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Council commits to tackle housing affordability and homelessness

Town of Gawler is tackling the issue of housing affordability and homelessness through collaborations with some of South Australia's leading advocates in the sector.

The latest National Rental Affordability Index singled out Gawler as a region where unaffordability has increased dramatically in the private rental market, as housing prices and low vacancy rates soar across the state.

Council has been particularly active in this space over the past six months, hosting a Housing and Homelessness Forum at the Gawler Civic Centre in August 2021, in conjunction with Gawler Domestic Violence Network, which was facilitated by Regional Development Australia's Anne Moroney.

A number of guest speakers presented on the day including Gawler Mayor Karen Redman, CEO Henry Inat, Shelter SA Executive Director Dr Alice Clark, SA Housing Authority's Ian Cox and Adelaide North-West Alliance's Orla Matthews.

In November, as a direct result of this forum, elected members endorsed a motion for Town of Gawler to become a member of Shelter SA.

Further discussions between Council, Shelter SA, Gawler Domestic Violence Network, Regional Development Australia and Zonta Club of Gawler were held with residents and other local groups where concerns were expressed about housing affordability and homelessness in the region. The meeting was facilitated by Dr. Clark who distilled the concerns into a draft local housing action plan for the group to progress to improve the housing situation, particularly, for people on low incomes.

Two of the ideas generated in the action plans include:

- Shelter SA and Town of Gawler are hosting a workshop to be held on Thursday 10 March 2022 with industry representatives and government sectors including representatives from community housing providers, modular housing manufacturers, developers, local landowners. The workshop brings together relevant stakeholders who share a commitment to improving housing affordability and explore what the community can do to alleviate the current housing crisis and we look forward to communicating the results.
- Shelter SA will work with Town of Gawler to explore an empty homes project to identify vacant residential properties that could be activated.

Council has also written to relevant State Government Ministers and Opposition Ministers about the run-down public housing stock and housing affordability in the region, in addition to other election candidates, prior to the March state election to request an audience to discuss how initiatives can be progressed.

Quotes attributable to Gawler Mayor Karen Redman:

"Access to affordable housing should be a basic right for all people residing within the Town of Gawler, regardless of their level of income or family situation," Mayor Redman said.

"Council is committed to tackling the issue of housing affordability and homelessness in our region and I'm proud to be leading an elected member body that is taking active steps and engaging in productive discussions with other key industry groups, to create meaningful change for our community in this space."



Quotes attributable to Town of Gawler CEO Henry Inat:

"The August 2021 forum and talks with local groups and citizens confirmed to council that there is a real desire locally to start seriously addressing the issues of housing affordability and homelessness in Gawler," Mr Inat said.

"Council is excited to progress these discussions further with appropriate industry bodies and government sectors to begin creating the necessary framework required to give people in Gawler better access to affordable residential accommodation."

Quotes attributable to Shelter SA Executive Director Dr Alice Clark:

"It is fantastic to meet a local government that is willing to explore all the options possible to help their constituents with the costs of housing," Dr Clark said.

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