

Submission to The Treasury regarding the Housing Legislative Package – Housing Australia Future Fund Bill, National Housing Supply and Affordability Council Bill, and Amendment Bill

City of Greater Bendigo

The City of Greater Bendigo (the City) is a major Victorian regional local government. The City encompasses 3,000 square kilometres in Central Victoria and houses a population of over 121,000 people. The City is forecast to grow by almost a quarter by 2036.

Housing is at the core of every community. Like many regional centres, the City faces several crucial housing challenges in seeking to provide for a growing and ageing population while also protecting and enhancing the City’s enviable natural assets and character as a ‘city in a forest’.

These include:

- planning for a sufficient supply of affordable and accessible housing, including social and transitory housing;
- supporting diversity in the housing market so that residents can find a home that suits their needs; and
- planning for homes that are resilient to future climate impacts.

The City welcomes the Australian Government’s Housing Legislative Package and particularly the recognition of Australia’s future housing needs and challenges through the Housing Australia Future Fund (the Future Fund).

Strong and early engagement with local government is crucial to ensuring that the Future Fund’s expenditure on housing is as efficient and effective as possible. Local governments not only administer much of the regulatory and planning aspects of housing development, they are also exceptionally well placed to provide clear and informed guidance on current and emerging local community needs.

While there are many administrative mechanisms to achieve this engagement, the City would encourage the inclusion of a principal within the *Housing Australian Future Fund Bill 2023* that directs sufficient engagement with local government, in addition to those provisions already included in the *National Housing Supply and Affordability Council Bill 2023*.

An area in which local governments are particularly well placed to respond is around rapidly emerging community needs. While some provisions exist for emergency housing grants in response to environmental disasters, local governments are also ‘first responders’ to other acute housing needs. The speed and efficiency of providing local responses to emerging, transitory and acute housing needs would be improved if grants could be made available directly to local governments. This could be achieved by specifying local government eligibility under Section 18(1) or including local governments in Section 18(3) of the *Housing Australian Future Fund Bill 2023*.

Greater Bendigo City Council
Address: 15 Hopetoun Street, Bendigo
Postal Address: PO Box 733, Bendigo VIC 3552
T: 1300 002 642
E: requests@bendigo.vic.gov.au
W: www.bendigo.vic.gov.au
ABN 74 149 638 164



The City welcomes the recognition of the need for underlying research in the establishment of the National Housing Supply and Affordability Council. In addition to matters of projected demography and construction, the City is making considerable investment in ensuring that climate mitigation is a primary consideration in the location and construction of new housing stock. The City is very fortunate that its predicted climate impacts are milder than those of some other regional cities. Nevertheless, it is important to ensure that new housing stock minimises both its short and long-term environmental impact and that housing stock is directed away from areas of acute environmental risk.

The City recommends that climate considerations be added to the Council's research scope, perhaps through additional provisions like those provided for its advisory role in Paragraphs 9(1)(f) and (g) of the *National Housing Supply and Affordability Housing Council Bill 2023*.

Craig Niemann
Chief Executive Officer

5 January 2023