

Affordable Living/Housing Affordability/Housing diversity Hot Topic

Like everywhere else on the Coast the Blackall Range is experiencing an affordable living and affordable housing crisis because of increasing property prices and rents and supply issues.

However, the supply problems are partly related to the reduced availability of properties for long-term occupation because they are being rented out as short-term accommodation like BnB, wedding accommodation and holiday stays. As the number of short-term accommodation properties and usage is not monitored or regulated by Council, including on the Range, the scale of this problem is not known and therefore Council must come forward with additional information how it intends to deal with the issues via the PS. It seems that Council will need to far better regulate the location, number and operations of short-term accommodation.

Similarly, there is anecdotal evidence that buyers from overseas, interstate and elsewhere are snapping up existing dwellings because of Covid and for sea and tree-change reasons and that this is also causing housing stress and supply problems. It is unclear if this will be an ongoing issue.

The Range is apparently not slated for significant development in the new PS, primarily because of lack of infrastructure and services and physical and nature conservation development constraints.

Nevertheless, there is a need to consider greater diversity on the Range (e.g. size, type and tenure) that matches the different household needs. There might be some very limited scope for tiny houses, secondary dwellings, duplexes, and retirement living dwellings on the Range, but the details of that need to be explored further with Council. This can occur once Council's Housing Needs Assessment is completed and Council explains exactly what aspects of the ELS and Community Strategy it intends to apply via the new PS.

However, we do not support expansion of the current Urban Footprint or the Rural Residential Areas on the Range, nor dwellings and any other buildings that exceed 8.5M in height (i.e. we do not support any multiple dwellings over 8.5 M, nor higher density dwellings). Any retirement village style development should be low key, low density to match the prevailing existing densities and building heights in Mapleton. We do not support any form of manufactured home, retirement village resort.

The homelessness and housing affordability crisis is unacceptable in a wealthy country. Chronic underfunding of social and community housing by the State and Federal Governments must be urgently changed as a major solution to the crisis. Council should advocate for much higher government budget allocations.

Private sector incentive programs are not an acceptable, adequate alternative. Instead, all new urban subdivisions and housing developments should be required to provide a wider diversity of housing, including minimum levels of affordable owner-occupier and rental housing. "Build to rent" appears to be a potentially useful option. However, Council should not offer lower standards of density, design, amenity, open space etc in return for developers providing greater diversity and more affordable housing. Council should advocate these housing policy reforms to State and Federal Governments.

Council needs to come back to the community with greater detail about its plans to use Council owned land for community and affordable housing. It is unclear where and how this would be done.