

COMMUNITY HOUSING

Community Housing is a term used to describe a wide range of housing options. The Community Housing Coalition of WA (CHCWA) uses the following definition:

“Community housing is non-government, not for profit housing provision and management which offers affordable and secure tenure.”

It has capacity “to respond to local needs, engage community resources and provide or facilitate a wide range of integrated services to assist tenants.”¹

According to the New South Wales Federation of Housing Associations, “community housing provides:

- *Flexible and sensitive local housing management, particularly for high needs groups;*
- *The ability to involve highly motivated individuals, with a commitment to community development in the management of housing services;*
- *Access to additional funding, beyond government sources;*

Many community housing organisations operate in close collaboration with support service providers, in an environment where an increasing proportion of tenants need both accommodation and support to live independently;

Tenancy managers in the community housing sector are generally skilled in providing links with other services for tenants, including employment and training;

Community housing organisations tend to place a greater emphasis on tenants’ involvement in management. Tenants have a greater commitment to their housing and neighbourhood, and gain skills through such involvement.”²

COMMUNITY HOUSING PROVIDERS INCLUDE:

Large and Small Housing Associations, Church-based Providers, Local Government Authorities, Crisis Accommodation Providers Indigenous Organisations, Housing Co-operatives, and other community service organisations

TENANTS OF COMMUNITY HOUSING INCLUDE:

Families and households in receipt of low to moderate incomes and people with special needs such as:

Seniors, People with Disabilities, Single Parents, Young People, Aboriginal People, Migrants, People Escaping Domestic Violence, People at Risk of Homelessness.

¹ Department of Housing and Works (2002) *Community Housing – Development of a Strategic Plan 2003 – 2013*. p 3 citing SACHA Strategic Plan 2000-2004

² New South Wales Federation of housing Associations (2002) *Submission to the Inquiry into community Housing* p18

BENEFITS OF COMMUNITY HOUSING TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT

- ❖ Helps create safer cities through the provision of supported and monitored appropriate secure affordable housing
- ❖ Contributes to sustainable, diverse communities
- ❖ Enhances social capital and build community capacity
- ❖ Provides appropriately located and integrated housing
- ❖ Assists council to implement local government initiatives e.g. sustainable urban designs
- ❖ Provide opportunities for local councillors to sit on the Management Committees of community based housing providers

Community Housing Providers:

- ❖ Contribute to local businesses and tradespeople
- ❖ Have a 'buy local' policy
- ❖ Support and network with personnel from other community based agencies to provide support to tenants i.e. ACTIV Foundation, Great Southern Personnel Workforce, Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service
- ❖ Employ local staff
- ❖ Have local persons who have a social and capital investment in the community on their management committees
- ❖ Meet local needs locally and are not constrained by the generic centrally determined policy which may not be sympathetic to the amenity of the locality
- ❖ Bring external investment to the local area
- ❖ Reinvest their income within the local authority area
- ❖ Work with local governments
- ❖ Offer security of tenure to tenants. (This reduces the negative effect of transience which manifests itself in social disruption, degradation and damage to public and private amenities.)

THE ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN THE PROVISION OF COMMUNITY BASED SOCIAL HOUSING

Local Government Authorities are an important stakeholder in the provision of community based social housing. Many of the activities and responsibilities of Local Government, for example, making land available for residential development, determining the density of housing and monitoring the quality of residential design, have a significant impact on the affordability, appropriateness, and security of housing in local communities.

While it is acknowledged that LGA's are not in the business of housing provision they are increasingly accepting their role as a major player in facilitating responses, that address social need, through the development and planning processes they control.

Local government is uniquely placed to act as a key player to contribute to the provision of affordable housing. It plans and delivers local services and facilities, advocates for developments that improve the overall well being of its community and is ideally positioned to facilitate collaborative working relationships with all spheres of government, the private sector and community organisations.

The following policy was adopted by WAMA and its constituents in the 1990's. It is now dated but provides evidence that Western Australian Local Governments did recognise the importance of community housing.

POLICY STATEMENTS OF WAMA AND ITS CONSTITUENT ASSOCIATIONS: LGA CSCA CUCA

“PRINCIPLE

Shelter is a basic right of all people. Affordable, secure and appropriate housing should be accessible within every community in Western Australia without discrimination of any kind.

The provision of housing is primarily the responsibility of the State and Commonwealth governments. However, each Local Government may choose to participate at a level that is appropriate for its community.

Local Government is well placed to identify and plan for the housing needs of all sections of the community, and can work co-operatively with governments, the private sector, non-government organisations and community groups to facilitate greater access to appropriate and affordable housing for all residents.

POLICY

ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

1. *Councils should facilitate a diversity of housing stock and mix of tenure types in the local area, as appropriate for the needs of all local residents, whilst having regard to the character and amenity of residential environments.*
2. *Local Government is a key sphere of government in the planning and coordination of local services and has the local knowledge and proximity to the community to enable it to identify particular housing needs, to monitor changes in the needs and preferences of local residents, and contribute to the formulation of adequate housing policies at local, regional, State and national levels.*
3. *Local Government has the capacity to share responsibility with the Commonwealth and State Governments in assessing and responding to the housing needs of all income and social groups.*
4. *Councils should integrate their housing policies and programs with the provision of community facilities, services and employment opportunities.*
5. *Councils should develop flexible planning schemes and building policies that use land efficiently and promote the development of more affordable housing.*
6. *Where demand exists for caravan parks which provide permanent accommodation, and where Councils allow the establishment of such facilities, then:*
 - a) *Councils should adopt regulatory control standards which are tailored to meet the requirements of permanent residence; and*
 - b) *Councils should adopt locational policies which allow access and support to local commercial and community facilities.*

INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

7. *In ensuring that local needs are met, Councils should complement and not duplicate the activities of Homeswest.*
8. *State and Commonwealth Governments should recognize Local Government as a key planner and coordinator of local services and, as such, Local Government should be consulted and participate in policy and funding negotiations relating to provision of housing. Local Government should be involved in negotiations on the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement.*
9. *Local Government expects that the State and Commonwealth Governments, in acknowledging these roles of Councils, will conform to local planning controls, standards and local Council policies when undertaking housing projects and any subdivisions.*
10. *Commonwealth and State Governments should recognize that rural Councils are particularly disadvantaged with respect to finances and access to human resources for the purposes of housing needs research, housing provision and management, by virtue of their small size, limited financial resources and geographical isolation.*
11. *Commonwealth and State Governments, when referring to “regional” policy should not assume that individual Local Government constituencies can be adequately or appropriately subsumed under “regional” generalisations. The intra-regional diversity of the housing needs and resources of Local Councils should be recognized by other spheres of government.*

FUNDING

12. *Commonwealth and State Governments should provide an adequate level of financial assistance for Local Government housing activities. The Commonwealth State Housing Agreement should allocate specific grant funds on a non-matching basis to Local Government for the purposes of either capital projects or research into housing needs.*
13. *Where Councils choose to take on the role of housing provision in joint venture type programs with Commonwealth/State Governments, non-government agencies and the private sector, then those arrangements should not result in the loss of equity of those Councils.*

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

14. *Local Government has a primary role to play in increasing the community’s awareness of housing needs and services, and in assisting, supporting and promoting self-help activities in the development, provision and management of housing resources.*
15. *Local Government is best placed, by virtue of its proximity to and knowledge of local resources, to act in one or more of the following developmental ways in the area of community housing – catalyst, facilitator, advocate, planning/coordinator, information broker and service provider.”*

