MINUTES OF THE AFFORDABLE HOUSING ACTION TASKFORCE

Meeting Date: Monday, 9 March 2026
Location: Jervis Bay Room, City Administrative Centre, Bridge Road, Nowra
Time: 4.00pm

The following members were present:

Mayor Patricia White - Chairperson
Clr Luciano Casmiri
Clr Jemma Tribe – left at 5:30pm
Clr Brett Steele
Clr Selena Clancy
Mr Ron Silberberg
Mr Peter Wells (Remotely)
Mr Paul Mitchell (Remotely)
Mr Craig Hadfield
Mr Graham Sweet (Remotely)
Ms Rachel Foster – The Housing Trust (Remotely)
Mr Nathan Boulous – Urban Development Institute of Australia
Ms Natalie Allan – Southern Cross Housing (Remotely)
Ms Jennifer Macquarie – Property Council of Australia
Mr Peter Dover – Salt Care
Mr Ben Folkard – Member for Gilmore Representative (Remotely)
Mr Hunter Meaney – Member for Kiama Representative (Remotely)
Mr Andrew Constance – Chief Executive Officer
Ms Emma Struys – Director – City Development
Ms Oyshee Iqbal – Homes NSW (Remotely) – joined at 4:11pm

Others present:

Ms Amanda Yeung – Astrolabe – left at 4:37pm
Mr Glen Royal (Observer)
Mr Gordon Clark – Section Manager - Strategic Planning
Mr Matthew Rose – Coordinator - Strategy Planning Team
Ms Kristy O'Sullivan – Strategic Planner
Ms Grace Walker – Strategic Planner
Ms Kat Fischer – Governance Officer (Minute taker)
Mr Ben Fischer – Governance Officer

Apologies / Leave of Absence

Apologies were received from Alex Pontello and Sue Brown.

Confirmation of the Minutes

RESOLVED (By Consent)

That the Minutes of the Affordable Housing Action Taskforce held on Monday 08 December 2025 be confirmed.

CARRIED

Declaration of Interests

Nil

REPORTS

AH26.1 Update Overview - Nowra Precinct Renewal Strategy — HPERM Ref: D26/47381

Council staff and a representative of Astrolabe (Council's Consultant) provided an overview of a Council-led project funded through the NSW Government's Regional Housing Strategic Planning Fund. The Project focusses on renewal of the State-owned housing estate at the former East Nowra site. The project is being delivered in partnership with Homes NSW and Southern Cross Housing, with Astrolabe engaged to prepare a precinct-level strategy.

Astrolabe Presentation – Master Planning Overview and Project Status

A representative from Astrolabe, Ms Amanda Yeung, presented an overview of the master planning work and current project status. The project focuses on the Nowra (East Nowra) Precinct, which contains the largest concentration of State owned housing in the Shoalhaven, much of which is ageing and no longer suited to contemporary housing needs. The purpose of the project is to develop an evidence based strategy to guide future planning, investment and redevelopment decisions, including renewal of existing housing stock, increased housing supply with no net loss of social housing, improved housing diversity, and staged renewal outcomes.

The information presented will be made available with these minutes on Councils website.

Questions and Discussion

The Chairperson enquired about the timeframe for completion of the project. Council staff advised the renewal and delivery package is currently being finalised and reviewed by the project partners, with completion expected before the end of the current financial year.

The Chairperson also enquired as to the likelihood and timing of NSW Government implementation. Council staff advised that the strategy will be used as an advocacy tool with the NSW Government and local Members of Parliament and supports staged implementation subject to funding availability, rather than reliance on a single funding commitment.

Mr Craig Hadfield asked about the number of households on the social housing waiting list in the Nowra region, the implications of increased density of similar households within the precinct, including social impacts, and whether building height and redistribution of housing to other areas had been considered.

In response, Ms Amanda Yeung – Astrolabe and Council staff advised that potential dwelling yield scenarios are indicative only and intended to test planning and infrastructure capacity. It was confirmed that the strategy considers social infrastructure needs and adopts a mixed tenure approach, including social, affordable and market housing, with no net loss of social housing. Privately owned land within the precinct has also been included in planning considerations.

Council staff advised that more than 2,000 households across the Shoalhaven, and over 1,000 households in Nowra alone, are in need of social or lower cost housing, reinforcing the focus on this precinct.

Ms Natalie Allan – Southern Cross Housing advised that the East Nowra project forms part of a broader housing renewal program across Nowra, including the Riverfront Precinct, supporting staged redevelopment, tenant relocation from ageing housing stock, and reinvestment through mixed tenure outcomes.

The Chairperson asked whether consultation had occurred with private property owners within the precinct. Council staff confirmed that letterbox notification was undertaken across the precinct and advised that further, more detailed engagement will occur as individual projects progress, including any future rezonings or infrastructure works.

Recommendation (Item to be determined under delegated authority)

That the Taskforce accept this report and associated presentation for information.

RESOLVED (By Consent)

That the Taskforce accept this report and associated presentation for information.

CARRIED

AH26.2	**Overview - NSW Affordable Housing Ministerial Guidelines**	**HPERM Ref: D26/44520**

Ms Rachel Foster – The Housing Trust provided a presentation on NSW Ministerial Guidelines for Affordable Housing. The presentation clarified the definition of affordable housing and its position on the housing continuum, noting that affordable housing sits between social housing and the private rental market. It was advised that, in this context, the focus is on affordable rental housing, which is available to low, very low- and moderate-income households and is distinct from social housing, which is limited to low and very low-income households.

The information presented will be made available with these minutes on Councils website.

Questions and Discussion

Ms Jennifer Macquarie - Property Council of Australia raised concerns regarding complexity and uncertainty in affordable housing rent setting from a private sector investment perspective and queried landlord influence over tenant selection.

Ms Rachel Foster - The Housing Trust advised that landlords retain final approval over tenants and that the Guidelines permit selection of higher income eligible households.

Mr Craig Hadfield asked whether average income levels in the Shoalhaven mean that a large proportion of residents would be eligible for affordable housing. Ms Rachel Foster - The Housing Trust advised that income data, largely based on census information, could be provided following the meeting.

Council staff advised that eligibility does not equate to entitlement and that affordable housing supply in the Shoalhaven is limited relative to demand. Council staff further advised that Council's key levers in this space are planning controls, land assets and advocacy, noting that delivery requires coordinated action across all levels of government and the private sector.

Mr Graham Sweet raised concerns regarding the impacts of regulatory changes on private rental investment and noted declining investor participation in the rental market, placing added pressure on government responses to housing demand.

Ms Natalie Allan – Southern Cross Housing noted that increased affordable housing supply reduces rental stress, supports broader economic outcomes and provides pathways for households to move from social housing.

Mr Peter Wells asked how affordable housing is allocated given high demand. Ms Rachel Foster – The Housing Trust advised that dwellings are generally advertised publicly, with tenant selection managed by the housing provider, taking into account dwelling suitability, tenancy mix and funding requirements.

Recommendation (Item to be determined under delegated authority)

That the Taskforce accept this report and associated presentation for information.

RESOLVED (By Consent)

That the Taskforce accept this report and associated presentation for information.

CARRIED

AH26.3	**Strategy Action 1.4 - Developing Strategic Principles for Affordable Housing**	**HPERM Ref: D26/76815**

Council staff presented a summary of the report and provided an overview of the proposed next action identified by the Taskforce, being Action 1.4: the development of a set of strategic principles for affordable housing.

The information presented will be made available with these minutes on Councils website.

Council staff advised that feedback from the Taskforce is being sought on the draft principles. Members were invited to provide initial comments at the meeting, with further written feedback to be submitted via email over the following weeks, consistent with previous Taskforce processes.

Questions and Discussion

Council staff suggested that, given time constraints, members be provided the opportunity to consider the report in detail and submit feedback following the meeting. The Chairperson requested that any feedback received, and Council's responses, be circulated to all Taskforce members. Council staff confirmed this would be undertaken.

The Chairperson sought clarification regarding the timeframe referenced in the report. Council staff clarified that the timing refers to the relevant calendar quarter and advised that future reports will reference specific dates rather than quarters.

Council staff outlined the proposed next steps, advising that once feedback is received and the principles are finalised, community and industry consultation would be undertaken through a public exhibition process prior to incorporation into the Local Strategic Planning Statement (LSPS). An indicative timeframe of approximately six months was noted.

The Chief Executive Officer queried whether the process could be expedited, noting that the proposed principles were largely non-contentious. Council staff advised that opportunities to shorten the timeframe would be explored, with a preference to report back to Council earlier if feasible.

Council staff confirmed that the principles do not directly amend planning or development controls but provide overarching strategic guidance within the LSPS.

Recommendation (Item to be determined under delegated authority)

That the Affordable Housing Taskforce:

1. Acknowledge the work required to implement Action 1.4 of the Affordable Housing Strategy to *Develop strategic principles for affordable housing.*
2. Consider and provide feedback on the proposed strategic principles presented in this report.
3. Receive a further report on the status of the implementation of the Action in Quarter 3 of 2026.

RESOLVED (By Consent)

That the Affordable Housing Taskforce:

1. Acknowledge the work required to implement Action 1.4 of the Affordable Housing Strategy to *Develop strategic principles for affordable housing.*
2. Consider and provide feedback on the proposed strategic principles presented in this report.

3. Receive a further report on the status of the implementation of the Action in Quarter 3 of 2026.

CARRIED

AH26.4	**Outcomes - NSW Legislative Assembly Select Committee on Essential Worker Housing**	**HPERM Ref: D26/45152**

Council staff provided a brief overview of the report, advising that it is presented for information only. Council previously made a submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Essential Worker Housing, and representatives of Council also appeared before the Inquiry. The report summarises the Inquiry's key findings and the NSW Government's response.

Council staff noted that the matters addressed in the report are largely within the NSW Government's remit and are not directly influenced by Council. However, the report acknowledges the importance of addressing housing issues for essential workers. Members were referred to the Government's commitments outlined in the report.

Discussion

Mr Graham Sweet expressed concern regarding the ability to staff the new Nowra Hospital due to housing availability, noting that the provision of housing for essential workers is critical to securing and retaining staff. Mr Sweet emphasised the need to progress "shovel-ready" housing initiatives without delay.

Council staff provided advice on the NSW Government's proposals to support the hospital upgrade. This included the State-led rezoning of the Nowra Riverfront Precinct to deliver 900 new homes, including 120 affordable rental housing dwellings; and NSW Health's $21m investment into securing accommodation for workers (22) in Bomaderry and determining the most appropriate delivery model for further accommodation.

Mr Paul Mitchell referred to findings in the Inquiry report that major employment-generating projects are not consistently required to assess essential worker housing impacts. Mr Mitchell raised concerns that major infrastructure projects, such as the Milton–Ulladulla Bypass, may result in an influx of temporary workers competing for rental accommodation, potentially displacing vulnerable households. He suggested that Council advocate strongly to the NSW Government for tender and contracting requirements that mandate appropriate worker accommodation solutions.

The Chairperson noted previous examples where major construction projects accommodated workers through temporary or dedicated accommodation, such as leasing entire motels, and observed that similar approaches could be applied locally.

Council staff advised that Council consistently raises worker accommodation issues as part of its submissions and advocacy on major State-led projects. It was noted that Council has strongly advocated for the assessment of both short- and long-term accommodation impacts as part of State Government project approvals, including through environmental impact assessment processes. Council staff acknowledged that these issues are occurring across multiple regions and reiterated that Council's role is primarily advocacy, as project delivery decisions sit with State Government.

Mr Paul Mitchell supported Council's advocacy efforts and suggested that tender and contract specifications could also be used to secure local employment, vocational training outcomes and longer-term community benefits, including reuse of worker accommodation for affordable housing.

Mr Ron Silberberg commented that the Inquiry report and Government response placed significant emphasis on State Government subsidy, noting that the public sector is a major employer of essential workers. Mr Silberberg suggested that public sector agencies and unions could work more collaboratively to identify and address essential worker housing needs, including through the use of underutilised or surplus government land assets.

Recommendation (Item to be determined under delegated authority)

That the Taskforce accept this report for information.

RESOLVED (By consent)

That the Taskforce accept this report for information.

CARRIED

AH26.5	**Update Report: Advocacy Efforts - Affordable Housing**	**HPERM Ref: D26/50310**

Ms Rachel Foster – The Housing Trust representative congratulated the team involved in the Coomea Street, Bomaderry project, noting that it is not only a strong example for the Shoalhaven but also a leading example for the broader community housing sector.

The Chairperson noted the project as a positive outcome and observed that its delivery timeframe highlighted opportunities for improvement in future projects.

Council staff advised that discussions will be undertaken with project partners in the coming weeks to document lessons learned from the Coomea Street, Bomaderry project. It was noted that while some delays were unavoidable, others present opportunities for improvement. Council staff acknowledged the government's role as a project partner and advised that the experience has identified aspects of the process that could be approached differently in future projects. Emphasis was placed on capturing these learnings to support improved delivery timeframes and outcomes for similar initiatives moving forward.

Recommendation (Item to be determined under delegated authority)

That the Taskforce receives this report for information.

RESOLVED (By Consent)

That the Taskforce receives this report for information.

CARRIED

GENERAL BUSINESS

Council staff provided an update on:

- The NSW Office of Local Government's Guide to *Council-led Affordable Housing on Operational Land in NSW*.
- Business Illawarra's *Homes for Workers 2026* Advocacy Report.
- Answers to Peter Well's questions about the current audit of Council's landholdings, confirming they would be presented to the Taskforce at its June 2026 meeting.

There being no further business, the meeting concluded, the time being 5:53pm.

Mayor Patricia White
CHAIRPERSON