



SHELTER TAS SUBMISSION HUNTINGFIELD MASTERPLAN JUNE 2020



ShelterTAS
Housing and Homelessness Peak

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By email: HousingProjects@communities.tas.gov.au

Re: Huntingfield Subdivision Master Plan

As the peak body for housing and homelessness services in Tasmania Shelter Tas appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Huntingfield Subdivision Master Plan. Our response is based on consultation with our members, who include all the funded Specialist Homelessness Services and not-for-profit Community Housing Providers in Tasmania. We also draw on the latest research, data and extensive consultation with our members, interstate colleagues and national peaks. The content of our submission is the responsibility of Shelter Tas and reflects our knowledge and expertise gained as the state's peak body for housing and homelessness services.

Shelter Tas strongly supports the proposed approach at Huntingfield and the affordable and social housing outcomes that the proposal is intended to achieve. Approximately 70 homes in the 470 lot development (15%) will be affordable and social housing. Even more housing would be welcome as there is clear evidence of the need for social housing in Kingborough and areas close to Hobart.

Shelter Tas is aware that as at June 2020, nearly 900 people have applied for accommodation in the Kingston area on the social housing waiting list. Of these, over 650 are priority applicants and the majority are seeking one bedroom dwellings. These could be older people who have lost a partner and can no longer afford their existing home, people who have left a family violence situation, and young single people who are priced out of the increasingly expensive private rental market. To be on the priority list for social housing means that you are in serious housing hardship at risk of or experiencing homelessness. The fastest growing cohort of people experiencing homelessness is women aged over fifty-five. People who have faced housing hardship deserve to be welcomed into this new neighbourhood, not be treated with suspicion and subject to inaccurate stereotypes about people who need assistance with housing.

This development is an opportunity to house local people on low and moderate incomes, including older people, in a diverse and vibrant environment that will be an asset to the broader community.

Tasmania's ongoing need for more affordable housing

As the peak body for housing and homelessness in Tasmania, Shelter Tas has for many years advocated for inclusive, diverse housing developments, and the importance of planning for our communities' needs for affordable and social housing. An inclusive society needs a range of tenure types, including ownership, private rental, and social and supportive housing options.

Local resistance to the building of new affordable housing and homelessness initiatives presents a significant barrier to new developments. This can create delays, meaning that people are waiting longer for the homes they need. In many instances, community resistance to social and affordable housing is based on a NIMBY – not in my backyard – response. But everyone's home will be in

someone's backyard. It is important that concerns raised in relation to the Huntingfield development are not given undue priority over the urgent need to build new affordable housing as soon as possible, given the current pressures across Tasmania and especially in greater Hobart.

Those concerned about social and affordable housing can be assured that this is a well-designed mixed development that includes a range of tenure types and income levels. Good planning avoids the concentrated areas of disadvantage arising from mistakes of earlier years. There are many good examples in Tasmania, and other national and international jurisdictions, where good planning and urban design deliver inclusive and diverse outcomes.

Building an adequate supply of affordable and social housing will be at the heart of long-term solutions that recharge and renew Tasmania's economy and social fabric. Building affordable homes for people on low and moderate incomes has a high social return on investment and maximises public value. Community concerns based on earlier broadacre developments are not well founded. Inclusive developments become well-integrated community assets. The citizens of Kingston deserve this inclusive and best practice approach.

All regions of Tasmania, including the Kingston area, need to increase the supply of affordable housing for people on low and moderate incomes. In recent years, Tasmanian households have experienced record levels of rental stress due to the combination of high rents and the lowest incomes in Australia.¹ Weekly incomes in Tasmania are 25% (over \$300) lower than the national average.² The 2019 Rental Affordability Index (RAI), which compares rents to incomes, identified Hobart as the least affordable capital city in Australia for the third year running.³ The rest of Tasmania has become the least affordable 'rest of the state' area. The most recent data from Communities Tasmania shows that in December 2019 there were 3 478 applications on the social housing waiting list, with an average time of more than one year to house priority applicants (65 weeks).

Many Tasmanians urgently need affordable rental homes, especially in the south of the state where the shortfall is greatest. Tasmania cannot afford to delay or prevent the construction of social and affordable housing to address our chronic shortage of affordable housing. We need to see leadership from planners and decision makers that support building affordable and social housing, or we will see more Tasmanians living in housing stress and homelessness for a longer time. People in housing stress and in need of affordable homes already live in Kingston and surrounding areas. People on the waiting list for social housing are people's mothers, fathers, children and friends.

Since the COVID-19 crisis, many more Tasmanians have direct experience of the ways that our financial and housing security can fail. Rates of homelessness are directly linked to the availability of affordable housing and appropriate support. The importance of a robust housing safety net has

¹ ABS Census 2016.

http://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/6?opendocument

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³ The Rental Affordability Index is an independent report produced by National Shelter, SGS Economics, Brotherhood of St Laurence and Community Sector Banking. The November 2019 RAI Report is available at https://www.sgsep.com.au/assets/main/Projects/SGS-Economics-and-Planning_RAI-November-2019.pdf

never been clearer. The Huntingfield proposal is a well-planned use of government-owned land to house people in an inclusive social mix.

The Huntingfield development includes 15% social and affordable housing, which will help to address the housing hardship already experienced in Kingborough.

We know the number one cause of homelessness is the lack of affordable housing, and affordability is a function of income and housing costs. Before the economic shock of COVID-19, over 8 000 low income households were experiencing rental stress in Tasmania and over 120 000 Tasmanians were living below the poverty line. Even when our economy was booming, many working families and Tasmanians on low and moderate incomes struggled to find secure and affordable accommodation. There are more households in housing stress and hardship now.

Many people experiencing homelessness have been kept safe from COVID-19 by the provision of accommodation in hotel rooms. A pathway out of these temporary options and into long term housing is urgently needed. All the evidence shows that the era of cheap rent in Tasmania's private rental market is long past. All the sources of evidence and trend analysis confirm the need to build more social housing, which stays affordable for people in the long term. The private market is simply not delivering enough affordable housing to keep pace with demand. In too many cases applicants' income is insufficient for them to obtain rental housing in the current private market.

Affordable housing underpins the growth of our economy, by enabling people's participation and productivity. Productivity depends on people having homes in well serviced locations to form the basis for their social and economic participation. The Tasmanian community's economic and social well-being is hindered by the lack of well-located appropriate and secure housing that households on low and moderate incomes can afford.⁴ We all need a home we can count on, with access to transport and services. Affordable housing is essential infrastructure that shapes our lives and our communities, towns and cities.⁵

The Huntingfield Master Plan presents an inclusive approach that integrates affordable and social housing in a well-located mixed development. It is a positive step towards ensuring that everyone in the Kingborough area can have access to the safe, affordable, appropriate and secure housing that we all need.

For any further information on this submission, please contact

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⁴ Productivity Commission (2016). *Productivity Commission Study Report, Overview*, Canberra, November 2016 accessed 5/12/16 at: <http://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/current/human-services/identifying-reform/report>

⁵ See Shelter Tas Priorities Statement 2018 <http://www.shelertas.org.au/priorities/>