

AFFORDABLE HOUSING FORUM

1. Purpose

This paper summarises recent developments in regards to the Housing Plan for South Australia, with a particular focus on the Affordable Housing Act that came into effect on 1 July 2007 and the Housing Summit. The Chair of the SA Affordable Housing Trust has been invited to the Forum to provide members with a verbal report on outcomes of the Housing Summit and practical actions that will be taken in the next six months.

2. Background

At the meeting in November 2006 the Forum was provided an update report on the development of the Local Government Affordable Housing Kit.

In March 2005 the *Housing Plan for South Australia* was released by the Minister for Housing. The Plan is focused on enabling the provision of more affordable housing in South Australia, and reducing the number of South Australians experiencing housing stress, as expressed in targets of South Australia's Strategic Plan. It is a plan to make affordable housing available to more people, provide quality housing for those in need in our community and renew and reinvigorate neighbourhoods.

3. Actions

3.1 Local Government Affordable Housing Kit

The South Australian Affordable Housing Trust (SAAHT) has developed a Local Government Housing Resource Kit in conjunction with Planning SA and the Local Government Association.

The Kit assists councils to identify critical housing issues in their community and develop effective local responses that are supported by regional and statewide planning and investment. The Kit captures some of the latest ideas and thinking in planning policy and affordable housing, and provides a checklist of affordable housing strategies for councils to consider in their Strategic Management Plans and have regard to in their Development Plans.

The SAAHT is working with councils to develop aspects of the kit and trial new affordable housing initiatives. A series of presentations to council officers have occurred over the past 6 months with visits to the majority of metropolitan councils and regional Local Government Associations.

A copy of the Kit can be accessed from www.housing.sa.gov.au/affordable. It is expected that the Kit will be finalised later this year.

3.2 Affordable Housing Act

At the meeting in March 2007 the Forum noted that the *Statutes Amendment (Affordable Housing) Bill 2006* had been introduced into Parliament. The new Affordable Housing Act came into effect on 1 July 2007. The Act enables South Australia to become the first state to set targets for affordable homes to make up 15 percent of significant new developments. Amendments to the Development Act 1993 give councils the ability to make planning provisions for affordable housing developments.

The new legislation also provides for a more integrated and effective housing governance and greater flexibility to work in partnership with the private and community housing sector to deliver more affordable housing outcomes.

3.3 Housing Summit and Pre-Summit Briefings for Local Government

One of the key recommendations that came out of discussions at the March 2007 Forum meeting was a commitment to hold a joint forum on affordable housing involving OSLGR, the SA Affordable Housing Trust, the LGA and Councils.

The LGA co-organised, with the Affordable Housing Innovations Unit two “pre-Summit briefings” with the Minister for Housing. These were attended by Council members and chief executives, the LGA and OSLGR and were held prior to the Housing Summit. One pre-Summit briefing was for metropolitan Council representatives and another for Regional LGA representatives. These were held on the 8th (Metropolitan) and 10th (Regional) of August.

At the pre-summit briefings, the Minister for Housing emphasised that local government has an important role to play in support of the provision of affordable housing in South Australia. It was noted that affordable housing is not just public housing, but addresses the broader issues of housing affordability experienced by people in the low to middle income brackets trying to rent or purchase their own homes. This group might once have been able to afford their own home, but have recently experienced considerable barriers in the market.

The Housing Summit was held on 14 August 2007 at the Adelaide Town Hall. Attendees included Ministers, representatives from industry, South Australian Affordable Housing Trust board members, Land Management Corporation, Economic Development Board, Homestart, the LGA, representatives from Local Government, senior representatives from State Government (including OSLGR), and NGOs (such as Shelter SA). Approximately 120 people attended the Summit.

The SAAHT is in the process of finalising a report from the Housing Summit with a focus on practical actions, including those relevant to local government, to be pursued over the next six months and in the medium term. At the time of preparing this report, information regarding the possible actions was not yet available and it is anticipated that the briefing for Forum Members will identify the nature of these actions.

3.4. Activities of the LGA

The LGA has resolved to establish an LGA Affordable Housing Working Group. The LGA’s State Executive Committee will consider the terms of reference for this Working Group at its September meeting. A copy of the draft terms of reference is attached, for information.

The LGA’s 2007 Draft Policy Manual, which is currently being circulated across the Local Government sector for consultation, and the LGA’s draft Strategic Plan 2008-2011 both refer to affordable housing issues and initiatives. These draft documents will be considered at the LGA’s State Executive Committee meeting in September for adoption. The Policy Manual will be subject to adoption by Councils at the LGA’s October AGM.

4. Recommendations

That the Minister's State/Local Government Forum:

- 1. Notes recent developments that have taken place under the Housing Plan for South Australia;**
- 2. Notes the verbal presentation on outcomes of the pre-Summit briefings and Housing Summit; and**
- 3. Notes that the LGA will consult with the SAHHT regarding proposed actions arising from the Housing Summit for local government.**