

WODONGA HOUSING FORUM

The Cube Wodonga
Thursday, May 26

▶ ***Creating more pathways
into housing for our people***

INTRODUCTION

Wodonga is one of the fastest growing regional cities in Victoria, with a population forecasted to reach 54,000 by 2031.

To keep up with this growth, housing development is occurring at a fast pace and the council needs to ensure we are planning for appropriate and affordable housing for all our people into the future.

Wodonga is characterised by large areas of conventional housing, however, as the population grows and changes, so do the housing needs of our people.

Currently, there are gaps in the housing system that make it difficult for single people, single families and retirees to access diverse and affordable forms of housing.

Together we will participate in an interactive workshop that will inform the development of a Housing Strategy for Wodonga.

The objectives of the workshop are to:

- ▶ Gain a shared understanding of the housing system in Wodonga;
- ▶ Understand the key barriers to creating more diverse and affordable form of housing; and,
- ▶ Identify opportunities to create and/or improve local pathways into housing.

Together as a collective we can plan and advocate for change to create and improve pathways into housing for our people now and into the future as we grow.

AGENDA

8.40am		Arrive registration
9am	Cr Anna Speedie Wodonga Mayor	Welcome
9.10am	Patience Harrington, Chief Executive Officer Wodonga Council	Introduction – housing for all people in Wodonga
9.25am	Rob Panozzo ASR Research	Key findings from the Wodonga housing needs assessment
10am	Professor Steven Allender Deakin University	Collective impact - Interactive workshop to inform development of housing strategy
12.50pm	Wodonga Council	Where to next?
1pm to 2pm		Lunch

1. PURPOSE

Wodonga is one of the fastest-growing cities in regional Victoria, with a growth rate of 2.2 per cent per annum and a population forecasted to grow by 41 per cent to 54,000 by 2031.

This growth brings with it great opportunity but also leads to “growing pains”. The speed with which development occurs can leave certain groups within our community struggling to secure appropriate housing.

The council needs to ensure it is planning for a range of housing types and sizes that meet the needs of the community into the future.

The purpose of the following summary is to provide a thorough background assessment of current housing needs in Wodonga.

The summary and the report that it is based on will be used to provide the context surrounding a housing workshop and inform the development of a housing strategy for the municipality. It will be underpinned by an integrated cross-council approach, as well as effective and co-ordinated engagement with external agencies and the broader community.

The summary draws out some of the key implications for the forthcoming preparation of the Wodonga Housing Strategy from a variety of sources.

2. POLICY CONTEXT

Housing is a complex and challenging issue across Australia influenced by numerous sectors and policy factors.

The social issues associated with housing shortages are profound and include decreasing affordability, difficulty accessing appropriate housing forms, providing a suitable diversity of housing types and challenges associated with ensuring neighbourhood amenity.

All three tiers of government in Australia directly influence housing outcomes, as well as a range of other sectors.

The following diagram illustrates these different sectors and is based on a model presented in the *City of Melbourne's Homes for People Housing Strategy 2014-18*.

2. POLICY CONTEXT

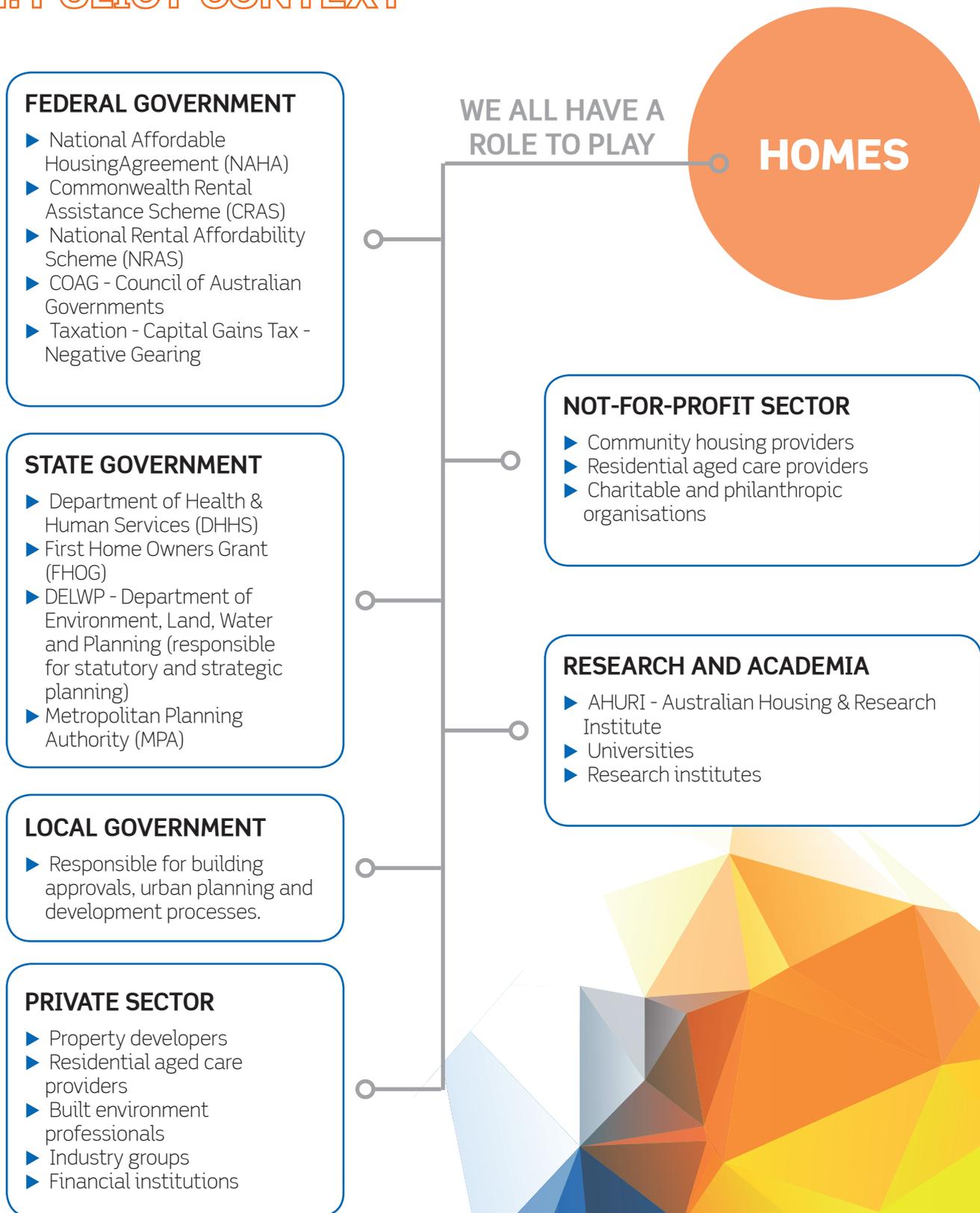


Figure 1- The role of different sectors in the delivery of new housing
 Source: Based on the City of Melbourne's Homes for People Housing Strategy 2014-18

3. SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

3.1 WHAT THE DATA REVEALS

3.1.1 Current and projected population and dwelling changes

- ▶ The municipality is projected to grow by approximately 4300 people every five years over the next 20 years.
- ▶ The current (2016) estimated population of Wodonga is 40,461. This is forecast to grow to 54,000 by 2031.
- ▶ The median age in Wodonga is 35, while the median age in regional Victoria is 41. The largest population increase is predicted among five to nine-year-olds (7.4 per cent of total persons) and the largest age group in 2036 is predicted to be zero to four-year-olds (4304 persons).
- ▶ At the same time, Wodonga's population is ageing, meaning a greater proportion of residents will be aged over 55 years in 2036 than they are now. The percentage of Wodonga's population aged 55 years and over will rise from 23.6 per cent in 2011 to 27.5 per cent in 2036.
- ▶ In 2016 the municipality has about 16,500 dwellings and an average household size of 2.54.
- ▶ Over the next 20 years the municipality is also anticipated to accommodate approximately 7000 additional dwellings.

3.1.2 Current housing characteristics

- ▶ The predominant housing type in the municipality in 2011 was separate houses (82 per cent), which was much lower compared to regional Victoria (88 per cent). The highest concentrations of separate homes within the municipality are located in Baranduda (100 per cent), Wodonga West (95 per cent), Wodonga South (95 per cent) and rural balance (94 per cent).
- ▶ The municipality contains a much higher proportion of medium density dwellings (18 per cent) compared to regional Victoria (10 per cent).
- ▶ There were no high density dwellings within Wodonga in 2011, compared 0.3 per cent in regional Victoria.
- ▶ The municipality has a higher proportion of dwellings with four or more bedrooms (28 per cent) compared to regional Victoria (24 per cent), with a higher proportion in the outer suburbs (Baranduda, Wodonga South, Wodonga West and rural balance).
- ▶ The municipality has a similar proportion of dwellings with two bedrooms or less (19 per cent) compared to regional Victoria (20 per cent), with a higher proportion in the inner suburbs (Wodonga Central, Melrose and Martin Park).

3. SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

- ▶ The municipality has a much lower proportion of households that own their own home outright (26 per cent) compared to regional Victoria (37 per cent). The highest concentrations of home owners within the municipality are located in Rural Balance (38 per cent) and Wodonga South (36 per cent).
- ▶ Wodonga has a higher proportion of mortgage holders (35 per cent) compared to regional Victoria (32 per cent). The highest concentrations of mortgage holders within the municipality are located within Baranduda (59 per cent) and Felltimber (53 per cent).
- ▶ The 2011 Census provides evidence that a relatively high proportion of households (12 per cent) in Wodonga are experiencing “housing stress” compared to regional Victoria (10 per cent). Housing stress appears to be most significant in Wodonga Central (19 per cent of all households), Melrose (16 per cent) and Martin Park (15 per cent).
- ▶ The proportion of households renting privately in Wodonga is much higher than regional Victoria (26 per cent compared to 19 per cent). Within the municipality the highest concentrations of private renters were located in Wodonga Central (39 per cent), Wodonga East (31 per cent), Belvoir (31 per cent) and Martin Park (30 per cent).
- ▶ Renting households in Wodonga had a median rental payment of \$205, \$15 more than regional Victoria.
- ▶ While the proportion of households paying high rental (more than \$400 per week) in Wodonga was lower than regional Victoria (2.8 per cent compared to 3.5 per cent), there were geographic pockets of high weekly rents in Baranduda (15 per cent), Felltimber (11 per cent) and Wodonga South (8 per cent).
- ▶ Interestingly, in both Belvoir and Martin Park, renting is the predominant tenure type. In contrast, the dominant tenure type in the municipality are homes being purchased.
- ▶ The highest concentrations of households renting some form of social housing within Wodonga were Melrose (16 per cent), Wodonga Central (11 per cent) and Martin Park (10 per cent).

3. SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

3.1.3 Building approval trends

- ▶ Since the financial year 2000-2001, Wodonga has averaged slightly in excess of 300 new residential building approvals per annum. After peaking in 2009-2010 with 533 approvals, sharp declines were experienced in the following year when it dropped to 318. However, residential building approvals have increased strongly over the past couple of years including 434 approvals in 2014-2015.

3.1.4 Private rental market

- ▶ The municipality currently has 230 affordable lettings, largely in the form of three-bedroom stock (114 properties) and two-bedroom stock (69 dwellings). Affordable lettings represented approximately 59 per cent of all rental stock in the municipality. This figure is the same as that recorded for regional Victoria overall (59.2 per cent).
- ▶ The municipality currently has 3804 active private rental properties, down 0.6 per cent on the previous year, but approximately 27 per cent more private rental properties than five years previously.

3.1.5 Residential aged care

- ▶ While the supply of residential aged care beds within the municipality (three providers with a combined capacity almost 330 beds) is currently satisfactory, the council has a role to play in encouraging and facilitating market interest in providing additional beds in line with future population growth, and any future changes to government policy.

3.1.6 Housing for people with a disability

- ▶ According to local services, there is a shortage of housing to meet the demands of people in the community with a disability.
- ▶ The introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is the largest reform to address barriers for people with a disability in Australia. The NDIS has funding to meet the housing needs of 27,700 people nationally with disability. This scheme will roll out in Wodonga in October 2017 and will have a significant impact on the funding for affordable housing for people in the community with a disability.

3. SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

3.1.7 Housing stress and homelessness

- ▶ Homelessness is a rising issue Australia-wide. Domestic violence, addiction, trauma, unemployment, mental illness and disability are some of the factors that can lead to housing stress and homelessness.
- ▶ In 2013-2014 drug and alcohol offences in Wodonga increased by 4 per cent and in 2013-2014, 692 cases of family violence cases were reported in Wodonga.
- ▶ In 2011, 12.3 per cent of Wodonga's households were experiencing housing stress compared to 10 per cent in regional Victoria.
- ▶ The Rural Housing Network Limited reported that in 2014-2015, 622 people in Wodonga were homeless or at risk of being homeless. Half these presentations were lone persons, 26 per cent were a couple, family or other group and 21 per cent were single parents.
- ▶ Housing affordability has become a social and economic problem in recent years, and between 2006 and 2011 rents across Australia increased by close to 50 per cent.
- ▶ In 2011, 26 per cent of Wodonga households were renting their dwelling from a private landlord or estate agent, compared to 19.3 per cent in regional Victoria.

- ▶ In 2011, 7.8 per cent of Wodonga households were renting their dwelling from a government authority compared to 4 per cent in regional Victoria.
- ▶ Inadequate housing and housing stress caused by having to spend more than 30 per cent of a low income on housing can lead to family conflict and breakdown.

3.1.8 Public Housing Waiting Lists

- ▶ The Wodonga public housing waiting list is one of the five highest in regional Victoria. As of March 2016, the data showed that there were 484 people on the public housing waiting list registered with the Ovens-Murray (Wodonga) area office. This was slightly up on the December data which showed that there were 467 people on the waiting list.

3. SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

3.1.9 Community housing

The Rural Housing Network Limited (RHNL), the largest provider of community housing in the Hume region, has almost 90 properties located within Wodonga.

There are a number of major policy trends that have been influencing the social housing sector. These include:

- ▶ A retreat by government from direct social housing service provision and specifically the retreat of the Australian Government from housing capital funding;
- ▶ The transfer of the management of public housing-owned stock to community housing agencies;
- ▶ The transfer of ownership of government-owned stock to community housing agencies;
- ▶ A renewal of public housing estates via Public Private Partnerships (PPPs);
- ▶ The end of specialist housing staff within government community services departments; and,
- ▶ The consolidation in the community housing sector into a smaller number of larger (including multi-state and national) agencies.

3.1.10 National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS)

Victoria currently has approximately 5400 dwellings tenanted or available for rent under the NRAS (referred to as “incentives allocated”) and almost 700 dwellings that are yet to be delivered (referred to as “incentives reserved”). Victoria currently has 18 per cent of all NRAS registered dwellings in Australia. However, according to the December 2015 quarterly report, there were no NRAS dwellings (either allocated or reserved) located in Wodonga.

4. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE STRATEGY

Some of the preliminary implications of the material and data reviewed in this summary are highlighted below.

- ▶ The development of the Wodonga Housing Strategy has some impressive strategic foundations upon which to identify meaningful goals and practical action measures. It should identify strategies to complement the directions and actions already contained within various strategic documents.
- ▶ Review the effectiveness of the Wodonga Affordable Housing Action Plan (2010) and prepare an update.
- ▶ Explore opportunities to consider greater use of the Wodonga Planning Scheme to strengthen the council's role in the delivery of affordable housing outcomes.
- ▶ Although Wodonga has for some time had a relatively higher proportion of social housing stock (public and community housing) compared to many areas of Victoria, that proportion is likely to continue to decrease as the population of Wodonga increases and government continues its retreat from capital investment in social housing.
- ▶ In terms of the structure and content of the Wodonga Housing Strategy, council and local stakeholders will need to assess what they consider to be the key priorities. A review of other municipal housing strategies shows that the scope of what is included in such a document can be very diverse.
- ▶ The importance of developing partnerships to achieve improved social housing and affordable housing outcomes is a significant theme of much of the literature reviewed. To this end the Wodonga Housing Strategy can play a key role in assisting external agencies such as the Rural Housing Network Limited to achieve some of its existing documented strategic goals.
- ▶ The review of other municipal housing strategies clearly demonstrates both similarities and differences in terms of the scope of goals and measures that a strategy can cover. It will be important for the Wodonga Housing Strategy to be clear about the scope of issues it wishes to prioritise, particularly in light of the existing housing relevant strategies it already has.
- ▶ Achieving widespread agreement on the definition of "affordable housing".
- ▶ The housing needs analysis suggests an opening for the development industry to respond to the opportunity to provide increased diversity of housing across the city.

CONTACT WODONGA COUNCIL

Office: 104 Hovell St, Wodonga, VIC 3690

Post: PO Box 923, Wodonga, VIC 3689

Phone: (02) 6022 9300

Fax: (02) 6022 9322

Email: info@wodonga.vic.gov.au

Website: wodonga.vic.gov.au

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