

Stewards of the community:

Local government and housing in Australia



Photos by Sandy Horne

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PROJECT PARTNERS:

City of Greater Bendigo • Berri Barmera Council • Gwydir Shire Council • Local Government Association of South Australia
Mount Alexander Shire Council • City of Mount Gambier • City of Moonee Valley • Randwick City Council
The Rural City of Murray Bridge • City of Playford • Sunshine Coast Council • City of Sydney • Waverley Council

Local Government and Housing in Australia

Local government as a key part of a networked housing solution



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Local Government and Housing in Australia

These are new times in the relationship between local governments and housing in Australia.

What is coming to the fore is the stewardship role of local government with respect to their communities.

- many local governments take on housing responsibilities in response to the absolute housing crisis in many parts of this country.

This finds expression in many ways. At times it is a problem - imposed on local governments by State or Federal authorities

- Local governments have found new and innovative solutions.

Photo by Sandy Horne



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1. **New developments in the housing market and the economy are putting pressures on local governments**
 - a. Airbnb – opportunity or threat?
 - b. Ongoing population decline in rural areas
 - c. Unaffordable housing
 - d. Pressures on infrastructure funding



Photo by Sandy Horne



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2. Local governments respond – or choose not to respond – to developments in housing markets

- a. Often council led – reflecting the leadership councillors offer their communities
- b. And councils respond in different ways to the different challenges they face

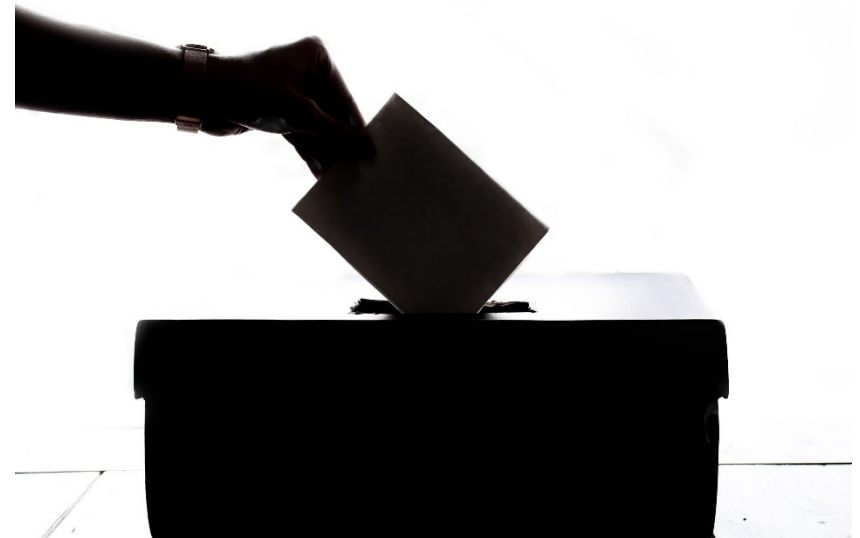


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3. Local governments often don't appreciate how much assistance they provide to housing locally



Photo and art by Sandy Horne

- Supporting community organisations
- Ensuring supply of land
- Engaging with other tiers of government
- Development and implementation of planning schedules
- Co-ordination of social services



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4. Too often housing is yet another focus for cost shifting by state or federal governments

- a. Eg – rate exemptions for housing associations in South Australia and other jurisdictions
- b. Senior tiers of government do not appreciate – the way local governments do – the inherent tension between their role as regulators of lands use and housing development, and any attempt to become more proactive in the housing space



Photo by Sandy Horne



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5. More could be done by local governments to share 'good practice' in housing

- a. While many local governments are active in this policy domain, it is rarely discussed
 - In some instances there is a sense that local governments are unwilling to discuss their achievements for fear of further cost shifting by more senior tiers of government
 - This reluctance means the broader community is unaware of the nature and level of local government achievements in this field



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6. Local governments are acknowledged innovators and important partners in some areas of housing



- a. Eg – the active leadership of some local governments in dealing with homelessness, especially in inner city areas
- b. Rural councils taking on a leadership role in encouraging population growth and stronger housing market

- c. Outer suburban local governments leading the supply

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7. For many local governments there is the potential and capacity to do more

a. And for action would give local governments the opportunity to shape the future of their communities

a. But no 'one size fits all approach'



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In conclusion ...

Local government's involvement in housing is emblematic of its broader reach into Australian communities, and its role as the **'government of first choice'** for many

- It's the most trusted tier of government in the nation
- It's the most accessible tier of government
- And in some parts of rural and regional Australia
 - it is the only government with a presence on the ground



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In conclusion ...

It is appropriate that local governments have the freedom and opportunity to become involved in housing beyond their statutory obligations

- if they choose to do so
- and to do so as part of a network, working together to deliver solutions



Photo by Anna Samoylova on Unsplash



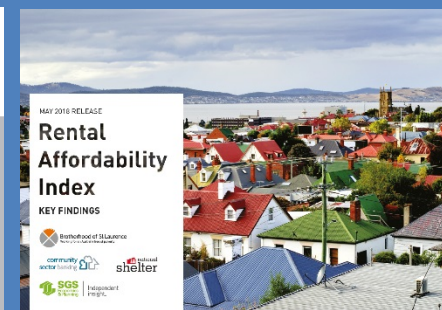
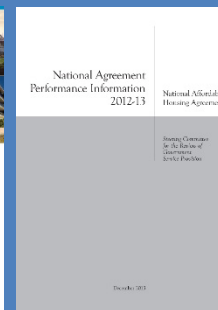
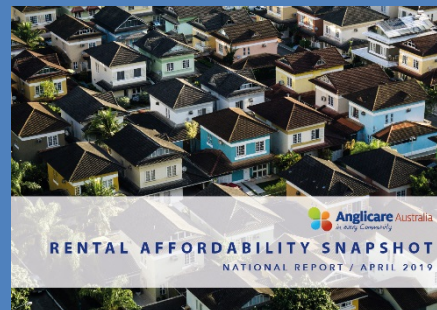
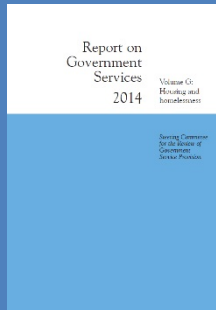
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In conclusion ...

The more senior tiers of government clearly do not understand the importance of local governments for housing in Australia



And too often local governments have been blamed for policy settings not of their making



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In conclusion ...

Finally, housing in the 21st Century is likely to become less affordable before it becomes more affordable

So increased pressure on local governments to act

And local governments may be better placed shaping up that agenda themselves, rather than having it imposed from above



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