



LOCAL GOVERNMENT HOUSING ADVOCACY PLAN LET'S CONQUER QUEENSLAND'S HOUSING CRISIS



A six-point action plan from Queensland local government to begin conquering the housing crisis.

On behalf of Queensland's 77 local councils, the Local Government Association of Queensland is calling on State and Federal governments to agree to the following:

-  **Convene a National Housing Summit** and prepare a new national housing strategy in partnership with all levels of government as well as industry and community groups.
-  **Quadruple capital investment in social housing in Queensland** by allocating a further \$4.8 billion over four years to increase social housing supply in areas of need.
-  **Extend the First Home Owners' Grant** to be available for the purchase of any new dwelling, any existing dwelling and for the renovation and refurbishment of existing housing stock.
-  **Unlock abandoned, unused and empty properties** in Queensland to increase existing housing supply.
-  **Commit to Closing the Gap** and reduce overcrowding in remote and discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities by allocating \$100 million per year for five years to increase housing supply.
-  **Invest \$200 million over four years** to assist councils to develop and implement innovative housing partnerships.



Let's conquer the housing crisis

The chronic housing crisis gripping many parts of Australia is inflicting a worsening human and economic toll.

The housing challenges across Queensland are complex, multi-faceted and driven by a diverse range of factors.

However, as the tier of government closest to the community, councils in every corner of Queensland have first-hand experience of the devastating impacts of the lack of available, affordable and adequate housing:

- + Homes that are too expensive and rents that are too high are forcing vulnerable people into emergency and makeshift accommodation. In extreme circumstances, this can mean people sleeping rough in a tent or even a car.
- + The growth of local industry and commerce is stalling, as desperate businesses struggle to attract enough workers because no suitable housing is available.
- + Overcrowding in some remote Indigenous communities is so bad that up to 30 people often live under one roof.
- + Deepening social problems, including mental health issues and domestic violence, imperil the social fabric of many communities as individuals and families who cannot afford to buy nor rent, succumb to the stress of homelessness.

Galvanised by this persistent housing shortfall, the Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ) is urging government, industry and community groups to support its campaign - **Let's Conquer Queensland's Housing Crisis!**

As the peak body representing Queensland's 77 councils, the LGAQ has kick-started the initiative with an initial six-point plan spearhead by a call for a National Housing Summit.

LGAQ President and Sunshine Coast Council Mayor Mark Jamieson said unprecedented low interest rates, sharply rising property prices, product supply chain issues, significant labour shortages and scarcity of tradespeople were combining to create a "perfect housing storm".

"This dire housing shortage is a national emergency, with many towns and areas suffering throughout Australia."

- Mayor Mark Jamieson
Sunshine Coast Council
President, LGAQ



Time for action

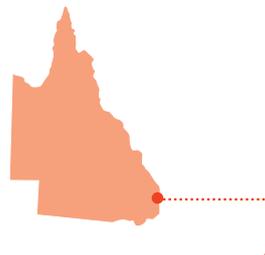
The LGAQ's "Let's Conquer Queensland's Housing Crisis" campaign is calling on the Federal and State governments to agree to an initial six-point Housing Action Plan:

- ▶ **Convene a National Housing Summit** and prepare a new national housing strategy in partnership with all levels of government as well as industry and community groups.
- ▶ **Quadruple capital investment in social housing in Queensland** by allocating a further \$4.8 billion over four years to increase social housing supply in areas of need.
- ▶ **Extend the First Home Owners' Grant** to be available for the purchase of any new dwelling, any existing dwelling and for the renovation and refurbishment of existing housing stock.
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In addition to these immediate priorities, the LGAQ's Housing Action Plan seeks on going discussions with the State and Federal governments to find further solutions and speedily respond to new challenges posed by the housing crisis.

"Local councils are responding to the housing crisis as best they can, but to achieve the major statutory, policy and funding levers our communities need, the Federal and State governments must also play their role."

- Mayor Jenny Hill
Townsville City Council



SUNSHINE COAST COUNCIL

Rental families left homeless

Single mum Nicole, and her three children, are among a growing number of homeless people on the Sunshine Coast. Despite being a great tenant for 18 years, with an unblemished record, glowing references and a full-time job, Nicole faces an uncertain future after being evicted from her home of five years. Her eldest son, 19, has been forced to live with a friend while Nicole and her two teenage daughters are staying in a friend's studio flat in Kings Beach. Nicole has applied for 20 rental applications so far — all to no avail. "Too many families seem to be in situations similar to ours at the moment and it just doesn't seem fair," she said.

- CASE STUDY





MT ISA CITY COUNCIL

Mt Isa accommodation plight

Mount Isa is a town known for providing opportunities for people from all over Australia, particularly in terms of career opportunities and a fantastic lifestyle.

However, for the foreseeable future, Mount Isa will see accommodation problems escalate, with the market for industries which dominate employment in the region never stronger.

This, combined with the lack of qualified builders in the region and the high cost of transport for building materials, has meant a decrease in the number of new houses built and the number of renovations to older homes.

Mount Isa hasn't seen many large-scale residential developments built lately, which would provide cost savings essential in affordable property construction, due to the buy-in-bulk and transport-in-bulk factors.

A partnership between the Federal and State governments, and Mount Isa City Council, could provide a huge step forward in addressing the affordable housing issue – as well as the many social, cultural, FIFO, industry-diversity, and overall liveability factors that currently do not exist.

- CASE STUDY



WHITSUNDAY REGIONAL COUNCIL

The housing crisis affecting the Whitsunday Region is the worst Deputy Mayor Mike Brunker has seen in his lifetime. Just 18 months ago, he recalls there being 1500 vacant properties in the Bowen area alone. Fast forward to today and the situation is completely reversed with more renters than houses available to rent. Some families are living in motel rooms, while others have been forced into caravan parks.

“Three people are coming into my shop every week and saying, ‘I’ve just been given six weeks’ notice and I’ve got to move out’... This is a rental crisis the like of which we’ve never seen before,” Cr Brunker said. He raised the call for a National Housing Summit at the LGAQ Annual Conference in October 2021, winning the unanimous support of councils across Queensland.

The pressure is now on the State and Federal governments to commit to the summit so all three levels of government can come together and start finding solutions. “We need a national summit and every shire and every council has got to support it, and we’ve got to get down to Canberra and tell them how it is... otherwise it’s going to be a disaster.”

- CASE STUDY



Housing crisis a handbrake on regional growth

Despite attractive investment opportunities for industry and business, the housing crisis is hampering economic growth in regional Queensland.

Councils are becoming alarmed as the lack of suitable local housing discourages skilled workers from relocating, especially to rural and remote towns.

A recent study by the Western Queensland Alliance of Councils, in conjunction with the Regional Australia Institute, highlighted the severe under-investment in housing in regional Queensland over many years.

This has led to a situation where the lack of housing was constraining population, employment and business growth.

The study said there were jobs going unfilled in Western Queensland simply due to a lack of suitable housing.

The per capita investment in housing in Western Queensland was less than one fifth of what occurred in Greater Brisbane, the study found.

Flinders Shire Council Mayor Jane McNamara said the regional property market had failed, dramatically reducing the availability and affordability of housing to buy or rent, especially for those on low and even moderate incomes.

She said rural and remote areas were in the middle of a perfect storm and, as a result, not enough houses were being built to meet demand.

Mayor McNamara said many reasons were contributing to this situation, including soaring construction costs and building material shortages, as well as banks requiring larger deposits for new home loans.

A lack of local tradespeople and the prohibitive cost of hiring these skilled workers from outside the area further discouraged any new home building.

"It has got to the stage where new home building in some rural towns is almost non-existent," she said.

Mayor McNamara said the housing crisis was threatening to derail the initiatives of rural and remote councils to boost their local economies.



MURWEH SHIRE COUNCIL

Housing shortage deters rural and remote workers

Economic growth and job creation are being severely hampered by a shortage of rental housing, especially in rural and remote areas. With livestock prices booming, Queensland's largest sheep and goat abattoir has commenced work on an \$8 million expansion of its facility in Charleville, in the Central West. However, Western Meat Exporters has struggled to hire the extra 40 permanent staff it needs. "Without any local housing to rent, it's virtually impossible for companies like this to attract new workers," said Murweh Shire Council Mayor Cr Shaun Radnedge. "And it doesn't stop there - council has been advertising outside our region for more staff to handle the increased tourism and commerce in our Shire. "Tourism numbers have been at record levels and there's more than \$10 million set aside to upgrade our tourism precinct facilities. But so far we've been unable to find the right applicants because we just don't have the sort of accommodation that appeals to them. Council now faces the possibility of cutting back our tourism operations and excursions next year."

- CASE STUDY

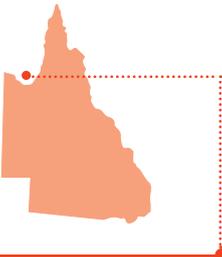
Overcrowding a blight on Indigenous towns

Overcrowding in many remote Indigenous communities in Queensland has reached critical levels.

To address these high levels of overcrowding, the LGAQ Annual Conference called for increased Federal Government support for housing supply in remote and discrete First Nations communities.

Lockhart River Aboriginal Shire Council Mayor and Chair of the Indigenous Leaders' Forum, Wayne Butcher, said overcrowding was a pervasive issue that had devastating flow-on effects for many Indigenous communities.

Overcrowding in remote Indigenous communities just keeps getting worse. In Lockhart River, it's fairly common to have up to 15 people living in a two-bedroom house," he said.



MORNINGTON SHIRE COUNCIL

Mornington Island residents turn to crime for some peace and quiet

A special article by The Australian (3 December 2020) highlighted the plight of Mornington Island residents Shaylene Yarrak, 25, and her partner Travis Body, 30, who shared a two-bedroom home with their five kids and extended family, including her sister's three children—making it 13 people under the same roof. "It is stressful, there is no privacy, it's like that everywhere around here," Ms Yarrak said. "Some people bugger up and get locked up just so they can get away—you get your own cell, it's like a holiday."

The 2020 Productivity Commission report into the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, reiterates the need to tackle overcrowding to improve physical and mental health.

The report says Indigenous Australians have typically larger households, motivated by "a culture of sharing accommodation", and two of five people living in remote Indigenous communities are in overcrowded housing. Further to this, like many remote communities, there is little or no employment on Mornington Island, and little chance of ever buying a house—often because of land tenure restrictions.

- CASE STUDY



"Efforts to improve the health and education of many of our people are being crippled by overcrowding. This is a human rights issue that must be urgently addressed with dedicated long-term funding from the Federal Government, otherwise the economic and social fabric of our communities are seriously at risk."

- Mayor Wayne Butcher
Lockhart River Aboriginal Shire Council

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