



Maroondah City Council Affordable and Social Housing Policy March 2018

Affordable and Social Housing Policy

Since the adoption of the Housing Strategy in June 2016, Maroondah City Council has been working hard to implement the key directions and priority actions identified by the Strategy, to help facilitate growth and liveability within Maroondah.

One of the key issues identified by this Strategy, was the need for improved affordable and social housing opportunities in Maroondah. The Strategy found that affordable and accessible housing pressures remain an issue that impacts the community, developers, and service providers.

In response, Council has commenced development of a new municipal wide policy to tackle key affordable and social housing issues in Maroondah. As part of this policy, Council will be engaging with key community leaders and service providers to identify the appropriate policy directions to be considered for inclusion in the Policy.

Affordable Housing

Affordability means that housing is accessible to a wide range of people on varying incomes. In particular, it is important to ensure that low to moderate income households have options to rent or buy, and that very low income households, have housing security and continue to have realistic housing options within our community.

Affordable housing is accommodation that requires less than 30% of a household's gross income to be spent on mortgage/rent payments, for households with the lowest 40% of median income.

Affordable housing allows low income households to meet their basic living costs, by reducing the burden of stressful mortgage repayments.

Social Housing

Social housing refers to a type of rental housing that is provided and/or managed by the government or a not-for-profit organisation. Social housing is an overarching term that covers public housing, community housing, and crisis accommodation.

Public Housing

A social housing service that is managed by the government, with the purpose of providing homes for very low income earners, victims of family violence, and those who have recently experienced homelessness.

A local snapshot

9.5% of households in Maroondah are thought to be experiencing housing stress, with approximately 3,400 households deemed as low income households.

Maroondah has experienced a rapid decline of affordable new rental dwellings. In 2006, 38% of new dwellings were affordable. By 2008, only 11% of new dwellings were considered to be affordable, dropping to only 4% by 2010.

Only 2.8% of housing stock in Maroondah is used as social housing.

Populations aged between 70-85 are growing at a rate of 2.3% per annum putting stress on the municipalities already lacking supply of affordable age-friendly housing.

Community Housing

Secure and affordable housing for people with a low income or special needs. Community housing is managed by non-for-profit organisations that have been regulated and registered by the state government. Different types of community housing can be provided to facilitate the varying needs of families and individuals.

Crisis Accommodation

Crisis accommodation is organised for individuals and families who are experiencing homelessness. Stay durations in crisis accommodation can vary and support is provided during this time.



Background research

Council has sought assistance from a consultancy to undertake background research on:

- affordable and social housing issues in Maroondah,
- identification of effective measures that local government can implement, and
- potential policy directions that could be considered for inclusion in the Policy.

Stakeholder engagement

In February 2018, Council invited key stakeholders and local organisations who work in affordable and social housing, to participate in focus groups. The purpose of these groups was to learn from the experience of stakeholders, and seek their views on Maroondah's future needs in affordable and social housing. Below are some of the key points discussed on the day:

What's causing the problem?

- Rooming Houses in Maroondah are expensive and unsafe.
- Victims of family violence often cycle back through the system as they are unable to find suitable accommodation.
- Maroondah has a lack of affordable and social housing due to existing housing stock.
- Landlords do not acknowledge Centrelink payments as a permanent form of income, making it difficult for low income to enter the renters market.
- There is a stigma surrounding homelessness that is having an impact on the development of social housing.
- The ability of housing providers to develop social and affordable housing is limited due to rising land prices in the eastern regions, and a lack of assistance from state and federal Governments.

What are the impacts and costs?

- The demand for specialist homeless and family violence services is rising.
- Victims of family violence can often return to their perpetrators as they have nowhere else to go.
- People are spending up to 60-70% of their income on rent, reducing their ability to access employment, education, services, and transport.

- Some people would rather save money on rent by sleeping on the streets, whilst others are borrowing money and accumulating debt to be able to afford rent.
- People are becoming disconnected from their families, friends, and support groups, by needing to move away the area to find housing.

What could the role of Council be?

- Council needs to develop and implement a diversity of options and strategies.
- There is a need for Council to consider how to expand the diversity of rooming houses.
- Council could act as an intermediary between state government and developers, to negotiate the development of affordable housing on land owned by the state government.
- Council could work in partnership with other municipalities, who have experience in delivering affordable housing.
- Council could use the planning scheme to provide better guidance for affordable and social houses.
- Council could play a regulatory role to assist the maintenance and allocation of rooming houses.
- Council could work in partnership with houses associations and developers, to implement affordable housing.

What can/should be changed?

- A greater supply of land allocated for affordable and social housing is needed to meet the increasing demand.
- New and easier pathways for under 55's singles to access accommodation are required.
- New rooming houses should be developed that are managed and operated by Council.
- Changes must be made in the way that affordable and social housing is perceived.

Contact Us

- If you have any questions regarding the Maroondah Affordable and Social Housing Policy please contact the Council and Community Planning Team on **1300 88 22 33**, or email **housing@maroondah.vic.gov**.