

Bellinggen SHIRE NEWS

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\$2 AT NEWSAGENTS

EDITION 71

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– Page 5



Bellinggen Muse returns this September 19-22

– Page 11



Affordable housing project almost complete

By Michael Burt

Excitement is building for a landmark housing development in Bellinggen that will provide 23 one-bedroom apartments for older single women.

Bellorana Limited, a subsidiary of Royal Freemasons' Benevolent Institution (RFBI), has announced the Watson Street housing complex, Watson Place, is almost complete thanks to a collaborative and determined effort with the Housing Matters Action Group and Bellinggen Shire Council.

Inspired by rising community concerns regarding a lack of affordable housing, RFBI donated the land that was home to their former aged care facility and started planning for the development in 2018.

They also negotiated an agreement with state and federal governments to secure \$10 million in construction funding.

"Our goal of getting involved in this development was to support the local community and in particular older single women who are at risk of homelessness," said RFBI CEO Frank Price.

"We are delighted to have been able to work with the

State and Federal governments to achieve this outcome. The benefit these 23 new affordable housing units bring to older single women and the Bellinggen community is significant."

"The support from the local community has also been overwhelming, with several local community members and business partners eager to assist in making these apartments a wonderful and welcoming home for our new residents."

Those partners include the Bellinggen CWA Branch who are providing kitchen gifts to new residents and a local community member making welcome quilts.

RFBI business partners Winnings has donated \$22,500 worth of white goods and Laidre has donated \$10,000 for essential furniture items

Liz Jeremy, former Bellinggen Shire Council General Manager and Housing Matters Action Group (HMAG) member, emphasised the value of these partnerships in achieving such a significant milestone in addressing the housing crisis.

"RFBI have been so collaborative with the Housing Matters Action Group," Ms Jeremy said.

"It's an organisation that is

very community minded and has supported the objective of assisting older women in vulnerable situations.

"This project will deliver tremendous benefits for our Bellinggen community.

"Projects like Watson Place, thrive when community is at their heart, and it has been inspiring to see RFBI's generosity of spirit and support for the Bellinggen Shire community, brought to life through this initiative.

"For some vulnerable women, it means moving from living in a car to a homely and warm apartment."

RFBI says the first cohort of tenants has been finalised and they look forward to working with Bellinggen Shire Council to fast track Stage 2 to create further affordable housing.

Fellow HMAG member Kerry Pearce said older single women were the biggest group experiencing homelessness and housing precarity in their first needs survey across the Bellinggen Shire in 2018.

"There's no doubt that having a secure and affordable place to call home will be life changing for the 23 older women who will move into Watson Place," Kerry said.



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- 154m², timber floors, kitchen
- 10m Waterfall Way frontage

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14 Cudgery St, Dorrigo

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- Waterfall Way & rear lane

Sale or Lease Offers invited

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