

Tasmanian Housing Strategy Submission: Cohousing Australia

Due 3rd July 2023

Documents:

<https://tashousingstrategy.homestasmania.com.au/consultation/tasmanian-housing-strategy-exposure-draft>

<https://tashousingstrategy.homestasmania.com.au/>

CoHousing Australia commends the Tasmanian government for taking a proactive approach to addressing the housing and homelessness crisis. Tasmanians are experiencing significant housing stress, with ramifications for health and wellbeing, environmental resilience, and economic prosperity.

CoHousing Australia is the peak body for collaborative, community-led, citizen-led approaches to housing. There are numerous interpretations of co-housing, ranging from inner city co-living to remote intentional communities. CoHousing Australia supports a diversity in housing type and tenure as an opportunity to broaden the housing landscape providing choice and agency.

The key tenets of cohousing are:

- Resident-led:
 - An inclusive and participatory approach to designing, developing, and governing a community-focused residential project,
 - Resident-groups use collaborative agreement-making and dynamic governance tools to create and meet collective policies and mutual expectations.
- Built environment is designed to facilitate community interaction and neighbourliness:
 - Promote various forms of interaction from spontaneous and incidental, to more formal and regular opportunities to interact as a community,
 - Commonhouse – a focal point of the community for shared meals, socialising, and organising,
 - Antisocial spaces (like roads and car parking) are reduced in size and kept at the periphery.
- Private dwellings and shared resources
 - Each dwelling is fully self-contained with all desired amenities of home,
 - Shared spaces can include: guestrooms (avoiding excess of 'spare rooms' in private houses), common laundry, workshop/shed, co-working space, music/art room etc,



- Private dwellings can be ‘space-economical’ without compromising access to amenities and activities. I.e. a promotes a housing model of individual sufficiency with shared abundance.

<p>New housing models</p> <p>Opportunities exist for government, and the not-for-profit and private sectors, to pilot different housing models such as build-to-rent, key worker accommodation and co-housing. Developments can also target specific life-stages and support needs to cater for a diverse population while maintaining the design-led principles that promote sustainability and affordability.</p> <p>Draft strategy page. 13</p>	<p>Cohousing explained: Cohousing Explained: "What is a Home?" Cohousing Explained Co-housing, a Future Way of Living Together Eef Tanghe TEDxLeuven Cohousing: The Future of Community and Human Connection Trish Becker-Hafnor TEDxCherryCreekWomen</p> <p>Local examples (cohousing + co-op affordable rental):</p> <p>Murundaka Cohousing Community (Victoria)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● https://www.murundakacohousing.org.au/ <p>Cohousing Co-op (Tasmania)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● http://www.cohousing.coop/
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The draft lists ‘co-housing’ among other examples under new housing models. These are very broad terms and need to be explored each on their individual merit or otherwise. CoHousing Australia supports an 'ethical' or 'social' build-to-rent (BTR) / key worker housing model that is citizen-led, as BTR alone is no guarantee of decent, sustainable and affordable housing.

Benefits:

- Wellbeing and health:
 - Shared spaces help build social capital. Cohousing offers the sense of community life which gives a sense of belonging and stability;
 - One quarter of Australian households are now single-person households ([Census 2021](#)) with [over one third](#) reporting loneliness prior to COVID, more than [50 percent in 2022](#). Cohousing is a typology which allows for individual privacy within a supportive and connected community.
- Environmental design and living
 - Because the future resident is involved in the housing design process, they can prioritise and advocate for long term sustainability and energy efficiency measures. The resident (whether as as an individual homeowner or cohousing renter) will benefit from the lifecycle savings from e.g. reduced energy costs, or lower maintenance, this has a wider societal benefit of improving overall housing stock in Tasmania



- Cohousing allows community-led housing groups to design for community level sustainability infrastructure (energy/water/composting) which are not possible or less effective at an individual scale (e.g. rooftop solar on multi-unit dwellings, community-scale heating, on-site distributed water capture and treatment options)
- Groups can collaborate to engage in sustainable lifestyle behaviours, for example:
 - Recycling, composting, gardening, maintenance,
 - Shared e-bikes, e-cargo bikes, and e-vehicles – reduces cost and enables access.
 - Sharing of infrequently used material items (tools, household items etc).
- Economic benefits:
 - Housing costs:
 - Provide opportunities for rentals within the cohousing development
 - Can provide opportunities for subsidised public/social and affordable housing within the cohousing development.
 - Living costs:
 - Reduced expense of individualising many household and lifestyle tools / appliances through access to common resources and facilities,
 - Mutual care – a community to share child-minding, lifts to the airport, senior care, IT whizz, bike repair etc.,
 - Ready supply of hand-me-downs: IT, clothing, recreational equipment, white goods etc.

Feedback on the Tasmanian Housing Strategy Exposure Draft:

Question 1: ‘Our way forward’ identifies several levers for achieving a more equitable housing system for all Tasmanians. Are there additional or alternative more important levers that you believe should be addressed?

There must be a stronger focus on citizen-led approaches to housing, as opposed to speculative development. This means developing robust mechanisms which support collaborative housing models to flourish. Groups coming together to create a cohousing or other collaborative community would not only support long-term affordability, but potentially drive more equitable housing delivery processes. Empowering citizens/residents to play a participatory role in housing planning, design and development, [research shows](#), encourages more sustainable and people-focused housing communities.

We recommend looking at the Victorian planning scheme for future homes and adapting it to prioritise cohousing models within the Tasmanian planning scheme:

<https://www.planning.vic.gov.au/guides-and-resources/strategies-and-initiatives/future-homes>

Recommended adaptations could include:

- Creating designs for a cluster of approximately 30 dwellings (this is the best-practice scale for cohousing balancing economies of scale with governance capacity).
- Reducing the car-parking with a green-travel plan – this is eminently practical given that the residents are designing capacity for their exact needs and priorities.
- Implementing the fast-tracked planning process and providing pre-application support

Include cohousing in the land use terms schedule and provide an appropriate planning framework for assessment.

- Banyule Council has included cohousing in their housing scheme and made cohousing projects exempt from developer contributions in recognition of their inherent community benefit.
 - [https://s3.ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/hdp.au.prod.app.ban-shapingbanyule.files/1715/3483/3657/UDF - Housing Innovation and Affordability.pdf](https://s3.ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/hdp.au.prod.app.ban-shapingbanyule.files/1715/3483/3657/UDF_-_Housing_Innovation_and_Affordability.pdf)

- Moreland Housing uses a scorecard to encourage community and environmental outcomes in residential planning:
 - <https://www.merri-bek.vic.gov.au/globalassets/areas/strategic-planning/design-excellence-scorecard.pdf>

Prioritise land access for cohousing:

- Create a land disposal process that facilitates access for cohousing groups (and other community-led housing groups). Surplus government land should be allocated to resident-led housing groups before being made available for sale to the market. Process for engaging with and supporting groups to take up this opportunity is essential to ensure transparency, efficiency, and success.
- References:
 - Community Led Housing Land Disposal Policy 2020 - Bristol
 - <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/files/documents/4953-community-led-housing-land-disposal-policy-2020/file>
 - Local Authority Support For Community Led Housing
 - <https://www.communitylandtrusts.org.uk/campaigns/local-authority-support/>

Provide support for public housing, community housing providers ie. rental co-ops and associations, and community-led housing co-operatives, to collaborate with cohousing projects.

- Provide policy frameworks to support partnerships with cohousing projects
- Develop financial and legal instruments to facilitate partnerships with cohousing projects.

Question 2: Theme one identifies the need for 'more homes, built faster'. Are there additional or alternative objectives you recommend for consideration?

Barrier Reduction

- Audit existing planning controls and assess impacts
- Reduce third party appeal rights if all requirements are met
- Redesign regulation to support prefabs, tiny housing and other affordable housing models, including half-house (where additions can be made at a later date), and completed to lock-up with DIY fitout to meet budget constraints and facilitate sweat-equity and customisation.

- Support worker-owner building co-ops
- Build homes that serve the needs of the residents, not just the investor market

Planning Incentives

- Fast approvals for developments meeting defined criteria
- Planning bonuses/concessions on development standards

Question 3: Theme two centres on ‘affordability in the private market’. Are there additional or alternative objectives you recommend for consideration?

Encourage and support more diversity of housing including options that provide affordable housing choices; e.g. prefabs, tiny houses, DIY as described in question 2.

Support financial options such as cooperatives (mixed, moderate/key-worker, and affordable) share equity, rent to own, community land trusts / ground lease models.

The Tasmanian government, working in partnership with the finance sector to create a new financial product that facilitates multiple residents with varying equity who, together, can service a loan for a property. This would include mechanisms to support / guarantee loans for emergent models like cohousing and co-operative rental to facilitate market participation. Once established, this model will become replicable and scalable, with increased access to conventional lenders.


Question 4: Theme three places ‘people at the centre’ of the draft Strategy. Are there additional or alternative objectives you recommend for consideration?

Theme could be ‘people with community focus at the centre’ or ‘people and community at the centre’ to better frame the strategy around supporting a citizen-led/resident-led development approach with focus on community.

Cohousing is about taking a user-focused citizen-led approach to the design, development and governance of a cohousing community. Importantly, it also engages on a community level. CoHousing Australia advises participatory approaches across all levels of planning and development. Participatory planning and budgeting helps communities establish priorities and negotiate innovative ways to deliver outcome and impact. Increasingly, Australian cities need to mitigate urban sprawl and consolidate urban growth. This necessitates an increase

in density and in creating more multi-unit dwellings. Typically this is perceived as a less desirable option to a standalone dwelling, in part because of the lack of design agency, and perception of dysfunctional contractualised governance.

Cohousing is uniquely placed to redistribute that agency back to resident-users and to facilitate sophisticated collaborative governance. Rather than being a compromise the cohousing model celebrates community and collaboration, these are key attributes highlighted throughout the draft strategy.

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		Detached House	Multi-Unit Dwelling
Dwelling Stock	Existing	Buy an Existing Detached House ✓	Buy an Existing Multi-Unit Dwelling ✓
	New	Initiate Design and/or Construction of New Detached house ✓	Initiate design and/or construction of new Multi-Unit dwelling ✗

Figure 3. Home Purchase Options in existing Australian Provision. Based on Dolin et al. (1992).

Jasmine S. Palmer (2019):
 Collective self-organised housing, an opportunity for consolidating the Australian dream, Australian Planner, DOI: 10.1080/07293682.2019.1595690
 To link to this article:
<https://doi.org/10.1080/07293682.2019.1595690>

Housing is a crucial issue but often planning can become a fight between the NIMBY's and the YIMBY's. Both these groups are demonstrating a love for their local neighbourhood, they just have different priorities. Bringing people together to undertake a PlaceScore process can help develop a QIMBY approach that resonates with everyone. All levels of government need to upskill in participatory approaches. This is particularly important for tackling housing affordability. It is important to have a rich picture of the needs and stressors in an area and to work with the whole community to design creative and innovative solutions that address these.

Cohousing projects can act as a fourth level of governance. Supporting hyper-local resilience and upskilling people in collaborative practices. Cohousing communities, when adequately supported in a partnership approach, can act as informal neighbourhood houses, provide support in acute disasters, and be a catalyst for neighbourhood projects.



Question 5: Theme four highlights ‘local prosperity’ as a priority. Are there additional or alternative objectives you recommend for consideration?

Cohousing projects incorporate a range of community amenities. In the right conditions, with a partnership approach these can include amenity benefits for the neighbouring community.

- Social enterprise cafes
- Food co-op
- Laundromat facilities
- Shared cars and micro-mobility
- Sharing shed / library of things
- Repair cafe
- Co-working space
- Function space

Question 8: Is there anything you think the draft Strategy does not cover but should, or that it mentions but could be highlighted more?

Provide some direction (not just refer to future action plan) to define explicit expectations regarding advocacy and actions:

- The role of the State government in advocating to the Federal Government.
- The role of the State government in encouraging, supporting and directing Local Government.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute this feedback

Additional references:

[Gendered Housing](#)

[Social Housing for an Ageing Population](#)

[Improving the private rental market for older Australians](#)

https://percapita.org.au/blog/our_work/home-for-good-improving-the-private-rental-market-for-older-australians/

[Mutual Appreciation: cooperative ageing for women](#)

Cohousing Handbook:

https://library.uniteddiversity.coop/Ecovillages_and_Low_Impact_Development/Cohousing/The_Cohousing_Handbook-Building_a_Place_for_Community.pdf

Cohousing for seniors

<https://agedcare.royalcommission.gov.au/system/files/2020-08/RCD.9999.0410.0192.pdf>

State of the Community Land Trust Sector 2023

<https://www.communitylandtrusts.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/State-of-the-Sector-2023-PRESS-1.pdf>

The Community Land Trust Handbook

https://d1ssu070pg2v9i.cloudfront.net/pex/carnegie_uk_trust/2016/02/pub1455011611.pdf

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