

**Submission
No 18**

OPTIONS FOR ESSENTIAL WORKER HOUSING IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Organisation: Murrumbidgee Council

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9 September 2024

Mr Alex Greenwich, MP
Committee Chair
Legislative Assembly Select Committee on Essential Worker Housing
Parliament of NSW
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Dear Mr Greenwich

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY SELECT COMMITTEE ON ESSENTIAL WORKER HOUSING

Terms of Reference

- (1) *That the Committee inquire into, and report on, options for essential worker housing in New South Wales, specifically:*
 - (a) *Establishing an appropriate definition for essential worker housing for the NSW Government to adopt, including criteria for prioritising worker cohorts and geographical areas.*

Our suggestion of a definition of an essential worker

Workers who carry out their duties on the front line and their work is primarily essential to the health, safety, education, nourishment and wellbeing of others. An essential worker definition is extended to include those workers who facilitate the ability of the primary essential worker, and who are required to be physically present to perform their work.

Note: this definition classifies primary essential workers as doctors, nurses, surgeons, allied health staff, police, fire, ambulance, teachers, primary producers of food, local government employees maintaining and operating infrastructure



and services, and the extended essential worker definition to include medical, police, ambulance, fire, teaching and local government support staff, childcare workers, food farm workers etc.

As such, essential worker housing, by definition, is housing supplied to an essential worker.

Further Note: If an employee can carry out their position remotely or working from home, then it does not meet the criteria of essential worker (must be present to perform work).

(b) Identify options to increase housing supply for essential workers including, but not limited to:

(i) planning tools and reforms

Reduce the burden of the NSW Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016 for rural Councils who develop their own green field residential sites which include a percentage of essential worker housing, by providing exemptions or a significant reduction in either the costs of clearing or the required offsets.

Delegate to rural Councils the ability to rezone land for residential purposes by a resolution of Council, instead of complying with the current gateway planning proposal system which requires various studies and the approval of NSW Planning, and which can take more than 2 years.

(ii) incentives for developments on privately owned land

Introduce deferred payment schemes to permit developers to pay section 7.11 or section 7.12 developer contributions until the land or dwelling is sold, so that developers do not have to pay all development charges up front, but rather until they receive payment for the land or the dwelling.

(iii) opportunities within developments on government owned land

Government owned land should be identified and assessed for the potential to develop essential worker housing.

(iv) investigate reforms that promote fiscal sustainability, innovation and essential worker housing in perpetuity

The solution for State Government specific essential workers is that the housing must be owned and controlled by the State Government, or in partnership with Local Government.

The solution for Local Government specific essential workers is that the housing must be owned and controlled by Local Government.



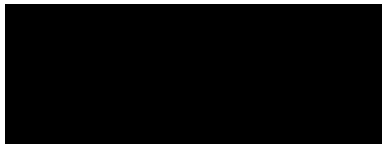
Current residential (Government owned) housing stock should be treated like every other asset, and turned over periodically, say every 10 years, providing essential workers with housing no older than 10 years. The release of these properties will reduce maintenance expenditure and place good quality housing to the market for community members to purchase (easier to purchase an existing build than it is to buy a new build, especially in rural and remote locations).

State funding should be allocated to local Councils to construct and rent essential worker housing so that the residence can be made available on a rent-to-buy scheme. Council can organise the construction of the dwellings on behalf of the State Government if the seed funding is made available.

(v) *Other related matters*

Nil

Yours faithfully



GENERAL MANAGER

