

6.2.2 Expression of Interest - Management of Seniors Housing

Responsible GM: Lili Rosic
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Recommendation(s)

That Council support officers to:

- commence an Expression of Interest campaign that identifies suitable registered community housing providers who are interested in providing management and wrap around services for seniors housing within Cardinia Shire.
- prepare a report recommending a preferred provider to Council for endorsement following the Expression of Interest campaign.

Attachments

1. Example Letter To Residents [6.2.2.1 - 2 pages]

Executive Summary

Council currently provides the tenancy management and maintenance for 10 seniors housing units across two sites located within Pakenham and Cockatoo. Residents of these units are local older adults who are unable to find affordable accommodation through the commercial rental market.

While Council has provided this service for several years, it is not a core function of local government and can be better managed by a community housing provider who has the expertise to provide a higher quality service and wrap around support to the tenants.

Council is seeking to consider expressions of interest from registered housing providers, with expertise in seniors housing, who can take over the management of the two sites, and in the case of the Pakenham site, purchase and/or re-develop the site to provide additional affordable housing accommodation for the community.

Background

Two seniors housing sites were developed within Cardinia Shire in the 1980s that Council continue to manage and maintain. Since this time, the Community Housing Sector has become well established in Melbourne and many registered providers operate within the region who have greater expertise than Council to provide this service.

Community housing providers are not-for-profit, mission driven organisations. They own, develop, and maintain rental housing for people on very low, low, and moderate incomes who require social and affordable homes. In addition to housing services, they often facilitate wrap around support through complimentary service provision such as case management or care co-ordination.

Given the recent investments by the state and federal governments into social and affordable housing, it is timely to explore options for a registered provider to take over the management of these sites. Considering the increasing demand for affordable housing, the funding available for housing providers to develop new affordable housing, and the proximity of the site

to public transport and services, there is an opportunity to increase the supply of affordable housing through redevelopment of the Pakenham site.

The below table provides an overview of each site and the expression of interest:

	Cockatoo Cottages, 5 McBride Street Cockatoo	Thomas Lodge, 1 Flower Street, Pakenham
Overview	Crown land with a temporary reservation for 'Homes for Aged.' Council developed 5 units for seniors' accommodation in the 1980s with the assistance of Tasmanian state government funding, as a donation following Ash Wednesday bushfires. Council has managed and maintained these units since that time for seniors affordable housing with a Gazetted Eligibility Criteria.	Council-owned land with 5 units for seniors' accommodation, developed by Council in the 1980s with the assistance of state government funding. Council has managed and maintained these units since that time for seniors affordable housing with a Gazetted Eligibility Criteria.
EOI	Council is seeking to lease this site to a Registered Housing Agency to manage the site for Seniors Affordable Housing and provide ongoing support services.	Council is seeking to either sell or lease the Pakenham site to a Registered Housing Agency to re-develop the Pakenham Site for Affordable Housing with a greater density than the current development and to manage the occupation and provide ongoing support services. The Pakenham site, if re-developed, has the potential to also provide some office or consulting space for a service provider/s to operate from.

Cardinia Shire's *Social and Affordable Housing Strategy 2018-25* (the Strategy) outlines the demand for affordable housing within the shire and highlights the priority demographics in need of housing. People receiving an aged pension (including DVA) were the largest cohort receiving Commonwealth assistance in 2016, at more than 8,000 residents. ABS data from the 2021 Census showed that more than 1,900 households within Cardinia Shire needed affordable housing. 24% of households in need of affordable housing were lone person households, followed by 14% being families.

A recent report to Council (Monday 11th December) provided a progress update of the Strategy, which can be found here: [Social and Affordable Housing in Cardinia Shire - Cardinia Shire Council](#)

Over the past several years council have investigated alternative opportunities for management of the Cockatoo seniors housing, including supporting the formation of a Community Committee. However, this model was not deemed feasible for the following reasons:

- As Council is the appointed Committee of Management by DEECA for this site, any community committee would need to be established as a Community Asset Committee and comply with governance requirements of the *Local Government Act 2020*, along

with other relevant tenancy legislation. Under such a model Council would retain liability of the site and liability of actions taken by the Asset Committee.

- Under such a model Council would need to continue allocating resources to oversee governance and maintenance of the site.
- There is no guarantee that a volunteer committee would remain in place for the long term and there is a risk that a committee would seek to hand the management of the site back to Council at short notice.
- Volunteers may not have qualifications and expertise to provide direct support to residents or connect them with appropriate supports in the community to meet their needs. This may risk residents' wellbeing and expose Council to litigation if improper care is given. Registered housing providers have the expertise and correct governance in place to mitigate these risks and provide a high level of care.

The principal objectives of Council in securing a Registered Housing Agency to manage the seniors housing sites are to:

- Provide a fair tenancy selection process where those most in need are given priority access.
- Provide a high-quality service to the residents with access to wrap around supports.
- Increase the supply of affordable housing for residents who are vulnerable to homelessness.
- Re-allocate the resources involved in managing these two sites to providing other social support services to the whole community (e.g., attracting other in-demand homelessness support services into the shire).

Expression of Interest process

The expression of interest (EOI) process will be undertaken via a procurement process commencing on 26 February and closing on 17 May 2024. During that time officers will engage with registered housing providers to make them aware of this opportunity.

Council is seeking a proponent with:

- experience in providing Affordable Housing and support services
- experience in undertaking construction of Affordable Housing
- experience in managing Affordable Housing
- experience in managing temporary re-location of residents, in particular seniors.
- strong connections with local support services
- the ability to develop the accommodation in a timely manner; and
- the ability to maximise the financial return to Council

Policy Implications

It is a key principle of the *Local Government Act 2020* that council gives priority to achieving the best outcomes for the municipal community, including for future generations and that innovation and continuous improvement be pursued.

Cardinia Shire's Liveability Plan 2017-29 identifies 'Housing' as a key liveability domain, with the following strategic indicator:

- Increased access to appropriate and affordable housing.

Cardinia Shire's Social and Affordable Housing Strategy 2018-25 identifies the following actions relevant to this report:

- Action 6.4.2. Work with DHHS (Department of Health and Human Services) to identify underutilised or ageing public housing stock that may be suitable for re-development or increased density.
- Action 6.4.4 Undertake a land audit to identify potential Council owned land that council be sold or leased for social and affordable housing purposes.

- Action 6.4.8. Facilitate the delivery of social and affordable housing by not-for-profit housing agencies.

The Expression of Interest process will be conducted in line with Council's Procurement Policy and the lease of property will be managed in accordance with the Council Lease and Licence Policy adopted on the 21 February 2022. Any sale of land will be in accordance with the Local Government Best Practice Guidelines for the Sale, Exchange, and Transfer of Land June 2009.

Relevance to Council Plan

1.1 We empower our communities to be healthy, connected and resilient

1.1.1 Plan for, and support the delivery of, accessible health and social services that address critical gaps in provision.

2.1 We support the creation of liveable spaces and places

2.1.1 Advocate, plan for and deliver accessible community infrastructure and services that address community need.

2.1.3 Plan for housing diversity that meets community need, is affordable and delivers environmental sustainability, safety and healthy living outcomes.

5.1 We practise responsible leadership

5.1.1 Build trust through meaningful community engagement and transparent decision-making.

5.1.2 Manage our finances responsibly and leave a positive legacy for future generations.

5.1.4 Maximise value for our community through efficient service delivery, innovation, strategic partnerships and advocacy.

Climate Emergency Consideration

N/A

Consultation/Communication

Internal consultation for this report has occurred with the following teams:

- Health and Social Planning
- Access, Ageing and Community Support
- Property
- Procurement
- Governance
- Communications and Engagement
- Buildings and Facilities

Current residents and key stakeholders have been informed of Council's intent to consider commencing an EOI process for the two seniors housing sites. Residents received phone calls, a home visit, and a letter (attached) with information about Council's intent for the EOI and the process timelines two weeks ahead of this Council Meeting.

Residents and key stakeholders will be further engaged throughout the EOI process in line with Council's Community Engagement Policy.

Financial and Resource Implications

The current resources allocated to managing the seniors housing sites include a 0.2 EFT Community Support Facilitator within the Access, Ageing and Community Support Team and an annual maintenance budget of approximately \$86K. Council has recently invested in the

upgrade and refurbishment of the Cockatoo Cottages to improve accessibility and overall building conditions for tenants.

Conclusion

Council is seeking to consider expressions of interest from registered housing providers, with expertise in seniors housing, with the intention of providing improved service to residents and enhance the stock of affordable housing. Council will follow the procurement and engagement processes to ensure good governance and support is provided for current tenants. Residents have been informed of the EOI process and timelines. Following the EOI evaluation process, a report will be presented to Council with the recommended provider.



5 February 2024

Lili Rosic
General Manager Liveable Communities
Cardinia Shire Council
PO Box 7
Pakenham
VIC 3810

Dear <resident's name>,

Re: Seeking expressions of interest from Community Housing Providers

Thank you for meeting with us today. This letter has all the information we talked about. Please share this with your family or support person.

On Monday 19th February Council will decide whether to start a process to find a registered housing provider who can provide residential tenancy management services and support to you as a resident of Thomas Lodge.

What does this mean for you?

There is nothing you need to do now. Please be assured that you are guaranteed access to long-term affordable accommodation for as long as you need.

Why is Council seeking an external provider?

Council has been managing and maintaining Thomas Lodge since it was established in the 1980s. Since this time the Community Housing Sector has become well established in Victoria and many registered providers operate within the region who have greater expertise than Council to provide this service.

Given the recent funding made available by the state and federal governments into social and affordable housing, it is timely for Council to explore options for a registered provider to take over this service.

What is a Community Housing Provider?

Community housing providers are registered and regulated by the state government to provide secure, affordable, long-term rental housing. Community housing providers can offer additional tenant support, some specialise in helping specific groups, like people with a disability, women, young people and seniors.

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Page 1 of 2



Community housing providers can:

- help people access secure and affordable housing
- assist and support people on low incomes, who are frail, have a disability, and
- help people to stay in their home over the long-term.

What happens next?

If Councillors agree to start the Expression of Interest process at the meeting on the 19th February, then Registered Community Housing Providers will be invited to submit proposals to Council outlining how they can provide the best service for our community.

Council officers will evaluate the proposals and provide a recommendation back to Councillors of which provider best meets the criteria for the service. The report will be made publicly available on Council's website, and you will be informed of the meeting date when it has been scheduled.

Can I put a question forward for this Council meeting?

The agenda for the Council meeting on Monday 19th February will be available to view on Council's website (www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/meetings) from Monday 12th February.

If you would like to ask a question during public question time at a Council meeting, please consider:

- The person who lodged the question must be present at the meeting during question time.
- To ask a question at a Council meeting, we need to receive your question by 12 noon on the day of the meeting so a response can be prepared.
- You can submit a question online or in hard copy. For more info on how to do this visit www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/councilmeetings

Your local Councillor is <insert Councillor's name>. They can be contacted on <insert phone number> or via email at <insert email>.

Council staff are also here to help. If you would like more information about the project or help with submitting a question at the Council meeting, please contact:

<insert officer name>
Community Support Facilitator
Phone: <insert phone number>
Email: <insert email>

Yours sincerely

Lili Rosic

General Manager Liveable Communities

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