# Social Housing Summary – Q & A

## What is social housing and how does it differ from other housing?

Social housing is for people in our community with low to very low incomes who are in need of housing. Many of these people have recently experienced homelessness, family violence or have special needs but it also includes aged pensioners, families, and students. People who live in social housing in Cardinia Shire are usually already living in our community.

Social housing in Cardinia Shire does not look like the big public housing towers you see in the city – social housing looks just like any other homes in your neighbourhood.

This type of housing is owned and managed by government or a community housing organisation and tenants are often supported by other services to help them get back on their feet or improve their quality of life. Just like in other types of rental properties, tenants pay rent, although it is set at a rate they can afford to pay.

## Why is social housing important for Cardinia Shire?

Cardinia Shire has the second highest rate of reported family violence in the Southern Metro region and homelessness in Cardinia Shire is increasing. Social housing provides critical housing to people in our community who have experienced family violence and have experienced or are at risk of homelessness.

Social housing also provides critical support to people in our community experiencing mental illness or disability. In 2016, 8.7 per cent of all households (2,547) in the shire were eligible to access Social Housing, based on the household income. Yet only 0.9 per cent (317) of dwellings in Cardinia Shire were social housing. This means there are very limited housing options for the most vulnerable members of our community and there are a large number of people living in housing stress or at risk of homelessness.

## Who lives in social housing?

No one sets out to rely on social housing for accommodation. Many people who live in social housing once owned or rented in our community, but due to a change in their situation now rely on social housing to help them get back on their feet or improve their quality of life. For people with an enduring illness or disability, a reduced ability to work and additional costs to their costs of living, makes them more at risk of homelessness and more reliant on social housing to survive.

Children make up 27 per cent of people experiencing homelessness. These children are almost always part of a family group and often escaping family violence. An analysis of people in Cardinia Shire seeking support from a local homeless service in 2015-17 found that one of the largest groups was single women and women with children.[[1]](#footnote-1) Social housing can improve a child’s feelings of connection, stability and security.[[2]](#footnote-2)

##

## Who manages social housing?

Social housing can be owned and managed by the Victorian Government (this is called ‘public housing’) or by a not-for-profit community housing organisation (this is called ‘community housing’).

In some cases, people living in social housing are provided with specialist support through staff that either live on-site or visit regularly.

Unlike with private rental properties, neighbours can contact the social housing managers to address any queries or concerns.

## What does social housing look like?

Social housing in Cardinia Shire does not look like the big public housing towers you see in the city – social housing looks just like any other housing in your neighbourhood. From the street, you cannot see the difference between social housing and regular housing, which is probably why you haven’t noticed any of the existing social housing in Cardinia Shire. The appearance of social housing is also maintained by the social housing property and tenancy on-site manager.

Not all social housing is apartments – it can be houses, units or townhouses to fit in with the look of the local neighbourhood. Just like with any other development in our community, most social housing developments go through Council’s planning process and must meet the provisions of the Cardinia Shire Council Planning Scheme.

## Will my property value be affected by social housing in my neighbourhood?

For most homeowners, their home is their biggest asset. It is natural to be concerned about the potential for an effect on the value of your home as a result of changes in your neighbourhood.

There is evidence from a number of studies that shows that property values are not detrimentally affected by nearby social housing.[[3]](#footnote-3)

## Will my safety be affected by social housing in my neighbourhood?

While it is common to be concerned about crime and personal safety when social housing is proposed in your neighbourhood there is no evidence supporting a link between social housing and increased crime.[[4]](#footnote-4)

There are stereotypes of people who live in social housing but the vast majority of people living in social housing were already living in our community and have simply fallen on hard times.

In many social housing developments there are on-site staff. This means there is oversight of people living in social housing and also someone to turn to if you have any queries or concerns. This adds additional security compared to regular residential developments.

## Will social housing bring more traffic to local streets? Will social housing affect parking?

Social housing is not expected to provide any more traffic than a private-market residential development. Social housing developments, like any other development, are required to go through Council’s planning processes. As part of this process, if changes to parking or local traffic are expected, the developer must prepare a parking and/or traffic report, which will identify potential impact on neighbouring residents.

If the community does not feel the proposed social housing development addresses their concerns, they can object to the development as part of the planning process.

Council will assess social housing applications and their objections to ensure that there are no significant impacts on the local community.

## Where will tenants come from?

Social housing in Cardinia Shire is designed for people already living in the area. This could be a mum and her children from your local school, an elderly man you see at the library, or the young person sleeping rough at the local park.

Social housing in Cardinia Shire accommodates the most vulnerable people in our community. This includes people who have experienced family violence, who have experienced or are at risk of homelessness, have a disability or mental illness or have experienced a financial crisis.

No one sets out to rely on social housing for accommodation. Many people who live in social housing once owned or rented in our community, but due to a change in their situation now rely on social housing to support them to help them get back on their feet or improve their quality of life.

## Social housing is being proposed in my neighbourhood – what should I do?

Cardinia Shire needs more social housing to meet the demands of the local community. If social housing is proposed in your neighbourhood we encourage you:

* consider who will benefit from the social housing – it could even be someone in the community that you know right now, or someone from your family in the future
* understand the details of what is being proposed
* understand the planning process and if you do want to lodge an objection to a planning permit then you should restrict your objection to planning matters (like traffic or built-form, rather than commentary on the potential tenants)
* talk to the Council about your concerns
1. Cardinia Shire Council’s *Social and Affordable Housing Strategy and Action Plan 2018 – 25* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. https://www.melbournecitymission.org.au/docs/default-source/research-documents/children-and-homelessness-literature-review-september-2009.pdf?sfvrsn=39684e92\_2 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. [http://www.portphillip.vic.gov.au/Final\_report\_version\_4\_Sep09\_(3).pdf](http://www.portphillip.vic.gov.au/Final_report_version_4_Sep09_%283%29.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. https://www.ahuri.edu.au/\_\_data/assets/pdf\_file/0010/2134/AHURI\_Final\_Report\_No211\_Understanding-and-addressing-community-opposition-to-affordable-housing-development.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-4)