



# Queensland Housing Strategy 2021–2025

## Local Housing Action Plan

**McKinlay Shire Council**

[www.mckinlay.qld.gov.au](http://www.mckinlay.qld.gov.au)

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# Introduction



## Introduction

This Local Housing Action Plan (the Plan) is developed through a joint initiative involving the Queensland Government\*, McKinlay Shire Council (Council) and the Western Queensland Alliance of Councils (WQAC) to respond to a range of immediate, emerging, and longer-term housing challenges in the Shire.

This is an iterative process that does not intend to duplicate existing actions of Council or the actions under The Queensland Housing Strategy Action Plan 2021-2025. It seeks to identify opportunities, consider an agreed response, develop targeted actions on key priorities and enable ongoing review of effort to adapt and respond to changing need.

### The Plan aims to:

1. **develop agreed priority actions** to respond to housing need,
2. **establish strong foundations for longer-term housing responses** to assist housing and homelessness outcomes in the Shire into the future.
3. **incorporate existing information and plans** that assist with developing responses to housing need and acknowledge work already completed by the Council, State Agencies, private and not-for-profit organisations.
4. **facilitate targeted interaction between all parties through agreed actions** to ensure a focus on deliverables and projects that can improve housing responses in the short and longer-term.



## Approach and methodology

The plan provides an overview of key community and housing characteristics, and emerging issues related to housing in the community and identifies a targeted initial set of priority actions to respond to housing need. It has been developed through a review of a range of supporting documentation including:

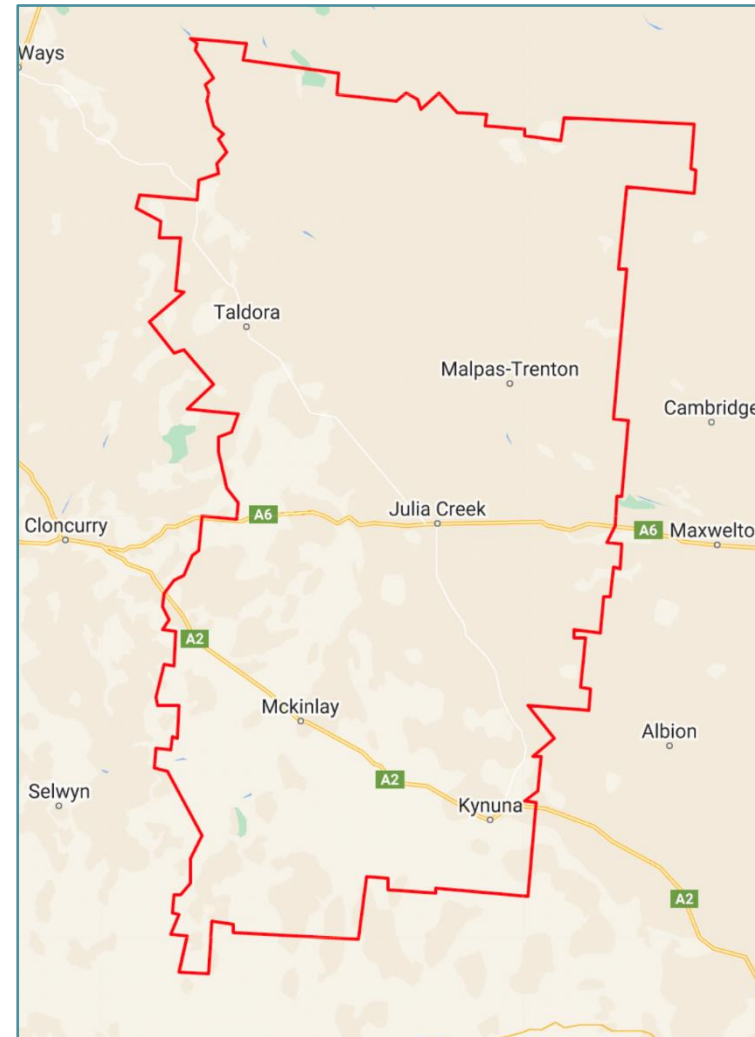
- Regional Infrastructure plans
- Council's Planning Scheme
- Relevant Council strategy reports and plans
- Statistical data via the Queensland Government Statisticians Office, including Census and other data sets such as building approvals, rental market data, housing approvals
- Housing needs data from the Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy and other state agencies as required
- *The Queensland Housing Strategy 2017-2027* and the *Housing and Homelessness Action Plan 2021-2025*.
- Other local data and information such as RAI reports

Emerging issues and opportunities, key challenges, and potential responses have been developed from the review of a range of data sets, anecdotal feedback, and preceding engagement opportunities with Council and other stakeholders.

\* The Queensland Housing Strategy Action Plan 2021-2025

## McKinlay Shire Council key details

- McKinlay Local Government Area (LGA) has a total land area of 40,885km<sup>2</sup> and is situated around 600km west of Townsville on the east coast and 200km east of Mount Isa.
- The main administrative centre is Julia Creek, and is crossed by the Matilda, Flinders (Overlanders Way), and Landsborough Highways.
- The population of the shire is 836 – other main towns are McKinlay, Kynuna, and Nelia.
- The community supports a mix of industries including agriculture, mining, and tourism, with a prime focus being beef production.
- Tourism is also an important evolving industry and features the McKinlay Hotel which has had a key location role in the Crocodile Dundee film.





## Key Community Characteristics



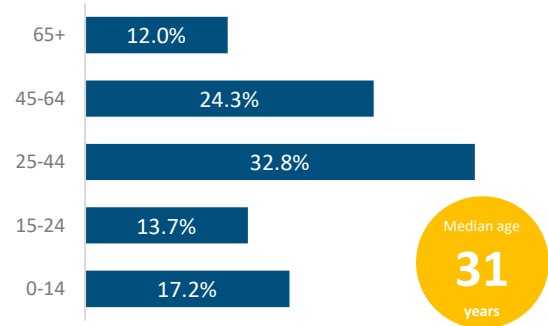


# Key Demographic Characteristics

Estimated resident population is **836** and is projected to reduce to **726** by 2041 (-14%)

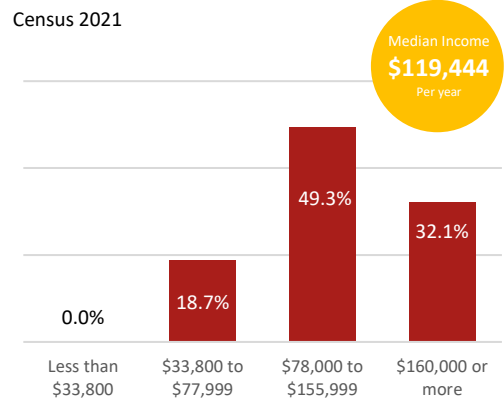
### Age

Census 2021



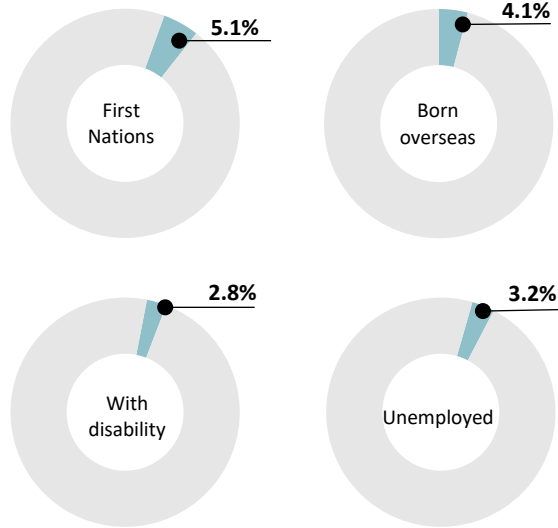
### Family Income

Census 2021



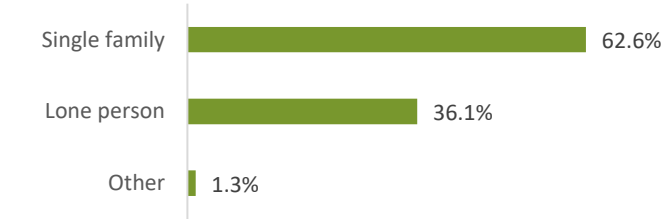
### Other characteristics

Census 2021



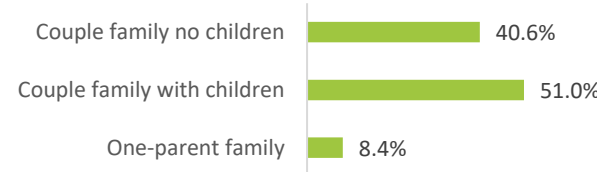
### Household composition

Census 2021



### Family composition

Census 2021



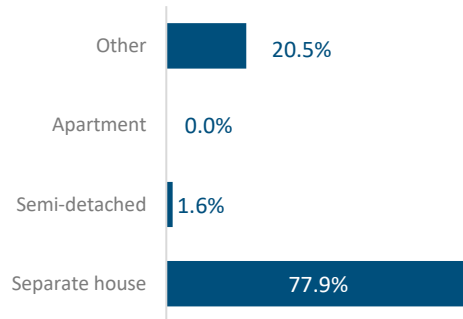


# Key Housing Characteristics

## Total Occupied dwellings (2021) **238**

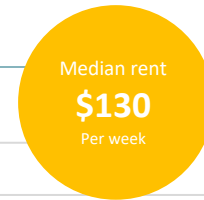
### Dwellings by Structure

Census 2021



### Median rent

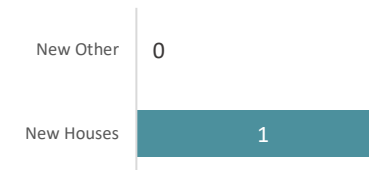
Census 2021 / QHPW



N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
1 bedroom flat/unit	2 bedroom flat/unit	3 bedroom house	4 bedroom house

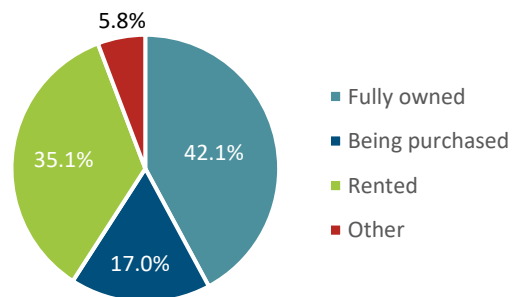
### Building approvals

12 months to 30/06/22 - QHPW



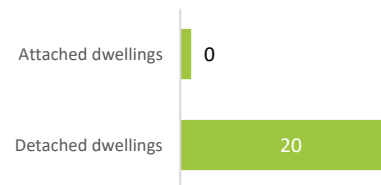
### Dwellings by Tenure

Census 2021



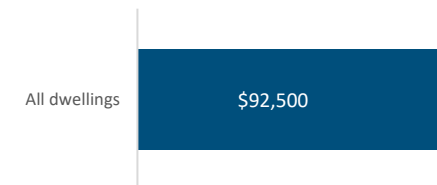
### Number of sales

12 months to 30/06/22 - QHPW



### Median Sales Price

12 months to 30/06/22 - QHPW



*\*Note: McKinlay Shire Council disputes the population projection to 2041 as significant growth is anticipated in the short to medium term from the opening up of vanadium mines and intensive agriculture in the Shire. Also, rental prices have increased to over \$200 per week.*





## Key focus areas identified

Areas of emerging concern have been determined through a review of existing data and engagement with stakeholders as identified in the methodology. These concerns will be considered when identifying and prioritising shared actions.

# 1. Housing Availability

Julia Creek is the main population centre in McKinlay Shire with a population of 377. The Indigenous population proportion is of the order of 15%. Julia Creek is a major tourist stopping point due to its location with crossings of the Matilda, Flinders, and Landsborough Highways – it is a popular access point for travellers to the Gulf. It is also a major service centre for local agricultural businesses, mining, tourists, and freight travelling to and from the Northern Territory and Townsville on the Overlander Way and for traffic to the Gulf.

The housing market in Julia Creek is very tight with a major need for more stock – there are currently three houses for sale- price varying from \$115,000 to \$300,000. There have been seven sales in the last 2 years at prices ranging from around \$60,000 to \$250,000 and also 2 lots of land ranging from \$10,000 to \$15,000. There are no real estate agents in town, and any real estate needs are generally serviced, when necessary, by agents from outside the region. Little or no data exists of historic activity or price trends. There has been no new stock and the bank requirements of up to 60% deposit is a major impediment for potential purchasers.

## Current housing stock situation

There are some 281 total private dwellings in Julia Creek – this includes all types of accommodation – the average number of people per household is 2.2 (census 2021). Occupancy rate at the time of the census was 70% - 30% unoccupied – this high level of unoccupied dwellings should be further looked at. The private dwellings are estimated to be 70% owner occupied and 30% rented. A breakdown of the dwelling ownership and type is:

- 126 private dwellings – (122 houses and 4 townhouses).
- 12 - Social Housing - 6 aged over 40 years
- 2 – government agency housing provided by Council
- 15 – GEH (9 houses and 6 units)
- 33 – Council staff properties (4 – 4 bed houses 8 - 3 bed houses 2 – 2bed house and 19 – 1/2 bed units)
- other short -term accommodation in the caravan park, roadhouse and motel are not captured separately – a mix of ensuite, self-contained and shared accommodation.
- Other State government departmental operational accommodation is not captured.
- The stock is generally aged.

## Future Council Housing stock needs

Council is struggling to hire staff due to a lack of suitable housing.

Relocating an employee's family away from more populated areas creates stress, therefore, availability of good standard housing assists in the transition and performance. Council provides houses for staff – these are leased with a variety of subsidy levels, generally depending on the negotiations to attract the right staff at a reasonable cost. Increasingly, the need is to provide free or heavily subsidised rental arrangements. Council needs new stock to ensure that it can accommodate its current and future staff needs to ensure that appropriate levels of service are offered to its community.

The area is experiencing some major opportunities that will increase the need generally, for more accommodation in the shire and the need for Council to employ more staff to enable it to deliver the expected increase required in Council services for the expanded community. Some of these new opportunities are:

- New mining ventures.
- Expansion of new agricultural businesses.
- Tourism is expanding as covid restrictions are lifted and the trend to visit remote areas is increasing



Council is hoping to be able to develop a further **2 dwellings** (3 bed – houses)

Council has 2 lots of serviced land available for new housing development. Further serviced land for an estimated 15 lots is available for future needs.

## Response opportunities

- Council proceed to investigate funding for the development of a further 2 dwellings (3 bedroom houses).
- Council commence planning for development of further lots including funding options for new infrastructure, if required.
- Council encourage more self-contained, short-term accommodation options in unit blocks, motels, and caravan /cabin type accommodation and sustainable housing options that can underpin the economic development of the region.
- The Western Queensland Alliance of Councils (WQAC) and State Government consider development of a major marketing strategy to highlight the housing affordability and other lifestyle and employment advantages and opportunities offered by the regions.
- Engage the State Government on the issue of home ownership in remote locations and the difficulty associated with obtaining finance through the normal means because of banking industry regulations specifically related to the deposit required to support a loan application.

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## 2. Private Rental Market

Almost all Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Queensland are considered to have 'tight' rental markets (characterised by a vacancy rate under 2.5%). Over three quarters of Queensland LGAs (77%) have vacancy rates under 1% as at March 2022. The current rental vacancy rate (as of August 2022) in the Shire is near 0.0%.


There are no properties available for rent – historically, there is no data, but anecdotal indications are that property is tightly held and rarely available for market. Tradesmen and contractors rely on self-contained accommodation at the motel, and caravan park but at times this is very hard to find.

Census data shows that 30% of private dwellings were unoccupied – this high rate should be investigated.

Some 30% of private properties are rented at an average rent of around \$150/week. At these rental levels, new construction for private rental to increase supply is not financially viable. due to the current challenges with material supply and construction cost increases plus the limited numbers of builders and tradespersons.

In addition, these rental returns and increasing construction costs limit the viability of private investors undertaking major renovations of existing stock to improve the housing standards.

Low income and supported individuals and families have limited entry into the private rental market. Their only option is to seek access to social housing alternatives. Social housing development provides additional options for those most susceptible to private market challenges and reduces demand on lower-priced private properties.



As the demand for employee rentals increases for transient fixed contract staff, local community rental demand is challenged. Anecdotally it was noted this situation results in increased rental prices for houses, if any were available, with reasonable liveability quality. The cost of delivery of employee housing adds to the cost of delivering services which is difficult to pass on to already financially struggling communities. Federal Government assistance to support employers in these situations maybe one of the options for consideration.

## Response opportunities

- Consideration be given to bringing forward any proposed social housing projects to increase the rental stock and free up lower cost rentals for market availability.
  - Council proceed to facilitate development options as discussed previously in the Housing availability section.
  - Support for service provider employers to construct employee housing to reduce transient employees monopolising higher quality housing at higher rental which limits community rental access.
  - Encourage new private development to cater for new mining, agriculture, and infrastructure projects.
- 

## 3. Social Housing Supply

There is a high demand for social housing across Queensland and allocations are focussed on supporting households with the highest need. Weekly median household incomes in Julia Creek of \$1,1,511 compared to the Queensland median of \$1,675.

There are currently 12 social housing dwellings (6 houses and 6 units) – 6 over 40 years old.

It is understood that the registered social housing demand with Julia Creek as a first preference is zero (refer Social Housing register). Interviews with local stakeholders indicates that some community members may have withdrawn from making application for social housing until they are aware of houses becoming available.

Overcrowding and “couch surfing” has been raised in a number of interviews. The interviewees consider that these situations aggravate social issues that cause other unintended consequences such as family and domestic violence. Also, the limited availability of housing may be resulting in persons relocating from the region.

Council has not estimated any need for a further social housing.

## Response opportunities

- No response opportunities identified.
-



## 4. Aged Housing and Care

Council currently provides eight (8) aged person units consisting of six (6) one bedroom and two (2) two bedroom units.

Council is not currently planning to provide any further aged accommodation.

### Response opportunities

- Undertake a needs assessment to determine the future needs for aged accommodation.
- 

## 5. State Government Employee Housing

In order to employ appropriately skilled and suitable employees, employers are required to prioritise attraction and retention incentives such as housing when housing stock is limited, and the standards do not match accommodation expectations.

Relocating an employee's family away from more populated areas creates stress, therefore, availability of good standard housing assists in the transition and performance.

The State Government supplies housing for its employees under 3 systems. GEH provides a range of housing types for government employees in government owned dwellings. The majority are provided for Police, Health, and Education. In addition, these departments provide "operational housing" for staff where located on operational sites e.g., police stations, hospitals, and schools. They also rent housing in the private market. Stock in the last 2 systems is not accounted for in this study.

Currently GEH has 6 dwellings (4 houses and 2 apartments) for government employees in Julia creek. Recent advice from **GEH indicates that they currently planning to provide 12 new dwellings (1 house and 11 units) – Council estimates that there is a need for a further 11 new dwellings for new departmental staff to be provided by GEH or the departments.**

### Response opportunities

- No response opportunities identified.
-

## 6. Cohort Specific Housing

The following cohort specific housing has been identified as being required to be investigated:

- Domestic and family violence
- Disability
- Youth homelessness
- Family homelessness
- Sleeping rough

There are no facilities for any of these needs in Julia Creek.

Council has not identified any needs for additional facilities for any of these needs.

Further assessments of the other areas are required to determine whether those needs are being addressed satisfactorily. Home lessness does not appear to be an issue generally but there would be overcrowding problems instead.

### Response opportunities

- Undertake investigation into crisis housing for victims of domestic and family violence to identify specific needs for such housing.
- NDIS housing requirements should also be investigated.





## Response Opportunities

# Response opportunities

A local housing action plan enables engagement across all levels of government, and benefits from partnerships between private and not-for-profit organisations.

An initial set of tactical actions has been developed, enabling refinement through an ongoing iterative process. These actions provide for a targeted response and outcomes that will seek to either create immediate benefit or establish a foundation for the next phase of actions. More specific responses can then be determined that provide flexibility in delivery and support each of the broad areas identified.



# Actions

The Council with the support of the Queensland Government through the Queensland Housing and Homelessness Action Plan 2021-2025 is committed to engage in the delivery of its initial Local Housing Action Plan through this set of actions, developed to target immediate to longer term housing responses. This is an iterative process, and these actions and target outcomes will seek to either create immediate benefit or to establish foundations that help respond to ongoing housing need.

1	Land and Development	Timeline Starting in March 2023 (months)
1.1	Conduct a detailed assessment of current Council and State-owned residential land and buildings to support immediate development of temporary housing provision including repurposing of existing buildings to address the present housing crisis.	6
1.2	Review other land holdings (vacant or disused buildings) to identify lots that would be suitable for permanent development and/or redevelopment/repurposing to support short and longer-term housing outcomes.	12
1.3	Council encourage more self-contained, short-term accommodation options in unit blocks, motels, and caravan /cabin type accommodation and sustainable housing options that can underpin the economic development of the region.	Immediate
1.4	As new stock is developed, WQAC and State Government consider development of a major marketing strategy to highlight the housing affordability advantages and other lifestyle and employment opportunities offered by the regions.	18
1.5	Engage the State Government on the issue of home ownership in remote locations and the difficulty associated with obtaining finance through the normal means because of banking industry regulations specifically related to the deposit required to support a loan application.	12
1.6	Research what type of product is best suited for Indigenous Housing i.e., more of a community style development with sleeping separate from outdoor cooking and meeting areas.	18
1.7	Council proceed to investigate funding for the development of a further 2 dwellings (3 bed houses).	Immediate
1.8	Council commence planning for development of further lots including funding options for new infrastructure, if required.	12-24



2 Planning		
2.1	Undertake, in conjunction with the Queensland Treasury Corporation (QTC) and WQAC, an analysis of the LHAP Data Collection for Council to assist in the assessment of housing needs and the identification of opportunities in relation to local density aspirations, opportunities for secondary dwellings on existing blocks, mixed use development options, repurposing unused commercial space, types of construction permitted and any other specific initiatives to address future housing need for both public and private sectors..	6
2.2	Prepare a draft Council Housing Strategy with targeted action for the next 10 years in consultation with the community, business sector and government agencies and informed by other policy settings such as, infrastructure and servicing, transport, economic development, and environmental management	12

3 Optimisation		
3.1	Council and the State Government investigate and coordinate options to develop under-utilised sites in partnership with the not-for-profit sector, private sector including employer housing providers and with Federal Government assistance, having regard to the assessment of underutilised land and buildings and the housing needs assessment.	12
3.2	Assess use of possible lease, purchase, new for old land exchange, redevelopment, change of use or renovation of existing buildings to optimise community outcomes that support housing need.	12

4 Master planning		
4.1	Consider master planning of identified options for future development, future development should be resilient and meet the community expectation of how its town acknowledges its heritage. The planning may be at allotment, street, or locality level.	12-24
4.2	Undertake Master Planning as part of preparation of any new Council Planning Scheme.	6

5 Supports		
5.1	Federal Governments provide programs/funding/incentives to encourage and assist local youth to take on trades in the local building industry.	12-24
5.2	State and Federal Governments provide financial assistance in grants for rural and remote LGA's to support provision of employee housing to reduce the financial burden on communities of meeting these additional costs and obtaining equitable access to essential services.	12
5.3	State Government to consider providing interest free loans to councils for the development of serviced land for sale.	12
5.4	State Government ensure there is sufficient housing of an acceptable standard in rural and remote LGA's for State Government agency and service staff to minimise the impact on the general housing markets.	5 years

6 People in need		
6.1	Consider how Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) can be incorporated into existing where required and future developments.	12-24
6.2	Undertake a detailed needs assessment, having regard to the Data Collection findings, and identify necessary action for any specific cohorts. Where necessary, seek to assist young people, individuals, and households in response to domestic and family violence situations by way of immediate support for crisis housing on a temporary or more permanent basis.	12-24

7 Construction		
7.1	Identify opportunities to enable housing construction in the private market and social housing sector including the use of non-traditional housing options in response to emergent needs, however, in the longer-term the built form needs to be reflective of the traditional housing character but using more sustainable and resilient materials.	12-24
7.2	Encourage housing development which may repurpose existing commercial properties for specific cohorts to address emerging needs.	12

8	Capital solutions	
8.1	Develop capital solutions in partnership with the State and Federal Governments through land provision and funding partnerships to construct and manage delivery of current and future housing needs having regard to the recommendations of the RAI-WQAC Western Queensland Housing Solutions Report – September 2021.	12-24
8.2	Develop funding partnerships with not-for-profit social housing providers to deliver short term outcomes for specific cohorts in the interim with longer term arrangements being incorporated in the arrangements.	12-24
8.3	Engage with private land owners and developers with land opportunities to maximise use of existing underutilised land.	12-24
8.4	Consider incentives to encourage rent to buy options for housing sales.	12-24
8.5	Engage the State Government on the issue of home ownership in remote locations and the difficulty associated with obtaining finance through the normal means because of banking industry regulations specifically related to the deposit required to support a loan application.	12-24





## Next steps

Establish a Local Housing Action Plan Working Group of key representatives from Council, relevant State agencies, and community organisations, to oversee and progress actions, review findings, report quarterly on progress and further develop the LHAP in an open partnership to address and ultimately resolve the housing challenge.