



Queensland Housing Strategy 2021-2025

Local Housing Action Plan

Carpentaria Shire Council

www.carpentaria.qld.gov.au

December 2022



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Introduction

The Queensland Housing Strategy 2021-2025 - Local Housing Action Plan - Carpentaria Shire Council was adopted by Council at the Ordinary Council Meeting held in Normanton on Wednesday 14 December 2022 by resolution number 1222/009.

Introduction

This Local Housing Action Plan (the Plan) is developed through a joint initiative involving the Queensland Government*, Carpentaria 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 Carpentaria 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 Carpentaria 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:

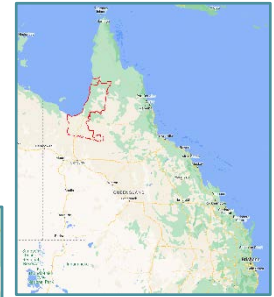
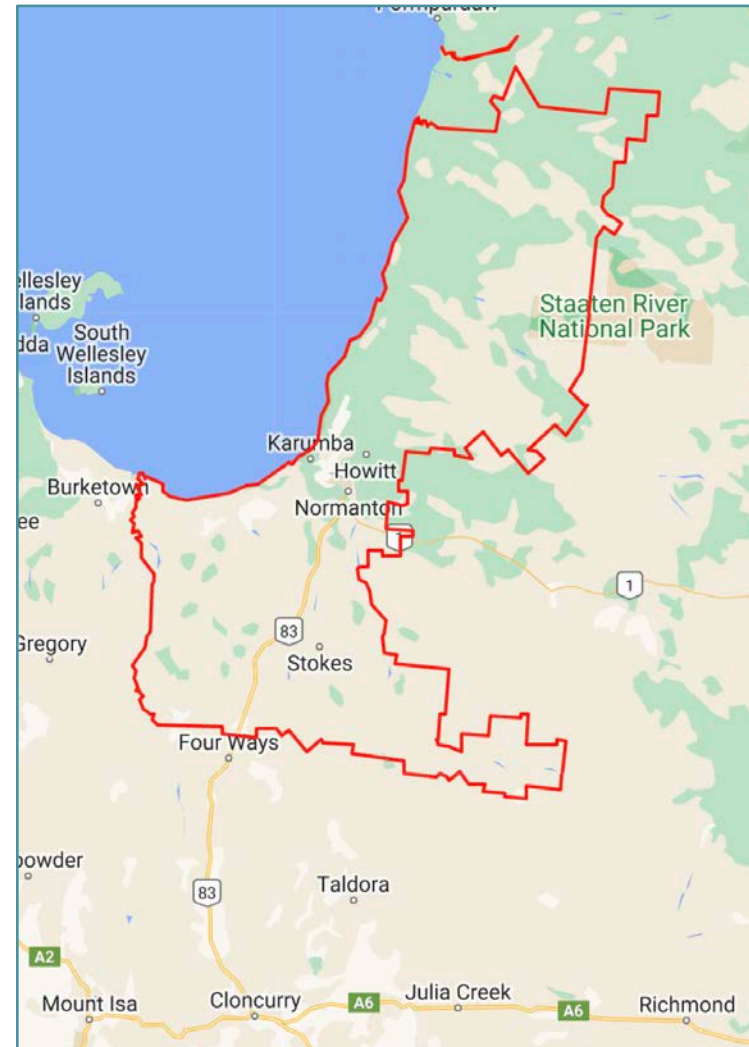
- Regional Infrastructure plans
- Carpentaria Shire Council Planning Scheme
- Relevant Council strategy reports and plans
- Statistical data via the Queensland Government Statisticians Office, including Census and other data sets such as building approvals, rental market data, housing approvals
- Housing 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

Carpentaria Shire Council key details

- Carpentaria Local Government Area (LGA) has a total land area of 64,121 km².
- Normanton is the main population centre and is located approximately 2,066km, or 22.5-hours' drive, north-west of Brisbane. Cairns is 678km to the east, an 8-hour drive.
- Karumba is the shire's other centre north of Normanton located at the mouth of the Norman River on the Gulf of Carpentaria.
- The community supports a mix of industries with agriculture, being a primary focus through beef production and commercial fishing.
- The region also has a growing tourism sector, with visitors drawn to coastal areas, scenic landscapes, cultural experiences, recreational fishing, and spectacular sunsets.





Key Community Characteristics

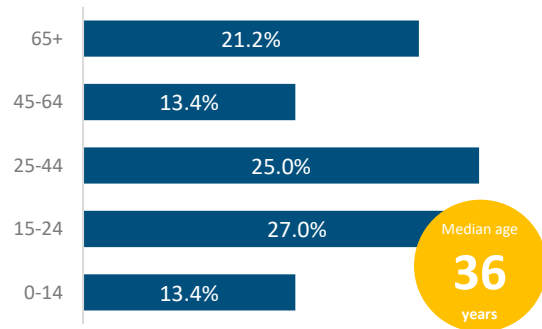


Key Demographic Characteristics

Estimated resident population is **2090** and is projected to reduce to **2078** by 2041 (-0.57 %)

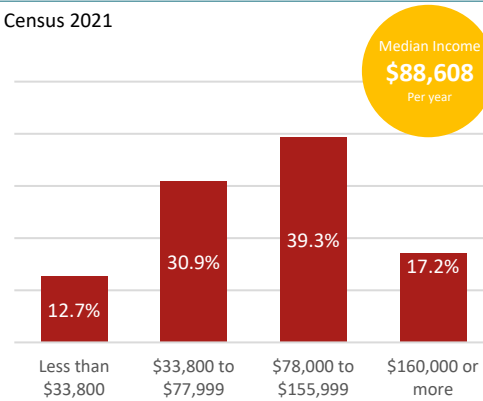
Age

Census 2021



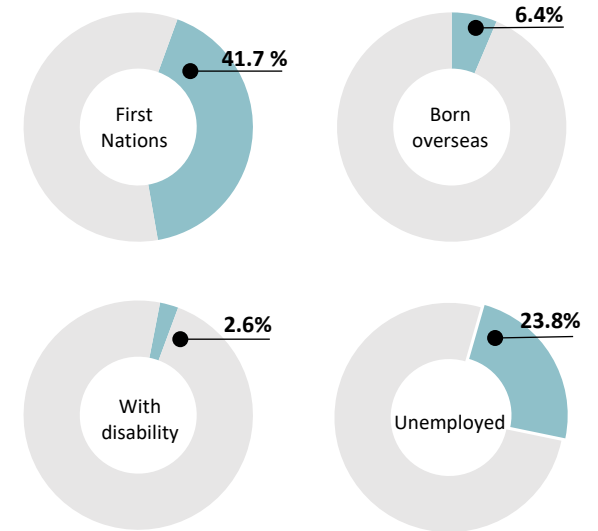
Family Income

Census 2021



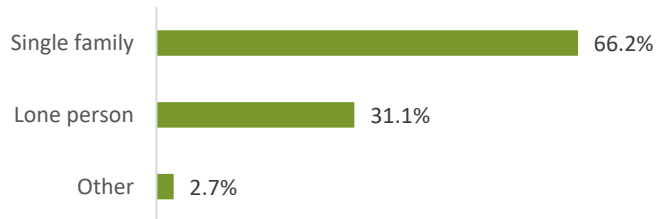
Other characteristics

Census 2021



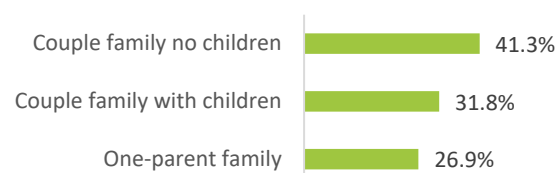
Household composition

Census 2021



Family composition

Census 2021



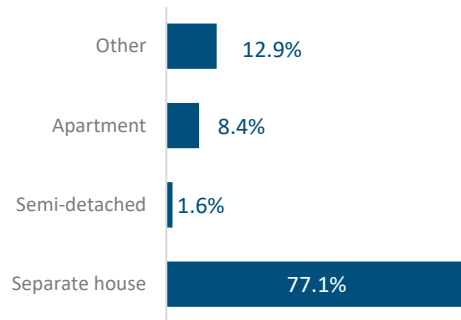


Key Housing Characteristics

Total Occupied dwellings (2021) 759

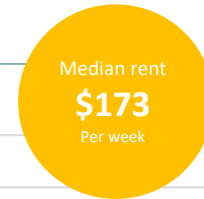
Dwellings by Structure

Census 2021



Median rent

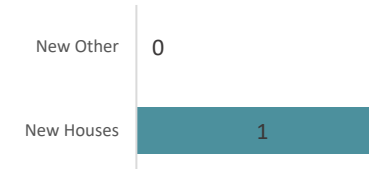
Census 2021



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

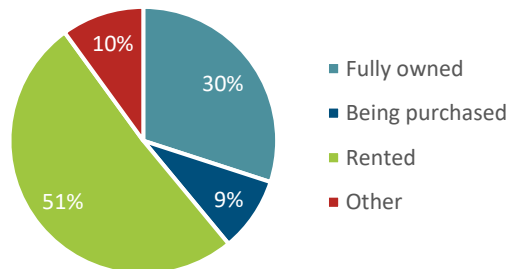
Building approvals

12 months to 30/06/22 - ABS



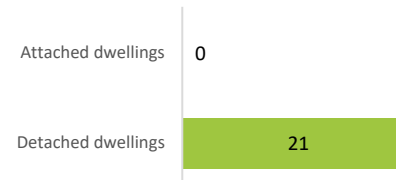
Dwellings by Tenure

Census 2021



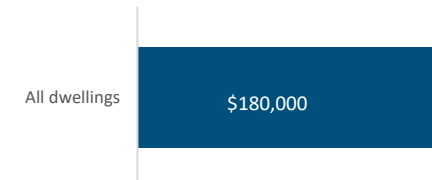
Number of sales

12 months to 30/06/22



Median Sales Price

12 months to 30/06/22





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

There is no available housing or land for purchase or rent in Normanton and some property is available for purchase in Karumba. When properties are available, they rarely go to market as they are snapped up quickly. Accommodation for visitors is also at a premium for most of the year but is particularly limited during the high tourist season from May to September. This is exacerbated by the need for tradesperson and contractor accommodation year-round due to Normanton's role as a major service centre for the western Gulf.

There are no real estate agents in Normanton or Karumba – any sales or property management are managed by agents in Cloncurry or Mount Isa. In the past few years there have only been around 2 or 3 houses for sale at any one time. There is no serviced land available for sale. It is understood that Government Employee Housing (GEH) have 4 lots only available for their future needs (plus an underutilised area in Woodward Street). Council is currently developing a 28-lot rural residential estate – Lilyvale – on the outskirts of Normanton. Council has some future residential land development options on a 3.892ha parcel near the hospital in Normanton, and a 23.7ha parcel to be acquired from the State Government.

There are some 348 private dwellings in Normanton - 28% of these are owner-occupied. In Karumba there are 209 private dwellings – 67% of these are owner-occupied. Sale prices are in the range of \$250,000 to \$400,000.

Major property owners are the Council – 42 in Normanton and 13 in Karumba, Bynoe (a Community Housing Provider) – 59 in Normanton and 1 in Karumba, and the State Government – Social, 103 in Normanton and 7 in Karumba; GEH, 45 properties in total including – 40 houses and 12 units (32 houses and 10 units in Normanton and 8 houses and 2 units in Karumba).

Little data exists regarding movements in the median house price but anecdotally it is believed to have risen. The more recent peak may have been influenced by drought recovery and the COVID pandemic which may have influenced a trend of relocations to regional areas.

The housing stock has aged, and its standard has not been maintained to attract investment and capital return other than from rental income. While land prices are relatively low, costs of construction are substantial due to the material supply logistics and limited local housing construction contractors in the region. During the period between 2015 and 2022, there have been very few new private houses constructed in the shire. Renovations to older homes have continued during this period and new State Government Employee Housing has been constructed in more recent years, adding to the housing stock, but more is needed.

A major impediment for people in remote areas who wish to buy land, develop housing, or purchase existing or new housing is the inability to obtain bank finance on reasonable terms including unrealistic deposit requirements and issues with low valuations.

Response opportunities

- Focus on immediate housing responses to the current housing shortage and develop longer-term resilient and sustainable housing options that can underpin the economic development of the region.
- Council continue development of Lilyvale and consider possible increase in number of lots in balance area.
- Council to progress its proposed development at Gough Street – 10 units, a mix of 1 and 2-bedroom units.
- Council to encourage further infill subdivision to smaller lots in existing residential areas.
- Council to investigate development of the Gaol reserve near the hospital.

- Council encourage more short-term accommodation options in unit blocks, motels, and caravan /cabin type accommodation.
- Council was offered to purchase an additional parcel of land for future urban expansion in 2017 and Council is about to recommence discussions with Department of Resources regarding a take-over of land available near the Ergon depot for some other development options.
- 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.

2. 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 Carpentaria Shire is near 0.0%.

Census data shows that 20% of dwellings are unoccupied – this level of vacancy needs further investigation.

Owner occupiers are 25% and 75% of residential properties are rented.

The rental market in both towns is very strong – with properties being tightly held and being rented out immediately. Private rents range from around \$350 to \$450 per week. Notwithstanding these rental levels new construction for private rental to increase supply is likely to be financially difficult 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.

Council age pensioner units are rented at a subsidised rate. 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.

Increasing accessibility to social housing through increasing availability by reduction in vacancy periods and increasing the number and type of supply is an option to reduce rental stress for the vulnerable communities. Opportunities for management through local oversight has been raised in the community interviews.

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 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.

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 Carpentaria Shire are \$1469 compared to the Queensland median of \$1,675.

There are currently 103 social housing dwellings in Normanton (26 - 2 bed, 59 - 3 bed, and 18 - 4 bed). In Karumba there are 7 existing properties (5 -1 bed, 1 - 2 bed, and 1 - 3 bed).

It is understood that the social housing demand in Carpentaria is high with a long-term waiting list of 25 in total including - 22 (3 - 1 bed, 9 - 2 bed, 9 - 3 bed, and 1 - 4 bed) in Normanton, and 3 (2 -1 bed and 1 - 3 bed) in Karumba.

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.

Response opportunities

- Investigate partnerships with social housing providers for development of private facilities on Council land.
 - 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.
-

4. Aged Housing and Care

Council provides aged pensioner housing in the area. A total of 8 units are provided in Normanton and 8 in Karumba. With the aged population increasing there is likely to be a need for additional accommodation. More research is needed in this area.

Response opportunities

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

5. 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. Council provides houses for 33 staff including 3 contractors and 4 childcare 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.

The State Government supplies housing for its employees under 2 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.

Recent advice from GEH indicates their intention to provide a further 14 residences in Normanton (3 houses and 11 units) to provide accommodation for health, education, and ambulance staff over the next 5 years. Six of these have been handed over to Q-Build for delivery over the next 6 months. Also, GEH is currently in discussion with Council about any future land available for the balance of their needs over the 4 vacant lots plus underutilised land they currently hold.

Private rentals for employee housing are also in use throughout the towns.

Response opportunities

- Council to progress the Gough Street development – 10 units, mix of 1 and 2 bedrooms.
 - Investigate the supply and demand of government employee housing and consider opportunities for additional rental housing if any government employees are currently utilising private rentals that are able to re-enter general community rental market.
-

6. Cohort Specific Housing

The following cohort specific housing has been identified as requiring to be addressed in Carpentaria Shire.

- Domestic and family violence
- Disability

There is one existing facility in Normanton helping those needing assistance as a result of domestic and family violence. An additional facility is needed.

No facilities exist for the other needs – further assessments are required to determine those needs.

There are few sleeping rough problems but there are occasions of public drunkenness. Homelessness does not appear to be an issue generally but there are 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.
- Evidence of the extent of family and youth homelessness that results in couch surfing and overcrowding should be quantified to test the social housing demand estimates.



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 then can be determined that provide flexibility in delivery and support each of the broad areas identified.

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 Carpentaria Shire 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 continue development of Lilyvale and consider possible increase in number of lots in balance area. | Immediate |
| 1.4 | Council to progress its proposed development at Gough Street – 10 units, a mix of 1 and 2- bedroom units. | Immediate |
| 1.5 | Council to encourage further infill subdivision to smaller lots in existing residential areas. | Ongoing |
| 1.6 | Council to investigate development of the Gaol reserve near the hospital in Normanton. | 12 |
| 1.7 | Council encourage more short-term accommodation options in unit blocks, motels, and caravan /cabin type accommodation. | Ongoing |
| 1.8 | Council to recommence discussions with Department of Resources regarding a takeover of land available near the Ergon depot for future urban expansion or some other development opportunities, following an offer to purchase in 2017. | 6 |
| 1.9 | 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. | 12 |
| 1.10 | Census data shows that 20% of dwellings are unoccupied – this level of vacancy needs further investigation. | Immediate |

| 2 Planning | | |
|------------|---|-------|
| 2.1 | Undertake, in conjunction with the Queensland Treasury Corporation (QTC) and WQAC, an analysis of the LHAP Data Collection for Carpentaria Shire 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 Carpentaria Shire 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 |
| 2.3 | Consider new minimum lot size of 400m ² in residential zone to increase density in existing areas and allow increased density in new developments during the current preparation of the new Carpentaria Shire Council Planning Scheme. | 6 |
| 2.4 | Review Lilyvale rural residential density and prepare new Development Application (DA) to increase density, if appropriate. | 6 |
| 2.5 | Undertake planning work and prepare required DAs for developments at Gaol Reserve, Gough Street and Ergon depot land, if viable. | 12-24 |

| 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 to ensure resilient development meets 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 new Carpentaria Shire 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 Federal and State governments 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 and policy 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.



CARPENTARIA SHIRE
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*It's a great place to work,
live and play*

Carpentaria Shire Council
PO Box 31
NORMANTON QLD 4890
(07) 4745 2200