
Affordable Housing Policy



1 Purpose

This Policy establishes key principles to guide the City of Coffs Harbour's work in addressing the issue of access to affordable housing in the City of Coffs Harbour Local Government Area (LGA). Affordable housing is defined by City of Coffs Harbour (the City) as 'housing that is appropriate for the needs of a range of very low to moderate income households and priced so that these households are also able to meet other basic living costs such as food, clothing, transport, medical care and education.' Affordable housing also has a statutory definition under the NSW *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (the Act), being housing for people on very low, low and moderate incomes.

The supply of affordable housing and social housing in the Coffs Harbour LGA is currently insufficient to meet demand. Census data shows that 5,147 households were in 'housing stress' in 2021. The cost to purchase and rent housing in the LGA has been steadily rising for many years, significantly outpacing wages growth over the same period. This is particularly an issue for low to moderate income households. Changes to domestic migration patterns and employment as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic have exacerbated existing issues.

Affordable housing and social housing are part of the bigger issue of housing supply and affordability. The issues around housing supply and housing affordability are complex. Traditionally, local government does not deliver housing: State governments are responsible for delivery of social housing and private developers and individuals generally build other housing. However, the City acknowledges that it has tools and mechanisms within its powers and responsibilities that can assist to grow the supply of affordable housing in the LGA.

The Policy supports the MyCoffs Community Strategic Plan 2032. It responds to the themes of *Community Wellbeing* and *A Place for Community* and the following objectives and outcomes:

- a) We address the causes of disadvantage:
 - i. We explore innovative solutions to affordable accommodation provision.
- b) We undertake development that is environmentally, socially and economically responsible:
 - ii. Sustainable design and best practice development provide quality housing options.
- c) We collaborate to deliver housing opportunities for all:
 - iii. Housing is affordable.
 - iv. Development meets the changing needs and expectations of the community.
 - v. We have the ability to access, afford and secure rental or long-term housing.

2 Policy

The City will assist delivery of affordable housing within the scope of its powers and responsibilities in accordance with the following principles:

2.1 Importance of housing

- a) The City recognises that a shortage of affordable housing in the LGA is likely to have adverse, long term social and economic effects and therefore must be addressed.
- b) The City recognises that access to affordable, secure and appropriate housing is a basic human right and is necessary for individuals and families to meaningfully participate in education, employment and cultural and social opportunities.

2.2 Partnerships and advocacy

- a) The City will look for opportunities to partner with and/or support Government and Community Housing Providers to assist them to deliver affordable housing.
- b) The City will advocate State and Federal Governments to develop and implement policy positions that improve the supply of affordable housing.
- c) The City will advocate for a fair share of resources and funding from existing and emerging government programs.

2.3 Planning

- a) The City will encourage and facilitate the provision of affordable and diverse housing through the City's local planning controls while achieving adopted place, environmental and transport objectives.
- b) The City will encourage and promote development opportunities provided by State and local planning instruments.
- c) The City will use powers it has under the Act to create affordable housing through mechanisms such as Affordable Housing Contributions Schemes and Voluntary Planning Agreements, where feasible and appropriate.

2.4 Decision making

- a) The City will consider the impact its decisions (including decisions on planning and development matters) will have on the supply of affordable housing in the LGA.

3 Definitions

Affordable housing: Affordable housing is housing that is appropriate for the needs of a range of very low, low and moderate income households and priced so that these households are also able to meet other basic living costs such as food, clothing, transport, medical care and education. As a rule of thumb, housing is usually considered affordable if it costs less than 30% of gross household income. Affordable housing also has a statutory definition under the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (the Act), being housing for people on very low, low and moderate incomes.

Affordable housing has usually been developed with some assistance from the NSW and/or Commonwealth governments, including through planning incentives. It is only available in some locations and eligibility criteria apply. Although affordable housing is sometimes available for purchase, it is most commonly available to rent.

Affordable housing that is available to rent may be owned by private developers or investors, local governments, charitable organisations or community housing providers. It is usually managed by not-for-profit community housing providers, and sometimes by private organisations.

Source: <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/providers/housing/affordable/about>. Accessed 15 February 2022.

Affordable housing includes a wide range of housing products, tenures and price points. This includes, but is not limited to; special needs accommodation, social (public and community) housing, discount market rent housing and assisted purchase housing. It also includes lower cost housing provided through the private housing market, such as smaller flats and units, boarding houses and caravan parks, as long as cost benchmarks are met.

Homelessness: Homelessness is defined in City of Coffs Harbour's Homelessness Policy.

Housing affordability: Housing affordability typically refers to the relationship between expenditure on housing (purchase cost, mortgage payments or rents) and household incomes. Measuring housing affordability is not straightforward. A household's financial situation, the overall demand in the housing market and housing tenure type (whether a household is seeking to rent, is renting, is looking to buy or is a home owner with or without a mortgage) all influence individual housing affordability. The simplest measure of housing affordability compares housing costs to gross household income.

Source: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/housing-affordability>. Accessed 15 February 2022.

Housing stress: A situation where a very low, low or moderate income household is spending more than 30% of their gross income on housing costs.

Low income earners: People earning more than 50% but less than 80% of the NSW or Sydney median income. This could include many people working in jobs such as a child care worker, secretary or cleaner.

Source: <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/providers/housing/affordable/about/chapters/who-are-very-low-to-moderate-income-earners>. Accessed 15 February 2022.

Moderate income earners: People earning between 80-120% of the NSW or Sydney median income. They may include people working in occupations such as teaching, policing or nursing, particularly if they are in earlier stages of their careers.

Source: <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/providers/housing/affordable/about/chapters/who-are-very-low-to-moderate-income-earners>. Accessed 15 February 2022.

Social housing: Social housing is secure and affordable rental housing for people on low incomes with housing needs. It includes public, community and Aboriginal housing. Public housing is managed by the NSW Government while community housing is managed by non-government organisations. Aboriginal housing is specifically for Aboriginal people managed by government or community housing providers, including Aboriginal community housing providers.

Source: <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/housing/help/ways/social-housing#:~:text=Social%20housing%20is%20secure%20and,managed%20by%20non%2Dgovernment%20organisations>. Accessed 15 February 2022.

Very low income earners: People described as being on a very low income are those earning less than 50% of the NSW or Sydney median income, depending on where they live. They include workers in a range of lower paid occupations, or who are on an aged or disability pension or other government benefit.

Source: <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/providers/housing/affordable/about/chapters/who-are-very-low-to-moderate-income-earners>. Accessed 15 February 2022.

4 Key Responsibilities

Position	Group/Directorate	Responsibility
Mayor	Council	To lead Councillors in their understanding of, and compliance with, this policy and guidelines.
General Manager	Executive	To lead staff (either directly or through delegated authority) in their understanding of, and compliance with, this policy and guidelines.
Directors	All directorates	To communicate, implement and comply with this policy and related guidelines.
Group and Section Leaders	All directorates	To plan, action, communicate, implement and comply with this policy and related guidelines as it impacts your areas of responsibility.
All Council officials	Council	To comply with this policy and related procedures.
Group Leader	Sustainable Places	To maintain this policy.

5 References (laws, standards and other Council documents)

- City of Coffs Harbour Affordable Housing Strategy 2024
- City of Coffs Harbour Homelessness Policy
- Coffs Harbour Local Strategic Planning Statement 2020
- Coffs Harbour Local Growth Management Plan 2020
- City of Coffs Harbour MyCoffs Community Strategic Plan 2032
- *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*
- *Local Government Act 1993*
- North Coast Regional Plan 2041
- *Residential Tenancies Act 2010*

6 Details of Approval and revision

- **Approval date:** 13/06/2024
- **Responsible Group:** Sustainable Places
- **Responsible Section:** Local Planning
- **Superseded policies/procedures:** N/A
- **Next review date:** 13/06/2028

Table of amendments

Amendment	Authoriser	Approval ref	Date
Amendment to update Community Strategic Plan references, add principles 2.2 c) and 2.3 c), updates to paragraphs 1 and 2 in section 1 Purpose, update document references in section 5 References and minor change to definition of affordable housing.	Council	2024/95	13/06/24
New Policy	Council	2022/59	24/03/22