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Submission from Shelter NSW

Singleton Council's Draft Local Strategic Planning Statement

Introduction

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

As the peak housing policy body in NSW, Shelter NSW is making submissions on draft LSPS in regional local Government areas expecting residential growth. As you would be aware the LSPS's aims to build a bridge between state and local government land use plans which makes this a key opportunity to promote dialogue about how to support the future delivery of a better housing system. The purpose of this submission is to provide feedback aimed at supporting the LSPS process to create housing options for all.

Having reviewed Council's Draft LSPS we have identified several 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 provides; an overview of Shelter NSW's role as the state's peak body for housing policy and advocacy, a summary of the key messages we heard throughout our recent consultation sessions across NSW, a list of the Actions in the draft LSPS, and suggestions from Shelter NSW for consideration in the final LSPS and residential housing study.

About Shelter NSW

Shelter NSW was established in 1975, and its aim is to 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 housing policy and practice and leadership forums.

As an independent non-profit organisation, our work involves advocating for systemic housing reforms and providing advice on policy and legislation to governments. We do this by researching the causes of inequities within the housing system with the overall aim of promoting solutions with a focus on the current and future housing needs. Our goal is to leverage our expertise, as we engage and collaborate with our members and stakeholders towards delivering an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable housing system.

Key messages from Shelter NSWs 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. Governments 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. Governments need 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 Singleton Council's Draft LSPS takes into consideration the long-term local and regional trends in the housing system and aims to identify what is essential in terms of future community requirements.

Singleton Local Government Area (LGA) currently has one dominant housing choice available, as 96% of its stock is made up of detached single dwelling houses. Council LSPS says that it aims to deliver at least 5085 new dwelling lots and that 20% of its housing stock will provide more choice by 2036.

In their, LSPS Council states that they want to encourage; young people to move into and remain in the LGA, they also want to support the delivery of accommodation that meets the needs of the aging population and promote more dwelling choice and affordability. For the

Council to achieve these aspirations, the majority of all new housing stock will need to be different; it will need to go beyond delivering more single dwelling houses. An essential requirement in achieving this is for the LSPS process to produce a land-use policy framework that supports more diverse housing options to be delivered.

The following section outlines the proposed strategic Actions in the LSPS related to housing. It provides feedback from Shelter NSW on ways to support or strengthen any proposed local housing-related Action. In some situations where 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.

Proposed Housing Related Actions in the LSPS

Shelter NSW has identified the following Action in the LSPS as having housing-related implications.

- 1.1.2 For housing close to operating mines, rail infrastructure and major industry areas, complete a review of the extent of affectation by adverse environmental impacts and identify any opportunities to avoid or minimise such impacts.
- 1.2.2. As background material to be utilised in the development of a new housing strategy, prepare a report reviewing the opportunities and implications of facilitating over-55's style retirement living within the Singleton LGA.
- 1.3.1. Complete an analysis into the service and facility (i.e. education, training, health, recreation and community) needs of youth/younger persons in the Singleton LGA to:
 - Identify services and facilities that would encourage youth/younger persons to remain in the Singleton LGA as opposed to living elsewhere;
 - Identify gaps in the provision of services and facilities in the Singleton LGA for youth/younger persons;
 - Identify any potential land use zoning or planning control barriers to the provision of services and facilities for youth/younger persons in the Singleton LGA;
 - Identify opportunities to attract families to reside in the Singleton LGA through Singleton's offer of services and facilities; and
 - Investigate mechanisms to facilitate service and facility provision to meet the needs of youth/younger persons.
- 2.3.1 Develop a housing strategy, which considers diversity in housing and land supply, minimisation of urban sprawl, requirements for support infrastructure, sustainable design, climate change adaption, neighbourhood character and minimisation of land use conflict.
- 2.3.2 Establish a monitoring and reporting system to monitor implementation of the housing strategy.
- 4.2.1. Complete a report, formally reviewing land use zoning around existing and proposed transport and infrastructure corridors, which gives consideration to land use compatibility, minimisation of land use conflict and protection of visual amenity.

Shelter NSW Comments on Housing Related Issues

The following points outline Shelter NSW suggestions for Council to consider in its final deliberation and implementation of its LSPS and future Residential Housing Strategy.

Suggested Options that aim to Increase Housing Choice and Affordability through the Planning System

- Investigate opportunities to amend existing residential land use controls, with an emphasis on delivering greater lot variety, housing diversity, choice and affordability as well as encouraging climate-responsive dwellings and design outcomes.
- Singleton LGA has several key precincts connected with transport infrastructure, essential services such as shopping, educational, and medical facilities. We suggest that the Council develop a precinct plan which looks at ways to deliver additional housing opportunities linked to these essential service hubs.
- Singleton Council LGA includes several small townships such as Broke, Bulga, Howes Valley, Putty, Warkworth, Jerrys Plains, Camberwell, Ravensworth, Mount Olive, Carrowbrook, Mirranie, Elderslie, Belford and Branxton. Many of these townships are dominated by large lot subdivision (Village Zone RU5) land use zones and therefore provide few opportunities to deliver diverse housing opportunities. We suggest that Council review its current low-density residential zones (such as; Village zone RU5 Zone and Residential zone R2) and replace them with a General Residential (R1) zone to deliver more housing choice connected with townships.
- Shelter NSW also recommends that the Council consider amending its current low-density residential zones in and around the Singleton CBD to facilitate the delivery of diverse housing options. This could include replacing the existing low-density zones with Medium Density Residential (R3) zones or Mixed-use (R4) zones. This change would facilitate housing options, such as one- and two-bedroom dwelling and shop top housing to be built within the CBD and its surrounding area.
- The Council could also review its DCP, to require a proportion of one- and two-bedroom dwellings units to be delivered. This type of initiative could be linked with incentives that support dwelling mix.

Housing Study

The LSPS indicates that the diversification of local housing stock will be outlined in Council Residential Housing Strategy. Shelter NSW supports the development of a residential housing strategy. As part of this work, we suggest that the following matters be included in the housing study.

- Identify the impacts of the mines and their related workforces on housing supply and affordability.

- Review planning controls to facilitate the delivery of housing options for over-55's within the Singleton LGA linked with town centres and essential services so that older residents can age in place.
- Undertake a workshop with local developers and builders on ways to deliver more diverse housing opportunities.
- Investigate opportunities to amend the existing land use controls, to delivering greater, housing diversity.
- Investigate and implement planning controls that encourage and increase the supply of affordable housing.
- 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.
- Define housing as essential infrastructure (including public and community housing) in any plans (Note: this definition is from the Australian Infrastructure Audit 2019).
- Work in partnership with Community Housing Providers and the Department of Communities and Justice to facilitate the delivery of new affordable housing options.

The suggestions outlined in this submission aim to support communities to access different housing options in response to changing lifestyle needs. We also hope that the suggested initiatives will, in turn, have a positive effect on providing both housing choice and affordability into the future.

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 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, Stacey Miers

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Sincerely, John Engeler

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