



## Improved community wellbeing now and into the future

For our region to be able to offer its residents a range of affordable, appropriate housing choices and access to health care, mental health care, aged care and other services that enhance wellbeing



**Increased social housing, including crisis and emergency accommodation, to be on par with the State average of 4% of housing stock, within people's community of interest.**

**Goal:** *Strategic Action #4.4* - Increased availability, affordability and choice of housing to meet the needs of current and projected Northern Rivers population.

**Background:** Every day more than 37,000 people in NSW experience homelessness, and this figure is increasing. Having a safe and secure home is out of reach for too many.

According to the NSW Department of Planning and Environment, by 2036 the population of the NSW NR will have grown by a further 20%.

Housing stress is high in the NR with 13.2% of households in the lowest 40% of incomes paying more than 30% of their gross weekly income on housing costs (16,179 households), compared to 11.7% for NSW (2016 Census). Housing stress is very high among renter households in NR at 38.8% compared to 28.4% for NSW.

**Policy Context:** The *NSW Homelessness Strategy 2018-2023* sets out the NSW Government's plan to prevent and improve the response to homelessness. It sets the direction for the next five years. This Strategy recognises that homelessness is not just a housing problem, with a person's pathway into homelessness driven by:

- the intersection of structural drivers, (such as housing affordability, labour market forces)
- risk factors (such as financial stress, family breakdown)
- protective factors (such as employment, involvement in community).

On 24 January 2016, the NSW Government announced its 10-year vision for social housing, *Future Directions for Social Housing in NSW*. This involves increasing the number of homes and making the best use of existing ones - a large scale program to build a mix of social, affordable and private homes. The focus is to build integrated communities close to transport, education and support services.

The NSW Government has signed a global agreement '*A Place to Call Home*' founded by the Institute of Global Homelessness, to halve street homelessness across the State by 2025. Premier Gladys Berejiklian and Minister for Social Housing Pru Goward, together with service providers and the City of Sydney, signed the agreement on 13 February at NSW Parliament, making Sydney the tenth city to join the fight against street homelessness. The target to halve street homelessness across the entire State by 2025 is welcomed by NRJO.

**Problem:** Housing affordability and housing stress are major issues in the NSW NR. Over recent decades house prices and rents have risen faster than incomes, particularly in coastal areas.

- The Northern Rivers has second tightest private rental market in NSW, with an average monthly vacancy rate at 1.2% in the 12 months to December 2018 (REINSW) and over 12,000 households in rental stress according (ABS 2016 Census)
- The Northern Rivers is the least affordable regional area for rental accommodation in the state, with Byron, Ballina, Clarence Valley and The Tweed Shire the four least affordable local government areas in regional NSW. (Affordable Housing Income Gap 2018 Report - Compass Housing)
- Tweed Heads is the eighth least affordable housing market in the world (Demographia, 2017)
- In March 2018 Anglicare found just one rental property in Ballina, one in Byron Bay and no rental properties in Tweed Heads that would be affordable to low income households or people on benefits.
- 6,200 additional social and affordable dwellings are needed in the Northern Rivers region by 2026 (based on *The Everybody's Home Campaign* methodology, *Housing Needs Northern Rivers Housing Study 2018 – North Coast Community Housing*). This is the equivalent of more than 600 per year over 10 years. Half of those will be needed just to clear the current social housing wait list. (John McKenna, CEO North Coast Community Housing)

**Support and Partnerships:** NRJO is committed to partnering with the NSW Department of Planning and Environment to progress relevant directions in the North Coast Regional Plan 2036, including:

Direction 22: Deliver greater housing supply

Direction 23: Increase housing diversity and choice

Direction 24: Deliver well-planned rural residential housing areas

Direction 25: Deliver more opportunities for affordable housing

Homelessness NSW, NCOSS and Social Futures are requesting action from the State Government on six key pillars arising from the 2018 Northern Rivers Housing Forum:

1. Develop a minimum of 100 additional social housing properties per year for 10 years
2. Quarantine part of the Social and Affordable Housing Fund (SAHF) for regional areas
3. Additional 150 transitional accommodation properties for specialist homelessness services' clients
4. Additional homelessness support funding for Northern Rivers
5. Better quality and higher density Housing NSW properties in appropriate locations
6. Extend existing planning instruments that support affordable housing development to NR LGAs.

Landcom develops award-winning places for the people of NSW, being a state-owned corporation that partners with the private sector to create quality residential communities that demonstrate leadership in sustainable urban development. Landcom is focused on increasing its activity in the regions, taking



an active role in supporting the NSW Government's housing affordability agenda and delivering the local infrastructure that helps new communities grow and thrive.

**Solution and Actions sought:** In the Northern Rivers 3659 households lived in rented social housing (3%) compared to 4.2% for Regional NSW and 4.4% for the whole of NSW in 2016.

**Status Quo:** No action by the NSW Govt will impact heavily on NR communities

**Small Increase:** Will offer wide ranging benefits to NR communities and restore dignity for those in crisis and emergency situations

**Increase to 4%:** Will put people at the centre and demonstrate equity between the city and the regions

