart, liveable and sustainable global city by 2040. We strongly support its ambition of creating a mix of great places that provides for all Novocastrians.

As the LSPS will build a bridge between state and local government plans for land use, it is a key opportunity to promote dialogue about a better housing system. Shelter NSW therefore making submissions on select draft statements in regional areas expecting significant residential growth.

Our submission is structured in four parts. Below, we provide an overview of our work as the state's peak body for housing policy advocacy. Over the page, we provide a summary of key messages that we heard at recent consultation sessions to develop a new vision for housing in NSW. The third section relates these messages to a summary of the housing priorities in the draft LSPS. Finally, we make a number of recommendations that endorse or seek to add to the 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 a specific industry or sector. Our diverse network of partners includes organisations and individuals that share our vision of a secure home for all. We pursue this vision through critical engagement with policy and by providing thought leadership.

As an independent non-profit organisation, we advocate for systemic housing policy reform and provide advice on policy and legislation. In doing so, we research the causes of inequity within the NSW housing system and promote solutions that ensure better housing outcomes for households on lower-incomes. We then leverage this expertise to engage and collaborate with the sector to work towards an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable housing system.

## Key messages from Shelter NSW's visioning sessions

In 2019, Shelter NSW held 7 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 their insights 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 security, stability and safety. It underpins health, social connections and participation in work and society. However, over-investment in housing and the standard model of development is not delivering housing people need or can afford. Government needs to talk with communities about these problems and discuss solutions. Once they do, they should make a plan for specific regions that addresses the issues they can control and work with other levels of government on 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 get around and transition between various stages of life. However, developers seem to be delivering either car-dependent sprawl or low-quality density. Both result in different kinds of congestion and unpleasant environments. They need to find a middle ground to win community support. Government can help them do so through its planning, support for innovative designs and investment in infrastructure.

### 3. Provide 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 then focus on their education and key workers can live in their own communities. 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 seen as a temporary safety net which is increasingly rationed and run-down. Government needs to ensure rental housing is both secure and high quality. It can do so by amending laws and policies that support long-term renters and providers of appropriate housing.

### 5. Use housing policy to address climate change, 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 extraction of new resources. So too can planning and subdivision protect our homes from natural hazards and limit our reliance on cars and lifts. Trees can cool our streets and infrastructure can make them walkable. All of this improves our health and saves us money. Governments need to use all of these tools to prevent and avoid the worst effects of climate change which we are just starting to see and feel.

## Local housing priorities in Newcastle

*Planning Newcastle 2040* includes 1 specific housing priority and a number of housing-related priorities. Generally, we find that these priorities are highly consistent with our own and reflect the messages from our visioning sessions. We provide a summary of these priorities below to build our own knowledge of local housing issues and give appropriate to our recommendations.

### Priority 12: Sustainable, accessible and inclusive housing

The main housing issue identified by this priority is that the Newcastle housing market is not delivering the housing people need, despite there being adequate amount of residential land. In particular, it highlights a lack of social and affordable housing as well as suitable accommodation for seniors, students and people living with a disability.

As a concise document, the draft LSPS defers to Newcastle Affordable Living Plan to elaborate on these issues. That plan describes four main challenges in the context of needing to accommodate 35,500 additional people by 2036. The first is an inadequate supply of quality affordable housing whereby growths are outpacing rents and 31% of renters are in housing stress. The second is a lack of diverse housing supply with growth tending to deliver large family homes rather than the smaller sized dwellings the community needs. The third is equitable access to transport and services with affordable areas largely being dependent on private car usage. Finally, neighbourhoods that support health and wellbeing is discussed as an ongoing need.

Responding to these issues, the draft LSPS establishes four principles for future land use. These include integrating appropriate density around public transport, encouraging diverse housing types, enhancing housing quality and incorporating affordable and sustainable housing in growth areas. Actions to reflect these principles include finalising a draft local housing strategy and implementing the actions Newcastle Affordable Living Plan which we discuss in the recommendations section.

### Other housing-related priorities

There are a number of additional priorities that are related to housing. To create an efficient and integrated transport network, these include support for public and active transport (P1, P2). To create a green and liveable city, these include greening neighbourhoods (P4), protecting natural environments (P5) and mitigating and adapting to climate change (P6, P7). To create a people-oriented city, these include planning for growth (P8) and ensuring that development contributes to local character and protects local heritage (P10, P11).

### Alignment with Shelter's visioning sessions

The degree of alignment between the priorities in *Planning Newcastle 2040* and those Shelter NSW heard at its visioning sessions is almost entirely consistent.

In particular, the draft LSPS and associated Affordable Living Plan recognise the significance of a secure home and commit to developing plans that deliver more appropriate and affordable housing. The priorities equally emphasise the need to better integrate new housing supply with transport and ensure that development contributes to the quality of existing neighbourhoods. It similarly addresses the need for more diverse and affordable housing.

While this submission does not discuss them in detail, the draft LSPS includes priorities to address climate change. It does not otherwise address security of tenure in the private rental market but this is beyond the scope of local government. Nevertheless, the Affordable Living Plan pledges support for the Everybody's Home campaign of which tenancy reform is a key pillar.

## Recommendations

*Planning Newcastle 2040* includes 2 specific actions to address Priority 12 on housing which are to finalise the local housing strategy and implement the actions in the Affordable Living Plan. While we strongly support both of these actions, they do not unto themselves describe specific policies and planning mechanisms that Shelter NSW can comment on. As such, we have chosen here to address the actions in the Affordable Living Plan since the draft LSPS recommits to them. We also presume that these actions will inform the forthcoming Local Housing Strategy.

### Actions we support outright

- 1.3 Review/develop a housing strategy to identify and plan for housing needs**
- 1.4 (a) Include an LEP aim to encourage affordable/adaptable housing**
- 1.4 (c) Include LEP/DCP provisions to encourage dwelling size mix in multi-dwelling developments**
- 1.4 (d) Review DCP to encourage intergenerational and co-operative housing**
- 1.4 (e) Update DCP to monitor and mitigate impacts of development on affordable housing**
- 1.5 (b) Investigate feasible ways to support housing projects through alternative funding models**
- 4.2 (b) Advocate use of surplus government land for affordable and cooperative housing**
- 4.2 (c) Advocate to state government for public transport improvements**
- 4.2 (d) Advocate for a minimum of 10% affordable housing in appropriate development**
- 4.2 (e) Advocate for incorporation of liveable design standards in National Construction Code**
- 4.2 (g) Support the Everybody's Home campaign**
- 4.2 (f) Investigate use of Crown Lands for affordable housing**
- 4.3 (a) Provide support to social and affordable housing providers**
- 4.3 (b) Collaborate with education providers to address housing affordability issues**

### Actions we believe could be strengthened

#### **1.2 (a) Investigate an inclusionary zoning policy**

Now that SEPP 70 extends to all councils in NSW, the City of Newcastle could now develop a specific Affordable Housing Contribution Scheme. Such a scheme should include appropriate targets that quantify the amount of affordable housing they can deliver and compare these with housing needs.

#### **1.4 (b) Include an LEP bonus to encourage affordable housing**

Voluntary agreements that offer density bonuses may not now be required now that councils have the option to prepare and implement affordable housing contributions schemes. Additional incentives could include fast track assessment, fee concessions and alternative design and car parking requirements.

## Thank you

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide comment on *Planning Newcastle 2040*. Shelter NSW welcomes further opportunities to collaborate with the City of Newcastle on the development of its Local Housing Strategy. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you would like to discuss any part of this submission in detail.

Yours sincerely,

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