

## **Inquiry into Options for Essential Worker Housing in NSW**

### **Hornsby Shire Council**

**Parliament House – 10:15am, Friday, 7 February 2025**

---

- Thank you for the opportunity to address the Committee.
- Since making its submission to the Inquiry, in December 2024, Hornsby Council adopted an Affordable Housing Strategy that seeks to outline a pathway to reduce the level of housing stress experienced by residents across the Shire.
- The dominant housing type in the Shire is separate houses, making up approximately 68 per cent of homes. Recent housing strategies prepared by Council have increased the supply of medium and high density dwellings. However, there remains opportunity to provide greater housing choice and mix of house dwelling sizes.
- We have an unemployment rate of 4.1 percent which is below the Greater Sydney rate of 5.1 per cent. However, only 40 per cent of key worker jobs within the Shire are staffed by local residents indicating a large proportion of key workers in the Shire are unable to afford to both live and work in the Shire.
- Notably, 15 per cent of key workers travel over 30 kilometres to work in Hornsby Shire and 64 per cent of people employed as police and fire fighters travel over 50 kilometres to the Shire.
- Of the 52,852 households living in Hornsby Shire as of the 2021 Census, 5,505 were in housing stress, being over 10 per cent of all households. However, of note, of the 11,963 rental households, 24 per cent were in rental stress. This highlights the need for affordable housing options targeted to renting households.
- Council acknowledges that to encourage the delivery of affordable housing and key worker housing in Hornsby Shire, careful planning, facilitation and advocacy is required.
- In terms of planning:
  - Affordable Housing Contributions Schemes are essential for identifying sites/precincts where contributions are required and the rate of the contribution (land and/or monetary) as has recently been prepared for the Hornsby Town Centre TOD.
  - Affordable housing should be recognised as a community benefit via planning agreements where it has not been provided for under the Affordable Housing Contribution Scheme – Hornsby Council successfully recently negotiated a contribution as part of a planning proposal for Pennant Hills.

- As recently reported in the Sydney Morning Herald and as experienced by Council, more families are living in units as dwellings become less affordable. Requirements for the size of units, open space and number of bedrooms should respond to changes in demand.
- In terms of facilitation:
  - A Council asset review should explore opportunities for surplus sites that may be developed for affordable housing by, or with, a CHP. A similar audit should be finalised for State Government land and land owned adjacent to the Hornsby Railway Station should be explored as a priority.
  - Processes for engaging and working with CHP should be developed to clearly identify responsibilities.
- In terms of advocacy
  - Council is committed to seeking to ensure affordable housing provided on private, or government owned sites is affordable in perpetuity.
  - NSW Government policy has been for affordable housing to be dedicated to Council. This policy should be reinforced to ensure there remains a long term supply of affordable housing, managed by the level of government closest to the community.
  - Essential worker terminology and definitions should be carefully considered. Teachers, nurses, ambulance, police and other emergency services personnel are one subset of essential workers. Council's affordable housing strategy acknowledges there are other important workers who serve local communities such as those in hospitality, retail and urban services.
  - It is also important the NSW Government, as part of its recently released Industrial Lands Action Plan, supports the development and retention of local employment and urban services lands. These lands are critical to ensuring local residents have a range of employment opportunities and essential services nearby. The loss of local service lands would increase travel times and cost of living for essential workers.

The details of Council suggestions are outlined in our submission to the Inquiry and we would welcome the opportunity to clarify any points or respond to questions.

Thank you.