

Local Government working with the Community Housing sector for Affordable Housing

The Townsville Region's response to affordable housing issues

History of the Townsville Partnership

- Townsville City Council's involvement with housing commenced in the 1970's.
- Council took on a role of supporting the establishment of the Family Emergency Accommodation Services known as FEAT in 1978, which involved transferring Council properties to that organisation.

Partnerships

- The Bell Street housing project in 1993 was a joint venture between Council, the Department of Housing and a private developer to construct a unit development with a mix of private and public housing.
- For the Garbutt renewal project in the 1990's Council partnered the State Government in the developing affordable housing while retaining the suburbs character.

Background to Research Work

- In 2002 an Affordable Housing Reference Group was established by Townsville City Council.
- The Group prepared a research project on homelessness for North Queensland Shelter.
- The Group has since provided input into the reports:
 - “Homelessness in the Townsville Region” (2002), “Affordable Housing Needs in the Townsville Region” (2003) and
 - “Towards an Affordable Housing Strategy for the Townsville Region (2004).

Affordable Housing Reference Group

- At the beginning of 2003 when work began on the “Affordable Housing Needs...” project, the Reference Group consisted of representatives from
 - North Queensland Shelter,
 - The North Queensland Community Housing Resource Worker Program,
 - The Townsville Region Tenants Action Group and
 - Townsville City Council.
- During 2003 the Community Rent Scheme and Family Emergency Accommodation Townsville (FEAT) representatives joined the group.

Expanding Interest

- In 2004, work began on the “Towards an Affordable Housing Strategy for Townsville” report.
- With guest speakers from
 - the Open Youth Project,
 - the Department of Housing Area Office
 - and the adjoining Council, Thuringowa City.
- The level of interest in the work of the Reference Group meant that these guests wanted to stay on.
- By the end of 2004 the Affordable Housing Reference Group had representatives from a broad range of stakeholders from the housing sector of the Townsville Region.

Affordable Housing Project

- In 2004 the Affordable Housing Reference Group was made up of:
 - Community Rent Scheme
 - North Queensland Shelter
 - Qld Department of Housing
 - Council of the City of Thuringowa
 - FEAT (Family Emergency Accommodation Townsville)
 - North Qld Community Housing Resource Worker Program
 - TRTAG (Townsville Region Tenants Action Group)
 - Townsville City Council (City Planning and Community Services Departments)
 - Open Youth Project

From Reference Group to Action Group

- The North Queensland Affordable Housing Action Group (N.Q.A.H.A.G.) was established at the 8th October 2004 meeting of the North Queensland Regional Housing Council.
- The Action Group's initial task was a response to an "Expression of Interest" invitation by the Queensland State Government for funding to develop an appropriate affordable housing model for the Region

Membership of the N.Q.A.H.A.G. is made up of:

- One representative from each of the following Community Housing funded programs:
 - Crisis Assistance Program
 - Support Assistance Accommodation Program
 - Community Rent Scheme
 - Tenant Advice and Advocacy Service
 - Long Term Community Housing
 - The Community Housing Resource Worker Program (CHRWP)
 - Indigenous Community Housing Program
- As well as:
 - North Queensland Shelter
 - Townsville Region Tenants Action Group
 - Townsville Multicultural Support Group
 - N Q Regional Indigenous Housing
 - Townsville City Council
 - Thuringowa City Council
 - Department of Housing, N Q Area
 - Queensland Youth Services
 - Department of Communities
 - State Member for Townsville's representative

Population Dynamics

- The current population of the Townsville Region now exceeds 150,000 people.
- It is projected that by the year 2026 there will be an extra 50,000 people in the Region requiring an additional 20,000 dwellings. (Source: Department of Local Government and Planning).
- The 2001 Census indicated that over 35% or about 23,000 people of the Region's workforce were casual, part-time, trainees or apprentices earning less than the average weekly wage.

Impacts on Housing

- The University, Defence Force and mining industries impact upon rental markets in the Region
- 35% of housing in the Region is rented.
- Average rental costs have increased by about 35% since 1997.
- Based on figures from the Department of Housing almost 35% of households are renting unaffordable accommodation.

Accommodation Needed

- Research suggests that for every new 100 affordable housing dwellings constructed in Townsville, the following percentages be used as a guide:
 - 1 bedroom units 50%
 - 2 bedroom units or houses 25%
 - 3 Bedroom houses 20%
 - 4 bedroom plus houses 5%

Type of Accommodation Required

- Research indicated that those most in need are:
- People with a physical disability or a mental illness, young singles and seniors who require 1 bedroom units;
- Small families, including one parent households who require 2 bedroom units; and
- Large families requiring 4 or more bedrooms.

Land Availability

- The Townsville Thuringowa Strategy Plan (2000) estimated that the Region has the potential to house a total of 320,000 people.
- This level of availability means that with good land management practices the Region has the potential to supply the market with affordable land for residential development for the next 20 to 30 years.

A Community Housing Model

- In December 2004, the 'expression of interest' for viability funding was submitted with a proposal aiming to develop a partnership approach as the basis for an affordable housing model for Townsville.
- The model promotes a partnership between a range of stakeholders with an interest in housing including FEAT, the Community Rent Scheme, Townsville and Thuringowa City Councils, the Department of Housing's Townsville Area Office and the development industry.

Models for Affordable Housing

- Elsewhere in Queensland and Australia affordable housing models are being developed to address demand for housing as an alternative to public housing provided by the State Government.
- Mostly these models are based on partnerships between state governments, local governments, the community housing sector, the development industry and churches.

A Role for Local Government

- Council's core role in planning and development regulation activities has a major impact on housing affordability.
- Planning schemes dictate aspects of housing development such as: location, density, height and built form.
- A partnership role for local government in housing provision is as facilitator and fair broker between State government, the community and private industry.

A Community Housing Model

- There is an opportunity to develop a community housing model specifically to suit the needs of the Townsville Region.
- The Queensland State Government is encouraging community housing sector organisations to demonstrate how a viable community housing model can be established for their regions in partnership with local government, State government, private industry, church groups and community organisations.