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▶ AFFORDABLE HOUSING POLICY

POLICY NUMBER: 85 (C)

NAME OF POLICY: AFFORDABLE HOUSING POLICY

DATE OF NEXT REVIEW: 20 April 2025

DATE APPROVED: 20 April 2021

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: MANAGER COMMUNITY CARE

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### INTRODUCTION

Council is aware that rising costs of purchase of housing over the past decade has made access to safe and secure housing as well as mortgage and rental stress a critical issue for the community. There are many people (including middle income residents and others from vulnerable groups) who aspire to live in Hepburn Shire who are not able to access appropriate and affordable housing to support work and other connections.

Research conducted by Council and community partners has identified the following issues that need to be further researched to enable Council's potential role to be clarified, these include:

- Mortgage and rental stress – one in six (15.3% – ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> highest in Victoria) households in Hepburn Shire experience mortgage stress and one in three (33% – 8<sup>th</sup> in Victoria) experience rental stress (2015 data from DHHS LGA Profile).
- Key workers – there is evidence that suggests it is increasingly difficult for keyworkers (hospitality, health, service etc) to gain access to long-term, sustainable and affordable housing
- Disability or pension – people on a statutory income will potentially find it impossible to access affordable rental housing and in general purchasing a home is out of reach
- One-bedroom stock – it was identified that supply of one-bedroom housing is extremely low and land-use planning and concerns regarding neighbourhood character mitigates against increased density of development
- Vulnerable groups – single persons, women over 55, people with a disability, victims of domestic violence, and low-income families were particularly affected by housing affordability

Council is also aware that broader community engagement on the issue of housing access and affordability will need to be undertaken to ensure that the community is brought along in its research, policy, and decision processes.

### SCOPE

This initial policy statement is designed to communicate that Council recognises that access to safe and affordable housing is an emerging and critical issue for its community.

It is Council's strategic intent to invest in research to better understand the extent of the problem, develop a comprehensive policy and strategy and identify where it can make a

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difference through advocacy, partnerships, land-use planning mechanisms and potentially direct investment.

This Policy will also be used to approach and seek funding and cooperation from other levels of government.

### POLICY

Hepburn Shire Council recognises that access to secure, appropriate, and affordable housing is an important foundation to ensuring diversity and contributing to the social and economic success of its community.

Hepburn Shire Council is committed to an inclusive and diverse community and will support improved community access to safe and affordable housing through:

- (a) Advocacy to other levels of government and working in partnership with the community
- (b) Conduct of research to inform policy and strategy development and advocacy
- (c) Development and implementation of an affordable housing policy and strategy that identifies opportunities in land-use planning and social policy domains, and
- (d) Ensuring its affordable housing policy commitment is tested through community engagement and appropriately resourced to ensure effective implementation.

### DEFINITIONS

Whilst there is no universal definition of *affordable housing*, the term generally refers to housing available to lower income households which is affordable relative to their incomes. Housing provided by the 'open market' can constitute affordable housing, but Council is aware that due to rising housing costs the share of 'market affordable' housing is declining.

A more specific definition of affordable housing in common use in Victoria is:

*Housing that is available to very low and low-income households to rent or own for less than 30% of the household's income. Very low and low-income households are the lowest 40% of households based on income.*

The *Planning and Environment Act 1987* introduced a definition of affordable housing in June 2018:

*Affordable housing is defined as housing (including social housing) that is appropriate to the housing needs of very low, low, and moderate-income*

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households. Income ranges for the three income 'quintiles' are provided for three different household types: single adults, couples without dependents and families with dependents. These are updated periodically, and the current ranges are shown in the table below.

	VERY LOW	LOW	MODERATE
Single	Up to \$19,020	\$19,021 to \$30,430	\$30,431 to \$45,640
Couple (no dependant)	Up to \$28,520	\$28,521 to \$45,640	\$45,641 to \$68,460
Family (Single / Couple with dependant children)	Up to \$39,930	\$39,931 to \$63,900	\$63,901 to \$95,840

There is no general definition of *safe housing*, but this concept generally refers to the right of people (often women, families, and children) to have access to safe, secure, and affordable housing options.

### FURTHER INFORMATION

Enquiries regarding this policy and further research should be directed to Manager Community Care

### IMPLEMENTATION

Council will include access to affordable and safe housing as a priority in its Council Plan 2021-2024.

During the 2021/2022 financial year Council will commit resources to develop a comprehensive and integrated Affordable Housing Policy & Strategy that will define its desired policy outcomes and strategic objectives.

Options for implementation arising from the Policy & Strategy will be referred to Council's 2022/2023 strategic planning and budget process for appropriate resourcing in the context of all demands.

### REVIEW

The Affordable Housing Policy will be reviewed every four years or sooner if required by legislation or organisational changes.

The officer responsible for the review of this policy is the Manager Community Care.