



**The Bellingen Nambucca Affordable Housing Action
Group Submission in Response to the
Bellingen Shire Council Local Housing Strategy**

15 October 2019



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Executive Summary

The Bellingen Nambucca Affordable Housing Action Group (BNAHAG) is pleased to submit this formal response to the draft Local Housing Strategy and Action Plan. We congratulate the Bellingen Shire Council (BSC) on the draft Local Housing Strategy (LHS), which reflects previous community input into the shape and direction of the plan. We also commend the BSC on comprehensively responding to the *Bellingen Nambucca Affordable Housing Action Group 10 Point Plan For Change* throughout the draft LHS.

We believe that it is very likely the Local Housing Strategy is an example of national best practice in relation to local government's role as leaders in seeking to influence both housing affordability and environmental responsibility into the future.

The draft LHS Vision outlines a future for the Shire which aims to maintain the character, environmental and community value that residents value highly while providing greater housing choice, diversity and affordability. The draft LHS and Action Plan sets a framework and practical activities to implement this vision.

We congratulate BSC on developing the Action Plan which underpins the LHS and outlines and seeks comment on how the LHS will be implemented. We note that BSC developed the Action Plan of its own accord, over and above compliance obligations to the NSW Department of Planning and Environment.

We also note the Local Housing Strategy is the first of three sections of the Bellingen Shire Growth Management Strategy.

Housing is critical to community health and wellbeing, as is responsible economic development. Members of the BNAHAG have emphasised the importance of employment creation and local enterprise as critical next steps.

Others highlighted the need to create a balance between work and leisure and noted that improving affordability should enable local residents to not only secure a safe place to call home but also improve their families' health and wellbeing.

Social license

The draft Action Plan recognises that BSC alone will not be able to implement the LHS. Whilst it is important to mandate requirements through tools such as planning controls and guidelines, it is equally important to support local communities, residents and developers to make decisions and adopt practices that align with the LHS housing vision. The extensive



early community input into the design of the strategy indicates a level of existing support and consequently social license.

Social license will be critical to the successful implementation of the LHS. However it cannot be taken for granted and will need to continue to be strengthened.

The communities across the Shire will need to actively engage in influencing and shaping growth and development so that it contributes to the future vision for the Shire rather than undermining it. The success of the LHS will be contingent on the social license our communities afford developers in the coming 20 years.

The draft LHS Action Plan recognises the system-wide, whole-of-community approach that will be required to successfully deliver the LHS Vision. It includes numerous actions that relate to the provision of information, community education and awareness. An investment in tools and activities that support community education, awareness and change are fundamental to the LHS's success.

Given the role of local government and the need for community engagement and trust, it is our view that BSC itself will not be able to fulfil the community development and education role required to enable the LHS's successful implementation.

BSC will need to harness and support the effort of stakeholders across the community for the implementation of the LHS to be a success and for the LHS housing vision for our Shire to be realised.

Deliberately building ongoing community awareness, education, engagement and the social license that will support the sort of development communities want across the Shire will be critical. These will be the protective factors that articulate the sort of development the local market, that is our communities, want. Without these protective factors we could be at risk of unrestrained infill development that delivers poor outcomes and only complies to the lowest possible standards.

Towards a Bellingen Shire Housing Hub

For the reasons outlined above, we invite BSC to enter into a formal partnership with the BNAHAG.

Our group is perfectly placed to lead community awareness and education activities as well as to provide advice and support to residents seeking to develop housing projects, including infill, within the Shire.

Some local councils employ housing officers to undertake some of these responsibilities. However, this would be a more costly and possibly less effective approach, given the regulatory function that BSC must also fulfil.



The BNAHAG's Ten Point Plan for Change (Attachment A) includes the establishment of an affordable housing hub "to build on the work of the Affordable Housing Action Group and support local initiatives". The Housing Hub could be an information clearinghouse and centre of expertise providing advice and resources to encourage good design and support local residents interested in exploring the potential for infill on their residential blocks. It could build a community of practice with environmentally responsible architects, builders and other housing professionals as well as with innovative housing projects nationally.

The Housing Hub will offer the Bellingen Shire communities information, support and assistance by bringing local experts together and drawing on national good practice. The Hub will be able to develop Shire specific resources and tools to supplement the guidelines and case studies flagged in the draft LHS Action Plan. Over time the Housing Hub will be able to influence and support local residents and developers in their decision-making to help implement the Housing Vision and the intent of the draft LHS. It will strengthen and articulate the social license required to ensure the housing vision guides developers decision-making over time.

BNAHAG actively invites BSC to partner with us to establish and help resource this hub as a centre that is critical to the successful implementation of the LHS, particularly in relation to realising the full potential for best practice, well-designed infill. Although BNAHAG has achieved much as an unfunded residents action group it will be unable to fulfil the role of the Housing Hub outlined in this paper without active BSC support.

An initial step would be for BSC and BNAHAG to enter into an MOU that clarifies the Action Group's roles and responsibilities in relation to community education, awareness raising and advising.

As a first step a small grant to cover the cost of the volunteer coordinator is needed. This role is currently funded through donations with a budget only to the end of 2019. This arrangement would be similar to the MOU that BSC has with local Landcare bodies.

The MOU could also provide in-kind support from BSC to help us to secure grant funding from other sources as well as potential office space.

Lastly, BNAHAG believes this partnership approach could be piloted and could be an example of national, or at least state-wide, best practice. It maybe that other industry bodies, such as the Local Government Association of NSW and Shelter NSW are interested in this pilot as a case study.



A comment on affordability and affordable housing

BNAHAG recognises that the draft LHS seeks to both influence housing affordability as well as facilitate the development of affordable housing projects. Affordability is a continuum and we strongly support this integrated, holistic approach.

Responding to the housing needs of very low-income earners including people living on income support such as the Aged Pension and Newstart as well as those living with complex needs and multiple disadvantage, is clearly a government responsibility.

For this reason, we strongly support BSC's commitment to advocacy for more social housing and crisis responses for homeless people. We are keen to work closely with BSC in this regard. We are also keen to work closely with BSC to find innovative ways through pilots and partnerships to increase the range of affordable housing options across the Shire for very low income earners.

We are also committed to continuing to explore and develop practical housing responses that influence affordability and create new housing responses. Current affordability data indicates that homeownership for working families who earn even middle incomes is increasingly out of reach for residents in many parts of the Bellingen Shire.

The Climate Emergency

On 27 March 2019 BSC declared that "we are in a state of climate emergency that requires urgent action by all levels of government, including local councils" and committed to develop a plan to operationalise actions to respond to the climate emergency by the end of 2019.

The draft LHS and Action Plan should be regarded as an early demonstration of practical action demonstrating BSC's response to the Climate Emergency.

Infill and 40% landscaping

Environmental responsibility is critical to ensuring that housing (and population) growth seeks to mitigate and/or adapt to climate change wherever possible. This is particularly important in relation to planning controls and guidance.

The approach to urban infill as opposed to further development of greenfield sites is a critical strategy in this regard. So too is the proposed allocation of 40% of each site for landscaping.

The BNAHAG strongly supports both of these proposals, noting there should be limited discretion to vary the 40% in relation to the needs of people with mobility disabilities or frail aged residents.



We also understand the draft LHS is a significant departure from previous practice and no one can be confident that we will not see unintended consequences. For this reason, we propose that the 40% landscape control be reviewed after 2 years to determine its efficacy and if any changes are required.

Water supply security and growth targets

It is critical that water security forecasts be reviewed and informed by the most up-to-date climate science. Water security should directly inform the housing growth targets. For this reason, BNAHAG recommends the growth targets outlined in the draft LHS be provisionally adopted but then updated to reflect the outcome of updated water security forecasts.

Key priorities – older people and the local workforce

This submission highlights the needs of two groups – older people who wish to age in place within the Shire and working families and singles who wish to live within the Shire. These two groups should be identified as priority target groups in the action plan, in addition to target groups already identified: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and people who are homeless.

Whilst the draft LHS is not an affordable housing strategy, it does scope a number of interventions and actions that could lead to improved affordability – for example, well designed infill and the development of smaller homes.

In addition, BNAHAG is keen to work closely with BSC in relation to all of the actions that are specific to the development of new approaches and innovative pilots and partnerships in relation to affordable housing initiatives.

Improving the supply of rental housing

The impact of un-hosted short term rental accommodation, such as Airbnb and Stayz on the supply of private rental housing across the Shire is of significant concern.

The BNAHAG understands this issue is complex and informed in large part by the new regulatory framework about to be implemented by the NSW Government. However the extent of this impact needs to be better understood and holistic, locally relevant responses developed.

Monitoring the Implementation of the Local Housing Strategy

We support the monitoring and review framework outlined in the draft Action Plan. However we recommend that BSC establish a Local Housing Strategy reference group to oversee and advise on implementation of the LHS comprising of housing professionals and



nominated representatives from the BNAHAG.

The following table is a summary of our response to the draft LHS Action Plan showing the line of sight back to the Bellingen Shire Council Climate Emergency Declaration and Bellingen Nambucca Affordable Housing Action Group 10 Point Plan For Change (at Attachment A).



Summary of response to the draft Action Plan

Table 1: Summary of Responses. [Note that Actions not included in this table are supported without additional comment]

Strategy & Reference	Action	Climate Emergency		BNAHAG 10 Point Plan	Key Comments
		Mitigation	Adaption		
Strategy 1: HOUSING CHOICES					
1.1	Set housing growth and diversity targets		✓	2	Strongly supported but must review water supply security and adjust growth targets if needed within 2 years
1.2	Enable more housing types by changing planning controls		✓	2 & 5	Strongly supported
1.4	Encourage smaller homes	✓		2	Strongly supported but strengthen focus on enabling tiny homes
1.5	Review Chapter 13 Universal Design			5	Strongly supported
1.6	Housing choices for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people			6	Strongly supported
1.8	Support alternative housing models and pilot projects	✓	✓	1, 2,8	BSC develop guiding principles for pilots, taking environmental responsibility into account.
1.8				1	Explore partnership with CLT
1.8					Develop prospectus to attract new residents as well as ethical investors
New action				2	Prioritise older people and local working singles and families
New action				1 & 2	Explore a community caravan and camping site in Bellingen
New action				1, 2 & 4	Investigate impact of short term holiday letting impact on private rental supply



<i>Strategy & Reference</i>		<i>Climate Emergency Declaration</i>		<i>BNAHAG 10 Point Plan</i>	<i>Key Comments</i>
		<i>Mitigation</i>	<i>Adaption</i>		
Strategy 2: WELL DESIGNED INFILL HOUSING					
2.1	Planning control changes for good infill design	✓	✓	2, 8 & 10	Strongly supported but strengthen this response given the Climate Emergency Declaration. Support BNAHAG to establish Housing Hub to provide advice and support for good design
2.1b	40% landscaped area for each lot	✓	✓		Strongly supported with a review at 2 years and strict case by case exceptions in relation to mobility requirements
2.2	Maintain existing height restrictions and building height plane envelope		✓		Supported noting some different views about main street shop top options
2.3	Infill focus areas and key sites	✓	✓	2	Strongly supported with a focus on infrastructure
2.6	Retrofitting buildings as infill	✓	✓	1 & 2	Strongly supported and enable the inclusion of two kitchens
New Action	Housing Hub	✓	✓	10	Supporting community engagement, education, innovative regenerative design and building practice and social license for good design, to deliver on the LHS Housing Vision
Strategy 3: WALKING AND CYCLING					
3.1	Implement the Pedestrian and Bike Plan	✓	✓		Strong support for the development of walking and cycle ways to provide links across the town precincts and between town and greenfield sites.
New action	Car sharing to reduce cars in town centres	✓	✓		BSC to find ways to facilitate and enable car sharing including exploring Go Get type enterprises. Allocate car-sharing parking spaces in town precincts
New action	Community buses	✓	✓		Introduce electric community transport as an alternative to dependence on cars to get to the town centre



<i>Strategy & Reference</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Climate Emergency Declaration</i>	<i>Mitigation Adaption</i>	<i>BNAHAG 10 Point Plan</i>	<i>Key Comments</i>
Strategy 4: HOUSING AFFORDABILITY					
4.1	Affordable housing on government-owned sites			1 & 8	Prioritise this review and seek partnerships with local trusted not-for-profits
4.2	Define affordable housing and promote its benefits to the community			1,8 & 10	Strongly supported and BNAHAG keen to be actively involved. Promoting the benefits of affordable housing will be central to the Housing Hub and ongoing work of BNAHAG
4.4	Reduce housing related costs	✓	✓	1 & 10	Low income earners have the right to safe, healthy and toxic free housing. Low cost environmentally responsible housing, including ongoing cooling and heating costs will be encouraged through the Housing Hub
4.5	Affordability objectives to be included in Council strategies and planning controls			1	Strongly supported
4.6	Advocacy and partnerships			1,7,9	Strongly supported and keen to work closely with BSC to advocate for more social housing for the Shire and a National Housing Strategy
4.8	Reduce Homelessness			7	Strongly supported and keen to work closely with BSC to advocate for a whole of government approach to tackle homelessness, to understand the extent of homelessness in our Shire and to develop local responses
New action	Housing for our workforce			1,3,4	Develop affordable housing options for local working families and singles in partnership with BSC and not for profits



<i>Strategy & Reference</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Climate Emergency Declaration Mitigation Adaption</i>	<i>Climate Emergency Declaration Mitigation Adaption</i>	<i>BNAHAG 10 Point Plan</i>	<i>Key Comments</i>
Strategy 5: COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS					
5.1	Parks, Community Facilities and Public Spaces	✓	✓		Strongly supported. Recommend BSC identify and implement best practice planning ratios for public green space in infill and greenfield developments
5.4	Ageing in place	✓	✓	2, 5 & 10	Strongly supported and recommend to prioritise in Action Plan implementation. BSC to find ways to make it easier for owner occupiers to subdivide and build small, adaptable, universally designed housing. Housing Hub to have a key role in supporting
5.6	Mixed tenure housing			1 & 2	Strongly supported and recommend bringing forward planning incentives for best practice proposals
5.8	Community Engagement and Participation in Strategic Planning				It is recommended that in addition to the activities outlined in this action, BSC establishes a LHS Reference Group to monitor the implementation of the LHS and provide advice on key initiatives and issues as they arise
New action	Dedicated car parking spaces for seniors and people with disabilities in town centres				Older residents find it difficult to shop locally. Increasing dedicated car spaces in town centres will enable greater community connection as residents age
Strategy 6: NEIGHBOURHOOD CHARACTER					
6.1	Character Statements				Strongly supported – these will be a critical part of the new planning regime
6.2	Planning controls for high quality design	✓	✓	10	Strongly supported and to be strengthened to include household climate change mitigation and adaption responses. The Housing Hub will have a critical role.



Reference	Action	Climate Emergency Mitigation	Adaption	10 Point Plan	Key Comments
Strategy 7: ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND SUSTAINABLE LIVING					
7.1	Infill housing – limit greenfield expansion and protect environmentally sensitive land and biodiversity.	✓	✓		Strongly supported
7.2	Planning controls and processes review – enable sustainable living	✓	✓	8	Strongly supported – strengthen encouragement of grey water re-use, composting toilets, solar power and battery storage, permeable paving. Investigate rates reduction as incentive for household water saving practices
7.4	Support bio-diversity in our backyards and neighbourhoods	✓	✓	8, 10	Strongly supported – strengthen by identifying urban habitat corridors as Connectivity Conservation Plans. Link CCPs to rural and agricultural land. Building approvals to incorporate measures to protect urban wildlife eg. bird strike prevention. Develop planting guides for habitat friendly garden design and tree planting – leverage 40% landscaping Develop Companion Animals Management Plan Housing Hub will have a critical role
7.6	Looking After Water	✓	✓	8,10	Strongly supported and needs to be strengthened given Climate Emergency. Updated water-availability modelling to be undertaken within 2 years and inform LHS growth targets Upstream water use to be actively monitored Community awareness raising in water saving behaviours. Housing Hub will have a critical role
Strategy 8: FARMING, RURAL CHARACTER AND COUNTRY TOWNS AND VILLAGES					
8.7	Support for local food production and small farmers	✓	✓		BSC to consider differential fees for properties engaged in regenerative agriculture and food production. To be considered in the Rural Lands Study



Background

The BNAHAG hosted three community consultations on the draft LHS, in close collaboration with BSC. These were in Bellingen on 25 September, Dorrigo on 26 September and Urunga on 1 October 2019. A total of 45 people participated in these consultations, not including presenters.

The input provided by consultation participants has been written up separately and provided to BSC as part of the public exhibition process. While this formal response has been informed by the consultations, it does not directly reflect the views of the consultation participants.

Rather, this submission reflects the views of the active members of the Bellingen Nambucca Affordable Housing Action Group.

Process

The GMS Working Group is a project group within the BNAHAG Action Plan. This group has 8 members who have met twice during the exhibition period. The GMS Working Group developed the first draft of this response, which was then circulated to all active members of the BNAHAG. An active member was defined as someone who had participated in a BNAHAG meeting, not including the two forums, in the last two years.

A special meeting of the BNAHAG was held on Thursday 11 October. This meeting considered and discussed each page of the draft submission, revised it and then approved this final submission out of session.



Response to the Draft Local Housing Strategy Action Plan

Reading this submission

This submission follows the structure and responds directly to the draft Action Plan. The draft Local Housing Vision is strongly supported. All of the actions in the draft Action Plan are supported. Actions not referred to specifically in the following commentary should be understood to be supported.

1. Housing Choices

Ensure new homes in residential areas provide for a wide variety of household needs and encourage new supply to fill identified gaps in the housing market.

STRONGLY SUPPORTED

[Actions 1.2 and 1.3] Housing diversity and more choice of housing type.

[Action 1.2b] The reduction of minimum block size to 500 m² in the three town precincts.

[Action 1.5] Embedding Universal Design

BNAHAG supports embedding universal design as much as possible, while still providing flexibility for owners of steep blocks. Resources will need to be developed that encourage this.

[Action 1.6] Housing choices for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

This action is strongly supported, noting that the BNAHAG is committed to collaborating with BSC and Local Aboriginal Land Councils in this regard.

STRONGER EMPHASIS

[Action 1.1] Housing Growth and Diversity Targets

Set growth targets informed by water security forecasts

The establishment and monitoring of targets for housing growth is strongly supported. However, given the climate emergency and the anticipated impact of climate change, water security and supply forecasts should directly inform the housing growth projection targets. This is addressed in more detail in commentary at Strategy 7 on Page 32.

Reporting against targets should include reporting on different dwelling types and locations, both in relation to infill and greenfield sites. Growth targets should also be transparently reported against water security and supply outcomes.



The BNAHAG recommends that:

- ***the current targets proposed in the LHS be provisionally adopted subject to a review within two years, once further work on forecast water security has been undertaken.***

[Action 1.4] Encouraging the development of smaller homes

More smaller homes are needed across the Shire to increase housing diversity. Smaller homes also contribute to improved environmental impacts – reducing the building footprint will help mitigate climate change.

Seek a stronger focus on well-designed tiny homes as a housing choice, which is more affordable and offers security for low to moderate income earners.

Whilst Tiny Homes are mentioned in a few different parts of the draft LHS Action Plan, there is more that could be done to encourage and facilitate well designed, environmentally responsible tiny home development.

There is also significant concern that an unintended consequence of making it is easier to develop Tiny Homes is that they could be extensively developed for use for short term holiday letting (e.g. Airbnb or Stayz). This would not be consistent with the LHS Vision or the intent, which is to increase the supply of permanent and secure housing for low to moderate income earners.

It is strongly recommended that BSC explore ways to limit the development of Tiny Homes for short term accommodation purposes and/or to include negative incentives for such purposes. The intent of streamlining arrangements for Tiny Homes should be reflected in published guidelines, as referred to above.

The BNAHAG recommends that:

BSC facilitate tiny home development as an environmentally responsible affordable housing option by:

- ***Ensuring that pathways to approve development of smaller affordable homes are simplified.***
- ***Facilitating Tiny Homes projects, including Tiny Home villages by devising planning instruments that allow for this use in locations close to services, infrastructure and amenities.***
- ***Clarifying and simplifying the requirements for both mobile and permanent Tiny Homes to be established on residential blocks, including publishing guidelines.***
- ***Exploring ways to limit the use of these streamlined provisions for tiny home developments for short term accommodation.***



[Action 1.8] Support alternative housing models and pilot projects

Identify opportunities to develop long term partnerships with local innovative housing initiatives that will improve affordability and/or provide affordable housing as an urgent priority

Working closely with alternative housing models and pilots is strongly supported, particularly in relation to the Bellinghen Shire Community Land Trust that is currently being established.

It will be important for the BSC to support projects which meet the vision and intent of the draft LHS. For this reason, it is proposed that some transparent guiding principles be developed by BSC to guide Council's decision making in relation to pilots and partnerships. For example, given BSC's Climate Emergency Declaration, a commitment to environmentally responsible design and practices should be a guiding principle for BSC support and partnering.

This action should be brought forward in conjunction with the review of Government owned land with a view to piloting new initiatives. BSC should also consider partnering with known and trusted existing community housing providers, including BRANCH Housing Co-operative, Common Equity Ltd and Community Housing Limited.

The BNAHAG is keen to collaborate closely with the BSC to identify and encourage new models and pilots as outlined in the Action Plan. Other key partners could include Nightingale Housing who have recently indicated interested in working in a regional setting.

The BNAHAG recommends that:

- ***That the BSC develop a set of guiding principles to inform their decision-making in relation to preferred alternative housing pilots and partnerships***
- ***That the BSC actively explore the feasibility of collaborating with the emerging Bellinghen Shire Community Land Trust as a foundation partner***
- ***That the development of preferred partners be brought forward in conjunction with the review of Council and government owned lands with the view to land being made available for affordable housing in perpetuity***

[Action 1.8] Support a proactive approach and the development of a prospectus.

This is strongly supported, however it is considered the prospectus be broadened to focus on the Vision for the Shire as a whole, for potential new residents and ethical investors.

A component could include the current targeted audience, i.e. ethical investors for innovative affordable housing projects, but the prospectus idea could be broadened to attract the sort of growth we are seeking – i.e. people who share the LHS vision for our communities.

The BNAHAG recommends that:

- ***The prospectus be broadened to target potential new residents as well as ethical investors***



NEW ACTIONS

1. Community focussed Camping Ground and Caravan Park for Bellinghen

Provide zoning or rezoning that allows for a community campground and caravan park type development close to the Bellinghen township.

It is proposed that this initiative would not be focussed on tourism but rather on providing medium to long term affordable housing responses for people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. This is a proactive way of helping to prevent homelessness and could be designed in a way that is consistent both with the local community character and is environmentally and socially responsible.

This initiative would suit the development of small clusters of Tiny Homes. It could also enable the development of an intentional community for young people and others who are mobile and who need simple, reliable and safe facilities. The campground could include a commercial style camp kitchen and a community garden could be onsite. Over time the caravan park could provide a haven for very low-income earners who need security and safety and be a stepping stone to more permanent housing.

A residential caravan park facility in Bellinghen would be of significant benefit to low income earners and families at risk of homelessness. This would significantly expand current housing choices.

The BNAHAG recommends that:

- ***BSC includes the identification of suitable land for a caravan park as a new action; and***
- ***BSC seeks to partner with potential not-for-profit developers, to establish a caravan park that provides medium to long term housing options.***

2. Increasing housing choices for older people, including ageing in place

Prioritise and actively encourage the development of a range of housing responses for older residents across the Shire.

There is an urgent need to prioritise the development of housing responses for older people, given the Bellinghen Shire's ageing population and projected demographics. Concern about the limited options for seniors housing was the most frequently raised issue during the LHS consultations hosted by BNAHAG. The LHS provides an opportunity for BSC to focus on seniors housing options locally as well as prepare for future national policy changes.

Many older owner occupiers have expressed the desire to age in place, ie. independently and within their local community. However, given the lack of housing diversity across the Shire, there are very few options for older people to downsize to smaller dwellings.



The subdivision of larger blocks and the development of smaller dwellings as outlined in the LHS could improve older people's housing options, if the LHS is well implemented. However, during the recent LHS consultations, a number of older people raised the need for targeted support and advice to help older owner occupiers realise the potential the infill focus provides. Whilst the LHS commits to the provision of information resources such as guidelines and case studies this is unlikely to be sufficient. It is also not possible for BSC to proactively provide advice given its regulatory responsibilities.

Older people living on income support who rely on private rental or live in unsafe and insecure circumstances, including in caravans and in cars, have raised urgent and immediate housing needs with the BNAHAG consistently since being established. The housing needs of older single women are well documented and was one of the top priorities identified in the BNAHAG Needs Mapping Project (2018).

The aged care sector is currently under significant pressure with the Australian Government providing a recent bail out for three of the largest publicly listed aged care providers in the country. The Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety currently under way is likely to recommend significant reforms. It is most likely that the Australian Government will increase its investment in supporting older Australians to age in place for as long as possible. It is interesting to note the United Kingdom's policy and funding regime is already largely oriented to ageing in place initiatives.

The proposed Housing Hub initiative referred to throughout this paper could provide targeted assistance and advice to older residents who wish to age in place. For example, asset rich and income poor owner occupiers could retrofit existing housing or explore the potential to subdivide their blocks with the view to building a smaller, universally designed home.

The BNAHAG recommends that:

- ***BSC partner with the BNAHAG to establish a Housing Hub which will include the provision of advice and assistance to older people exploring their options to age in place either in their own homes or in the Shire***
- ***Guidelines, case studies and resources are developed specifically for older owner occupiers to assist them in infill subdivisions and in the design and construction of smaller dwellings utilising universal design principles***
- ***BSC partner with not for profits and community housing providers to create retirement housing and affordable rental housing options for low to moderate income earners in the Shire***
- ***BSC and the BNAHAG actively advocate for more social housing, including purpose designed for older people, throughout the Shire***
- ***BSC prioritises projects which respond to the housing needs of older people when promoting and considering developments on the key sites proposed in the draft LHS***

3. Increasing private rental – understanding the impact of short-term holiday lettings

Is Airbnb reducing the supply of long term rental housing?



The impact of Airbnb and other similar models on the supply of long term private rental housing needs to be urgently investigated.

Current estimates indicate that there are around 300 un-hosted Airbnb lettings in the Shire. The number of un-hosted short-term lettings through other similar providers is unknown. It is most likely that a proportion of these premises would previously have been available on the private rental market.

The BNAHAG recommends that:

- ***BSC urgently audits the impact of short-term holiday lettings on the private rental market and works closely with BNAHAG to develop appropriate responses***

2. Well-designed infill housing

Encourage building of new homes in and near the town centres of Dorrig, Bellingen and Urunga.

Ensure areas of housing growth are accompanied by suitable investment in essential infrastructure, welcoming streets and public spaces.

STRONGLY SUPPORTED

[Action 2.1] Encouraging *well designed* infill in current town precincts – planning control changes for good infill design

Find ways to facilitate good design

BNAHAG strongly supports the proposed infill approach for environmental, community connection and neighbourhood character reasons. In particular we support simplifying the locality density provisions, the proposed 40% landscaping control and the requirement to submit site analysis plans. We believe the introduction of 40% landscaping control alongside a reduction in the minimum block size in the town precincts will act as an insurance to overdevelopment and help to retain the local character and environmental benefit of green space that local residents value highly. Refer to further commentary on the landscaping control below.

However, we are concerned the vision of the draft LHS will only be able to be realised if there is an integrated and systemic approach to actively encourage and enable **well designed** infill.

This will require a focus on the use of planning controls and advising, community education, awareness raising and social change, with all of these parts of the system working together. Given the Climate Emergency and the importance of environmentally responsible design including water saving, solar passivity, siting and building practices, it is important that BSC implements appropriate planning incentives to actively facilitate environmentally responsible, adaptable design. Supporting universal design and encouraging people to build houses that are able to adapt to life's changing circumstances is also an important element of good design. Community education, support, advising and awareness raising are all



activities that would be undertaken by the proposed Housing Hub.

The BNAHAG understands there can be upfront costs in relation to environmentally responsible design that can impact on initial housing affordability. However, it is also possible to build low cost housing that is environmentally responsible with smart design, landscaping, responsible building materials and practices.

We intend to support a community of best practice local progressive housing professionals e.g. architects, builders, landscape architects, designers, developers etc, to share knowledge and link them up with local residents seeking support in relation to infill activities. This is an example of the sort of activity the BNAHAG and ultimately the proposed Housing Hub will undertake, which is outside the BSC's remit due to its regulatory function. An alternative approach could be for BSC to establish a design review panel; however, this is unlikely to be as cost effective an option.

Whilst there can be initial upfront costs, good design leads to lower household operating costs in the longer term.

Importantly, environmentally responsible design will also contribute to climate change mitigation and adaption strategies locally – and will form an important plank in BSC's plan to operationalise the Climate Emergency Declaration.

Setbacks

In relation to setbacks, BNAHAG supports the introduction of a minimum setback of at least 3 m from the rear property boundary in the RI General Residential Zone to provide for backyard areas.

We note that changes are not proposed to side boundaries and the Building Code of Australia minimum standard of 900 mm would apply. We understand that creating too many local planning controls could lead to an increase in complying developments, an outcome that would be counter to the vision of the draft LHS. However, we are concerned that a one size fits all approach to side boundaries could be inappropriate in relation to urban infill. For example, in Bellingen there is a need for greater breeze ways alongside boundaries. BNAHAG group members have also raised significant privacy concerns.

The BNAHAG recommends that:

- ***BSC consider including additional planning objectives in the DCP in relation to siting, orientation and environmental impact to support merit-based assessment that will facilitate well designed infill outcomes***
- ***BSC consider increasing the minimum setback on side boundaries or provide guidelines on best practice and relevant case studies***

[Action 2.2] Maintaining existing height restrictions and the current building height plan envelope.

This action is strongly supported. However, there were different views within the BNAHAG in relation to height restrictions in commercial areas of the town precincts, such as the main streets. Those with an alternative view proposed that Council consider reviewing this in two years, particularly in relation to the design of shop top housing.



[Action 2.3] Infill focus areas and key sites are both strongly supported.

Infrastructure needs to be properly planned

We note that BSC has identified the need to proactively develop infrastructure to support increased infill development. Reducing the requirement for individual owners to pay for infrastructure associated with subdivisions and laneway housing, such as kerb and guttering etc is commended. It is anticipated that further guidance will be available on the types of infrastructure that BSC will fund following the Infill Focus and Infrastructure Studies, currently identified as a short-term action.

That developers are currently required to cover infrastructure costs such as kerbs and guttering for infill development was raised as a serious disincentive a number of times by BNAHAG members during the consultations.

BNAHAG is also concerned that an appropriate infrastructure investment plan is developed to support the Shire growth in the town precincts. This needs to be well managed and paced as infill is developed.

STRONGER EMPHASIS

[Action 2.1b] 40% landscaped area for each lot

Strongly support retaining the 40% landscaped area for each lot with a review period and very limited discretion.

It is likely this new control will deliver significant environmental and social benefits. Mandating a 40% of landscaped area on all new sites, both infill and greenfield, will increase the green space throughout the Shire, contributing over time to climate change mitigation strategies. Guidance on species for native plantings could also increase the biodiversity for wildlife and bird habitats across the Shire.

This landscaped envelope will also help properly manage absorption and discharge of surface water. Mitigation strategies for surface water (pluvial) runoff will be critical as infill development is taken up and as a climate change adaptation strategy.

Reducing the minimum lot size to 500 m² in the three town precincts whilst retaining 40% of each lot for landscaped area will positively incentivise the development of smaller homes, which BNAHAG strongly supports. It is noted this could also lead to an increase in two storey dwellings on a small footprint. However, the high proportion of landscaped area and the retention of the current Building Height Plane Envelope Control should mitigate negative impacts.

There is a strong argument to introduce the 40% landscaping requirement as both a mitigation and adaptation strategy in relation to the Climate Emergency. However a small number of people, some with specific design expertise, have raised concerns with the BNAHAG that 40% might be too restrictive. For this reason, we strongly recommend that BSC trial the 40% and review the impact of this change in two years' time rather than reducing the ratio or including specified hard surfaces initially.

It is noted however that the needs of people with mobility disabilities and the frail aged should be considered. BSC should have the discretion to approve a lower ratio in very



specific circumstances where increased hard surfaces are demonstrably required for mobility purposes.

The BNAHAG recommends that:

- ***BSC trial the 40% landscaped area for each lot, with a review to determine the outcomes and the impact on developments after 2 years.***
- ***Provision be made for the 40% allocation to be reduced on a case by case basis only in circumstances where proposed residents can demonstrate a need for a greater proportion of hard surfaces to meet mobility requirements.***

[Action 2.6] Retrofitting buildings as infill

Promoting retrofitting buildings as infill is strongly supported, including with two kitchens

Council should support retrofitting and new construction that includes two kitchens within the same premises without triggering dual occupancy and related requirements. Two kitchens enable different family and household types to live together while maintaining privacy and independence. This increases choice and affordability and is a simple response to contemporary changes to family and household formation. Again, there is a risk the short-term holiday market could leverage this initiative and this risk needs to be actively discouraged and monitored.

The BNAHAG recommends that:

- ***BSC streamline arrangements for retrofitting or building new dwellings with two kitchens***

NEW ACTIONS

1. Supporting community engagement and social license for good design – Housing Hub

The Strategy and Action Plan identifies a range of actions related to providing resources and information to encourage good design and to make subdivision as straightforward as possible. These actions are strongly supported. However, the BNAHAG is concerned that these actions alone will not be enough to deliver the type of infill development the LHS and the community is seeking.

As flagged in the Executive Summary, we strongly recommend that BSC implement and invest in a deliberate and strategic approach to providing resources and support that will actively encourage and enable well designed infill housing. BSC will not be able to do this alone, given its regulatory function.

If supported, the Housing Hub will provide leadership, advice, support, community education, awareness and resources related to a range of actions outlined in the draft LHS. However the role of the Hub in relation to actively encouraging the community to take up good infill design is the most critical feature of the system required to realise the housing vision outlined in the draft LHS.

If supported, the Housing Hub will be an information clearinghouse and centre of expertise which provides advice and resources to encourage good design and to support local residents interested in exploring the potential for infill on their residential blocks. It will build



a community of best practice environmentally responsible architects, builders and other housing professionals as well as with innovative housing projects nationally.

BNAHAG actively invites BSC to partner with us to establish and help resource this hub as a centre that is critical to the successful implementation of the LHS, particularly in relation to realising the full potential for best practice, well designed infill.

Some local councils employ housing officers to undertake some of these responsibilities. However, this would be a more costly approach.

The BNAHAG recommends that:

- ***BSC recognises the BNAHAG as a key partner in the implementation of the LHS and further development of the Growth Management Strategy by:***
 - ***Developing a formal MOU which outlines agreed roles and responsibilities;***
 - ***Providing a funding contribution towards the cost of the BNHAG volunteer coordinator; and***
 - ***Working closely with BNAHAG to establish a Shire-wide Housing Hub***

3. Walking and cycling

Design subdivisions, buildings and public spaces to encourage walking and cycling and connect key destinations by providing linkages, constructing footpaths and supportive infrastructure.

STRONGLY SUPPORTED

[Action 3.1] Implementing the Pedestrian and Bike Plan

There is strong support for the development of walking and cycle ways to provide linkages across the town precincts and between new greenfield site developments.

NEW ACTIONS

1. Car sharing to reduce cars in town centres

Council should investigate the establishment of a social enterprise aimed at enabling car sharing. This would involve dedicated car parking spaces across the three town centres and the development of user-friendly technology to enable share cars to be easily booked and used.

There are a number of different models that should be considered, including commercial businesses like GoGet. An alternative model would be the development of car pooling and car sharing arrangements locally, utilising existing privately-owned vehicles.

The BNAHAG recommend that:

- ***BSC explores the feasibility of introducing car sharing arrangements, or facilitating the entry of a car sharing enterprise, including by the provision of dedicated car sharing parking spaces in the three town precincts***



2. Community buses

Introducing community transport as an alternative to dependence on cars to get around town.

A hop on/hop off or on-demand community electric mini bus service should be established in each of the three town centres. This could be a continuous loop enabling residents to get to town centres from suburban areas easily or be an on-demand or timetabled service. (Refer <https://lincsbus.info/callconnect/> for an example of on demand community transport)

Interestingly the need for a town-based community bus was identified as a priority at the recent 2040 Community Conversation sponsored by the Corner Store in Bellinghen on 19 September 2019.

BSC could directly support a town-based community electric mini-bus program and/or partner with local entrepreneurs or community services who develop the initiative as a social enterprise. The local bus company may also be interested in being involved.

The BNAHAG recommends that:

- ***A commitment to support the development of a community electric bus program be included in the draft LHS Action Plan***

4. Housing Affordability

Improve housing affordability and ensure people of all incomes, and in particular people on low incomes, can access and afford homes that meet their needs.

STRONGLY SUPPORTED

[Action 4.1] Affordable housing on government owned sites

There is very strong support for the review of government-owned sites to identify land suitable for Affordable Housing. This review should be prioritised and in addition to BSC land should include Crown Land and other government owned sites. BSC should identify opportunities to transfer suitable land in partnership with a local not-for-profit such as the emerging Bellinghen Shire Community Land Trust, the BRANCH housing co-operative or a local registered Community Housing Provider to develop affordable housing projects for older people or key workers (Refer also Housing Choices commentary 1.5)

[Action 4.2] Define affordable housing and promote its benefits to the community

The BNAHAG is keen to work closely with Council to define affordable housing and promote its benefits to the community, noting the following discussion about the lack of affordability for moderate- and middle-income earners across the Shire. The Housing Hub will have a key role to play in helping Shire residents, developers and housing industry professionals to understand approaches that can enable greater affordability.

[Action 4.4] Reduce housing related costs

Reducing ongoing housing related costs is strongly supported. The proposed Housing Hub referred to previously would have a key role in community education across the range of



initiatives referred to in this action. Environmentally responsible design, good site orientation, solar passivity, solar energy and the re-use of grey water will all contribute to lowering ongoing housing costs while responding to the Climate Emergency.

[Action 4.5] Affordability objectives

Including affordability as an objective within Council strategies and planning controls is strongly supported.

[Action 4.6] Advocacy and partnerships

BNAHAG is keen to partner with BSC to develop an advocacy platform which seeks to influence all tiers of government to improve housing affordability, including the development of a National Housing Strategy, greater investment in social housing and tenancy legislative reform.

In particular we seek to work closely with BSC to advocate for increase social housing within the Shire.

[Action 4.8] Reduce homelessness

This action is strongly supported. BNAHAG is keen to partner with BSC to advocate for a whole of government approach to tackle homelessness, to understand the extent of homelessness in our Shire and to develop local responses. The proposed community camping ground and caravan park and streamlining arrangements for the development of Tiny Homes are both immediate responses.

NEW ACTIONS

1. Workforce housing

Develop affordable housing options for local working families and single people

Affordable and secure housing for people of working age across the Shire is a rapidly increasing priority. Home ownership and private rental is largely out of reach for a range of workers across key sectors including the retail, hospitality, education, emergency services and health. This will only continue to escalate as the Shire's already older population continues to age.

Affordable housing is an issue not only for low income earners but also for more moderate- and middle-income earners. Strategies to provide greater affordability including shared equity, co-ownership, long term leasing and capped profit need to be prioritised. The Bellinghen Shire Community Land Trust should be actively supported by BSC as it offers the potential for increased affordability and new forms of ownership and security for Shire resident workers.

The BNAHAG recommends that:

- ***BSC identifies the housing needs of local working families and singles on low to middle incomes as a priority now and into the future within the LHS and the LHS Action Plan***
- ***Proactively foster housing initiatives that improve affordability and provide security for working families and singles on low to middle incomes, including***



through partnerships with not-for-profits and in relation to developments on key sites

2. Target group

Broaden target group

The term low income earners are often used throughout the Local Housing Strategy when discussing affordability measures. This should be broadened to include low, moderate and middle income earning households, given current affordability data.

The BNAHAG recommends that:

- ***BSC acknowledges the affordability challenges for very low income earners to middle income earners and reflects this in relevant documents.***

5. Community Connections

Support new and existing community connections and build upon our community's sense of care, creativity and resilience.

Include social considerations in decision-making and deliver socially beneficial and inclusive outcomes through planning, urban design and development.

Increase community engagement in strategic planning and encourage community partnerships.

STRONGLY SUPPORTED

[Action 5.1] Parks, community facilities and public spaces

Develop parks and public open spaces based on best practice planning ratios

The active development of and planning for parks, community facilities and public spaces is strongly supported. This will help to ensure high standards of liveability as infill increases population growth. It is anticipated that parks, community facilities and public spaces will be included in the Key Sites and Focus Sites infill and infrastructure studies. It is recommended that BSC researches best practice in relation to public green space ratios and that this informs local planning.

The BNAHAG recommends that:

- ***BSC identifies best practice ratios for parks and public open spaces in infill and greenfield sites and plans accordingly***

[Action 5.4] Ageing in place

Promote ways for older owner occupiers to subdivide and build smaller homes

Reviewing planning controls and barriers to ageing in place is strongly supported and it is recommended this action be brought forward. Refer to previous discussion on increasing housing choices for older people. Council should consider incentives to make it easier for older owner occupiers to subdivide their blocks and build smaller homes or retrofit existing dwellings.



The Housing Hub will be able to provide advice and support to older people interested in subdividing their blocks to build smaller homes or in retrofitting existing dwellings.

The BNAHAG recommends that:

- ***BSC prioritises this action; and***
- ***BSC explores ways to make it easier for older owner occupiers to subdivide their blocks to build a smaller home or to retrofit existing dwellings, including positive incentives***

[Action 5.6] Mixed Tenure housing

Actively encourage mixed tenure housing

BNAHAG strongly supports mixed tenure housing. Given the extent of un-developed greenfield sites currently throughout the Shire BNAHAG encourages Council to bring forward the consideration of planning incentives for best practice proposals.

The BNAHAG recommends that:

- ***BSC brings forward planning incentives for best practice mixed tenure housing.***

[Action 5.8] Community Engagement and Participation in Strategic Planning

BNAHAG congratulates BSC on their collaborative approach to the development of the LHS.

We strongly support this action and recommend that Council enter into a formal partnership with the BNAHAG to increase community awareness and active participation implementing the Local Housing Strategy. Regulation and compliance will not be enough to drive the best possible outcomes and the BNAHAG has a key role to play, if supported.

It is also strongly recommended that Council establish a reference group to guide and monitor the implementation of the Local Housing Strategy. The BNAHAG could be a member of this group along with industry experts.

The BNAHAG recommends that:

- ***BSC establishes a reference group to monitor the implementation of the LHS***

NEW ACTION

1. Car Parking in Town Centres

Enable older people to remain connected through increasing dedicated car parking spaces in town centres

Older residents have indicated they find it very difficult to shop locally because of the lack of parking close to the shops. Whilst incentives that reduce the reliance on cars are supported for environmental reasons, it is important to plan for the needs of an ever increasingly ageing population. More dedicated car parking spaces for seniors and people with mobility disabilities in the three town centres should be provided as part of the Local Housing Strategy. This enables older people to continue to be connected to their local community and continue to contribute to the local economy.

The BNAHAG recommends that:

- ***BSC immediately increase and then continue to plan to increase dedicated car***



parking spaces in the town centres for seniors with mobility challenges and people with a disability.

6. Neighbourhood Character

Respect and appreciate local history and culture and cherish the unique characteristics of our Shire. Promote understanding and conservation of Gumbaynggirr heritage and culture, historical buildings, heritage items, natural landscapes and notable people, groups and stories.

Showcase and promote high quality home design that provides for household needs and respects local character.

STRONGLY SUPPORTED

[Action 6.1] Character Statements

The preparation of Character Statements for Urunga, Bellingen and Dorrigo is strongly supported as an immediate priority.

These will be critical in ensuring the fundamental nature and unique characteristics of these precincts are understood and factored into planning controls and decision making. Character Statements will provide greater confidence for local residents that planning control changes will continue to protect the aspects of local neighbourhoods that residents value.

The BNAHAG is keen to be involved and to support BSC to develop Character Statements with a high level of community involvement.

The BNAHAG recommends that:

- ***BSC brings forward the development of Character Statements as an immediate priority.***

[Action 6.2] Planning controls for high quality designs and character

Strengthen controls where possible to ensure high quality design particularly in relation to bulk, scale, footprint, energy efficiency and environmental footprint.

Given the Climate Emergency Declaration it is critical that environmentally responsible design is mandated as much as possible. Planning controls should actively encourage environmentally responsible siting, design and energy efficiency. Although strong planning controls may increase upfront construction costs, well designed and sited dwellings that are solar passive will have lower ongoing housing related costs.

Whilst the intent of the draft LHS is strongly supported, the implementation and consequently the outcomes will be largely market and community driven. This is why community awareness and education are so important.

Good infill outcomes will also be contingent on the ability of people to put themselves in their neighbour's shoes to understand the impact of proposed changes on their amenity and the liveability of adjoining properties. Whilst planning controls seek to minimise the impact on adjoining properties, proactively seeking shared design solutions with neighbours will



build community wellbeing.

The proposed Housing Hub will have a key role to play in both promoting good design and encouraging collaborative decision making between neighbours as much as possible.

We are creating tomorrow's heritage today.

7. Environmental Protection and Sustainable Living

Protection of ecologically sensitive areas and environmental sustainability underpins the Shire's approach to growth.

Be a leader in sustainable living through continually improving environmental performance

Mitigate and adapt to climate changes and support local and creative community sustainability initiatives.

STRONGER EMPHASIS

[Action 7.1] Planning controls and processes review – enable sustainable living

Actively encourage the use of water tanks, grey water re-use, composting toilets and solar power and battery storage, permeable paving and green walls and roofs.

BNAHAG strongly supports the review of the planning controls and processes outlined in this action. However we recommend that BSC commit to a proactive approach within the LHS that actively promotes the use of these sustainability practices as a direct household response to the climate emergency. The review should identify ways that BSC can simplify and streamline the requirements and processes for residents or developers. This could include investigating a rate discount for owners who implement water saving practices.

The proposed Housing Hub will build resources and to link residents to people with expertise who will be able to assist residents to implement these activities within their homes.

The BNAHAG recommends that:

- ***BSC actively encourages local owners and residents to implement sustainability practices that directly respond to the climate emergency including grey water re-use, composting toilets, solar power and battery storage, permeable paving and green walls and roofs.***
- ***BSC investigate the feasibility of a rates reduction for households that implement water saving practices***

[Action 7.4] Support biodiversity in our backyards and neighbourhoods

Actively facilitating the establishment of habitat corridors

The Draft LHS identifies 'ecological diversity' as one of Bellingden Shire's strengths. It also identifies a key value as: care and concern for the natural world translating to eco conscious actions and lifestyles. There is however no mention of wildlife, fauna or flora in the document.



Given our towns are directly enhanced and underpinned by ecological diversity, it is critical that this is formally recognised in the LHS along with measures to conserve and enhance this attribute.

Preservation/provision of appropriate habitat corridors can enable wildlife to move safely across urban areas with reduced risk of stranding, vehicle collision or predation by cats and dogs. Such corridors often utilise and enhance natural watercourses, verges, laneways and disused topography such as steep slopes. Architectural features (e.g. green walls and designated nesting sites) and sympathetic landscape design can further support, rather than displace, biodiversity in urban areas.

The BNAHAG recommends that:

- ***Urban habitat corridors are identified (incorporating ecological survey and citizen science) as Connectivity Conservation Plans (CCPs) which inform Local Housing Strategy planning.***
- ***Urban CCPs should link with CCPs for rural living and agricultural lands and their Strategies***
- ***Building approvals and urban design should incorporate measures to protect urban wildlife e.g. bird strike prevention and create safe environments***

[Action 7.4 b] Design

Include planting guides in design guidelines

BNAHAG strongly supports all of the activities outlined in this action. It is noted the draft LHS proposes that guidance on water wise and habitat friendly garden will be referenced to support local wildlife. Consultation participants have requested that BSC develop planting guides to assist residents to make informed garden design and tree planting decisions to improve the Shire's biodiversity.

The BNAHAG recommends that

- ***BSC publish planting guides to support habitat friendly garden design and tree planting.***

[Action 7.6] Looking after Water

Prioritise the development of water security plans and revise growth targets accordingly

Looking After Water identifies the need to update strategic infrastructure and water security plans. Whilst this action and the narrative in the draft LHS outline the importance of water security and the need to plan for better water use, it is critical that water security be treated as a significant priority within the Local Housing Strategy.

Population growth without water security will be unviable and high risk. The population growth targets proposed in the Local Housing Strategy are informed both by NSW Government demographic projections in the North Coast Regional Plan and Council's assessment of growth capacity based on available land. However projected water supply security should be a critical input.

The Housing Hub will have a key role to play in community education and awareness.



The BNAHAG recommends that:

- **Updated water-availability modelling (aligned with the strategy period and consideration for the escalating climate emergency) should be a key determinant of population growth, rather than a 'consideration'. This modelling should be undertaken within the first two years of the LHS and growth targets should be revised if required.**
- **Upstream water use on agricultural and rural-residential lands should be actively monitored to facilitate effective modelling, management and availability.**
- **For the purpose of community engagement, the findings of an updated modelling process should be regularly reviewed, interpreted and made publicly available.**
- **Water modelling, as a basis for supporting projected population growth, should also be clearly interpreted within the Local Housing Strategy and population growth targets should be continuously reviewed as water modelling changes.**
- **Community education and awareness raising in water saving behaviours be supported by BSC, including the utilisation and promotion of sustainable water management resources across the community e.g. the Alternative Technology Association's free Tankulator**

NEW ACTIONS

[7.4] Companion Animal Management

Planning for urban amenity, animal welfare and impact to wildlife

Although no local statistics for pet ownership are identified in the Bellingen Shire, the RSPCA estimates that 38% of Australian households own dogs and 29% own cats. Proportionally, this is 20 dogs and 16 cats per 100 people (projected increases can be established on this basis). The implication of an increase in companion animal numbers should consider related issues such as:

- Urban amenity - e.g. additional animal noise, waste management and run-off in recreational areas, need for dedicated/contained off-leash areas, roaming and impoundment capacity.
- Animal welfare - the design of homes and public areas strongly influence the welfare of the domesticated animals who live with us. Examples include building and outdoor design that consider pet's ability to (i) see beyond the boundaries of their property (ii) have independent indoor/outdoor access, (iii) be effectively confined within a home area (particularly cats, where outdoor netted areas connected to the home most effectively protect the animal and wildlife), (iv) safely engage in rewarding behaviours with their owners in public areas without detriment/inconvenience to others.
- Impact to wildlife - the Companion Animals Act does not require cats be confined to their owner's property, even though there is increasing evidence that cats often roam large areas and kill wildlife.

The BNAHAG recommends that:



- ***Companion Animals Management Plan be developed as part of the LHS and that this includes:***
 1. ***Active promotion of responsible pet ownership via welfare awareness and care programs (although related, these are different topics).***
 2. ***Active promotion of responsible dog and cat supervision outside the home, including town centres, beaches, special events and to protect urban wildlife.***
 3. ***Cats should be confined to their owners' homes.***
 4. ***Zoning key urban areas (including habitat corridors) as Wildlife Protection Areas (as described by the Companion Animals Act 30.1.b) as a means of enacting cat control under inadequate state legislation.***

8. Farming, rural character and country towns and villages

Support compact growth in Dorrigo and country villages, with a focus on leveraging sustainable agricultural opportunities.

STRONGER EMPHASIS

[Action 8.7] Support for local food production and small farmers

It is recommended that as part of the forthcoming Rural Lands Study, BSC consider the feasibility of differential fees related to DAs and other Council charges for properties engaged in sustainable and regenerative agriculture and food production.

9. Monitoring and Reporting

STRONGLY SUPPORTED

The review periods, monitoring and reporting actions outlined in the draft LHS Action Plan are all strongly supported.

The individual performance measures proposed throughout the draft Action Plan have also been reviewed and are supported.

The establishment of an LHS Reference Group, as recommended by BNAHAG in commentary on Action 5.8, to have a key role to collaborate with BSC to support the implementation of the LHS.

Lastly, it is recommended that BSC consider the recommended target groups of older people and working families and singles, during the regular reviews that are planned for the LHS. As the population demographics and the supply of housing change there may be other population groups who need to be targeted.

The BNAHAG recommends that:

- ***The proposed population target groups of older people and working families and single people be considered and possibly updated during the planned LHS reviews.***



Attachment A: Bellingen Nambucca Affordable Housing Action Group Ten Point Plan For Change

Bellingen Nambucca Affordable Housing Action Group 2019

10 POINT PLAN FOR CHANGE

1. More affordable homes to rent and buy
The current housing system is broken. Encourage new approaches beyond home ownership and private rental, like shared equity and Community Land Trusts. More government investment in social housing in our Shires for low and moderate income earners.
Local

2. More housing choice
We have too many 3 & 4 bedroom houses and not enough smaller dwellings in Bellingen Shire. Increase the range of housing types across our Shires so that we can age in place and young people can stay.
Local

3. Support for first home buyers
Reset our tax system to make it fairer for ordinary Australians wanting to buy a home.
Everybody's Home

4. A better deal for renters
Get rid of "no grounds" evictions and unfair rent rises so that renters have the security they need to create homes, build lives and raise families. Increase Commonwealth Rent Assistance for the thousands of Australians who are struggling to pay rent. Explore the impact of Airbnb on the supply of long term rental housing.
Local & Everybody's Home

5. Universal design is widely adopted
Universal design (UD) is environmentally responsible and contributes to community resilience, health and wellbeing. It encourages social inclusion and helps people respond to life challenges and transitions. Governments introduce incentives to encourage widespread use of UD principles.
Local

6. More Aboriginal housing and less overcrowding
The implications of Aboriginal population growth plus the importance of living on country are understood and drive increased investment in Aboriginal owned housing.
Local

7. Homelessness is reduced – with a plan to end it by 2030
There is no homelessness in our Shires. Crisis accommodation and housing options for homeless people are well funded. With real effort we can halve homelessness in five years - and end it in 10.
Local & Everybody's Home



Bellingen Nambucca Affordable Housing Action Group 2019

10 POINT PLAN FOR CHANGE

8. Responsive local Government reflects the needs of the local community

Local Councils are responsive, innovative, strategic and develop an affordable housing strategy.

Local

9. A national housing strategy

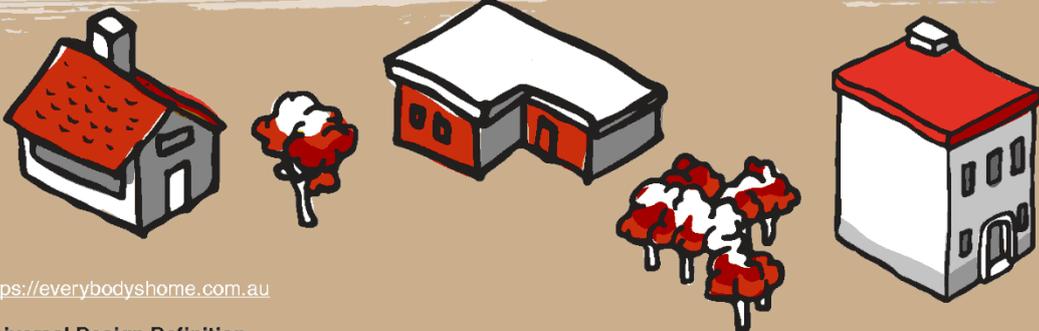
More low-cost properties mean more choices, making it cheaper and easier to find a home. 500,000 new low-cost rental homes are needed to meet the demand for affordable housing.

Everybody's Home

10. An 'affordable' housing hub is established

A centre of expertise is established to build on the work of the Affordable Housing Action Group and support local initiatives.

Local



<https://everybodyshome.com.au>

Universal Design Definition:

Universal design is the design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability or disability. An environment (or any building, product, or service in that environment) should be designed to meet the needs of all people who wish to use it. This is not a special requirement, for the benefit of only a minority of the population. It is a fundamental condition of good design. If an environment is accessible, usable, convenient and a pleasure to use, everyone benefits. By considering the diverse needs and abilities of all throughout the design process, universal design creates products, services and environments that meet peoples' needs. Simply put, universal design is good design.

<http://universaldesignaustralia.net.au>

Note: The local priorities are from over 300 responses to a local needs mapping survey and our action group meetings in 2018. The Everybody's Home priorities are from the national campaign which the Action Group supports.