

The Mayors of the cities of Whyalla, Port Pirie and Port Augusta have today released the results of their recently conducted Housing Survey along with recommendations.

SGC has established a 9% population growth stretch target for achievement over the next 10 years. Filling current job vacancies and delivering the workforce needed to support current and planned investment in the region (estimated at \$15billion and 9000 jobs) and improving city liveability to attract and retain residents, is vital to delivering population growth.

The key focus of the survey was to address the urgent need for suitable residential accommodation for temporary and permanent workers across the region; a barrier which is significantly inhibiting and, in some cases, halting the delivery of economic investment and growth.

Housing was a key element of the Spencer Gulf Cities 2022 State Election Platform Document distributed to candidates and parties in the electorates of Frome, Stuart, and Giles.

Stakeholders invited to respond to the survey were local government, state government, local Regional Development Australia organisations, the Employment Facilitator Upper Spencer Gulf, local real estate agents, community housing providers and a small number of middle to large employers, a number of which have major projects to begin construction in 2022.

The survey addressed:

- Housing scope/availability – development approvals, land, rental, demand, other factors
- Economic growth and jobs, including hard to fill roles
- Council projects and proposals

The survey results reveal that:

- the demand for rentals is not being met – public, community and private
- housing sales are increasing along with values
- lead times for new house builds is up to 3 years wait
- community housing providers do not have sufficient stock to meet need
- investment in the region by the SA Housing Authority is not meeting needs and in many instances the housing stock is not maintained
- much of the property in some cities is 40 years plus old and not being maintained
- the squeeze on housing affordability is forcing up rents
- rent increases are \$20 - \$80 per week
- evidence that rents are increasing and impacting on affordability, especially among youth
- Centrelink income or lower income workers are struggling to pay their rents and put food on the table for their families
- there is state and local government land that could be released to build houses to meet needs
- SA Water costs for infrastructure for large housing projects are significant and costing arrangements are not flexible enough to space costs over the term of a development to enable them to go ahead
- all housing is a priority (affordable, crisis, executive)
- workers on major projects are taking up tourism, hotel rooms and available rentals due to lack of available worker accommodation
- some tourism accommodation is up to 98% worker occupancy as opposed to tourists
- some employers are providing incentives to get workers and housing is a key element
- no rentals were available during aspects of the survey period

Mayor Stephens (Chair of SGC) said:

"Councils are keen to partner with the government, private and community sectors to meet needs and are seeking:

- the State Government to form a "lead agency" for housing given clear limitations on Renewal SA to establish projects to meet the region's needs with the agency responsible for integrated planning, co-ordination and interventions
- identifying and agreeing on key projects to meet needs, in consultation with employers, governments and the private sector
- the establishment, with the State Government, of a "SGC Housing Strategy" responding to demand and supply, engagement, refocusing SA Housing Authority plans, target housing types to meet workers taking up current and future jobs, set affordable housing targets and enhance the presence of developers in the region
- to fix data gaps to reflect current and future needs
- to establish a Housing Taskforce to inform the gathering of data, preparation of the SGC Housing Strategy and to monitor implementation of the Strategy with Taskforce members coming from: State Government, SA Housing Authority, Renewal SA, SGC Councils, Real Estate Industry, RDAs, Business/Industry Organisations and the Community Housing Sector
- a meeting of the Community Housing Sector to better understand their needs
- support to tackle image and liveability issues that might be impacting on housing availability
- to share information from the region with other country regions and work collaboratively, where appropriate, on policy development and initiatives"

"A key element of our State Election Platform is Housing, and we are not seeing a great deal of information coming from the candidates and the parties about how they will tackle this issue in our region."

"We are pleased that both the Liberal and Labor Parties have recognized the value of meeting with the Mayors of the SGC and we intend to make sure that Housing continues to be a key issue in our discussions with whoever forms government post the State Election," said Mayor Stephens.

The information gained from the survey and recommendations included in the Survey Report are designed to:

- support the SGC Councils to continue to influence and/or initiate positive housing outcomes in the region
- assist in the identification of potential housing projects involving the private and public sectors
- recognise that direct intervention by individual Councils and/or the State Government may be required to support increasing the housing stock in the region

For a copy of the survey report, please see https://upperspencergulf.com.au/key-documents/?wpfb_s=Housing+survey+report

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