



National Housing and Homelessness Plan Team

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Dear Team

**Submission – National Housing and Homelessness Plan**

Congratulations on the progression of the National Housing and Homelessness Plan. To inform the development of the Plan, the Kimberley Regional Group is submitting a copy of our Housing Position paper.

The lack of social and affordable housing across the Kimberley is having dire social and economic impacts. It is critical that a National Housing and Homelessness Plan has a focus on regional Australia, given the market fails to deliver the homes that are needed in remote and regional areas. Also, that the Plan has a clear goal to deliver the homes needed by all members of our community regardless of their cultural background, social or economic circumstances or where they live. The national plan must unite levers across Federal, State and Local Government towards this goal and harness the strengths of industry partners, including the community housing and Aboriginal community housing sector.

We look forward to ongoing engagement on the development of the National Housing and Homelessness Plan.

Yours sincerely

[Redacted signature]

[Redacted name]

[Redacted title]

Kimberley Regional Group

Attach.



# POSITION PAPER HOUSING

MARCH 2023

## ABOUT THE KIMBERLEY REGIONAL GROUP

The Kimberley Regional Group (KRG) is an alliance of the four Shires of the Kimberley, being the Shire of Broome, the Shire of Derby West Kimberley, the Shire of Halls Creek and the Shire of Wyndham East Kimberley. Our Vision is to maintain and enhance the rich diversity and liveability of the Kimberley for its people and the world. Collaboratively the group seeks to drive positive impact across the region through improved social, economic and cultural outcomes. This paper is designed to highlight the issues as known to Local Government at the time of writing and the potential pathways that are supported.

### CONTEXT

- Housing is essential economic and social infrastructure, and the lack of housing is impeding growth, development and community stability.
- The lack of housing is impacting on the attraction and retention of staff in the community service and business sectors.
- The Kimberley region has a severe housing shortage indicated by a long social housing waitlist, severe overcrowding, lack of affordable rental homes and high rents.
- Housing is not designed for the Kimberley climate or Kimberley lifestyles, so it is expensive to run increasing cost of living pressures
- Poorly maintained housing is leading to poor health outcomes
- Inconsistent land supply, high costs of living and development, more transient community members seeking access to rentals, limited investor pools and more difficult commercial project and purchaser lending criteria means government participation through land development activity, as well as other interventions such as through housing delivery and management programs is critical<sup>1</sup>

### OBJECTIVES

- » Increase awareness of housing issues, challenges and opportunities.
- » Remove barriers and streamline policies and procedures to facilitate investment into new housing supply.
- » Increase housing investment in the Kimberley.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following guiding principles should underpin housing in the Kimberley

- Climate adaptive and responsive and designed to reduce cost of running a home and climate change impacts.
- Culturally appropriate.
- Include a range of housing products to meet current and future need.
- Use of adaptive technologies that enable homes to be reconfigured in response to changing need.
- Accessible to people of all abilities.

## POLICY PRIORITIES

1. **Access to contemporary data to inform housing investment and maintain housing affordability through sufficient housing supply and project pipelines to meet current and projected need.**
  - 1.1 That the Kimberley Development Commission in partnership with other agencies;
    - a. Produce a quarterly East Kimberley Housing and Land Summary;
    - b. Undertake demand modelling on a Shire and town basis to indicate and quantify the type of housing required and the level of investment; and
    - c. Allocates funding for place-based housing surveys to understand current housing stress and level of unmet housing need.



- 1.2 That the WA Department of Communities publishes social housing trend data and Housing Social Impact Indicators on a quarterly basis for the Kimberley by region, by Shire and townsite, to enable local organizations to better understand social housing need and develop an evidence-based response.
  - 1.3 That the WA Government In line with recommendations in the State Infrastructure Strategy facilitate as a priority;
    - a. a ten-year Kimberley Regional Housing Plan to improve long-term planning and inform infrastructure investment for social and affordable housing; and
    - b. establish the principles, criteria and models for government housing intervention in the Kimberley to address market failure, informed by regional housing plan.
  - 1.4 That the Department of Planning and Heritage provide funding to the Shires to review housing needs in each town.
- 2. Ensure land availability**
- 2.1 That the Shires ensure that their Local Planning Strategies remain current and future focused with sufficient urban zoned or identified and to accommodation anticipated and potential development.
  - 2.2 That Development WA works in partnership with the Shires to ensure residential land availability to respond quickly to spikes in demand and future needs.
  - 2.3 That the WA Government review policy regarding the transfer of Crown Land to freehold for the provision of housing, with savings allocated for headworks or other activities to facilitate development.
- 3. Increased investment in social housing by leveraging assets and partnerships with government to unlock investment and create local jobs.**
- 3.1 That the Department of Communities invest in new Employment and Education housing programs in the Kimberley
  - 3.2 That the Department of Communities Introduce an ancillary housing program utilizing prefabricated ancillary homes for eligible households in public housing to provide urgently needed supply and reduce overcrowding.
  - 3.3 That the Department of Communities and Development WA undertake an audit of under-utilized State Government land that could be used for social housing
  - 3.4 That an audit is undertaken by Local Government and the NGO sector of under-utilized land that could be leveraged for social (and mixed tenure) housing
  - 3.5 That a list of Kimberley social and affordable housing projects is developed for investment partnerships with the State and Federal Government through their social housing packages.
  - 3.6 That the State Government develop and implement a plan to decarbonise social housing in the Kimberley including an energy audit for all existing stock, new investment in energy efficiency retrofit/ replacement and solar installation programme
  - 3.7 That the WA Government
    - a. Introduce a Band B social housing option to the Kimberley in partnership with a registered Community Housing Provider; and
    - b. Reviews the maximum threshold a tenant is able to stay in their social home, with the support/rent settings adjusted and tailored according to that person's economic circumstances.

4. **Better targeted Government Regional Officers Housing (GROH) policy to attract and retain a government and non-government community sector workforce.**
  - 4.1 That the Kimberley Development Commission develop a policy paper to remove disincentives between GROH and Home Ownership Subsidy Scheme (HOSS) and incentives for tenants to purchase the GROH home, another home or to build a new home in the region. Incentives could:
    - a. promote new builds
    - b. be designed to have a counter-cyclical effect, to lessen the severity of future downturns in housing investment in the region
    - c. take the form of subsidies, cash grants for new builds, shared equity schemes and stamp duty/other tax concessions.
  - 4.2 That the Department of Communities, in partnership with other agencies that manage GROH housing (WA Country Health Service, WA Police and Main Roads WA) audit vacant GROH properties and make properties with limited demand available as social or key worker housing.
  - 4.3 That the Department of Communities update GROH policy to enable:
    - a. Agencies to enter longer-term leases
    - b. Shared housing arrangements
    - c. Support 'hire local' in government recruitment, enabling access to housing amongst Kimberley recruits
  - 4.4 That the Department of Communities investigate innovative models for implementation that would provide high-quality regional officer and other key worker housing to diversify and increase investment into GROH housing., including the Defense Housing Australia model.
5. **Targeted regional incentives to increase affordable housing supply, stimulate investor activity to increase the supply of rental homes for key workers, local businesses, and the non-government sector.**
  - 5.1 That the State and Federal Government targeting their housing investment programs to the Kimberley region.
  - 5.2 The Federal Government consider a Regional New Home and major renovation guarantee as a measure to reduce barriers to finance.
  - 5.3 That the State Government introduce incentives to support investment in new supply including removing stamp duty on the purchase of homes in the Kimberley and/or introduce a stamp duty rebate for the purchase of homes.
  - 5.4 That the Chamber of Commerce and Industry in partnership with local government and the Kimberley Development Commission advocate for changes to finance lending practices for home purchase in the region
  - 5.5 That the Kimberley Development Commission develop an Options Pape to address the cost of housing insurance in the region.
  - 5.6 That the Commonwealth Government increase Commonwealth Rent Assistance by 50 percent
  - 5.7 That the State Government establish a rental affordability scheme to increase the supply of below market rental homes in the region.
  - 5.8 That the State Government invest in expansion of private rental assistance programs to keep people in their home.

## ENDNOTES

1. *The factors leading to failed housing markets in regional WA were acknowledged in Foundations for a Strong Tomorrow State Infrastructure Strategy, page 253.*