



Submission form: Victoria's draft 30-year infrastructure strategy

Your details

Name:	Teresa Dominik
Organisation (if applicable):	CoHousing Australia Cooperative Limited (CoHA)
Position (if applicable):	Board Member and Convenor Planning Policy Working Group
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About you

Please tell us which best describes you:

☐ Victorian resident
☐ Victorian business owner/operator
☐ Industry professional
☐ Community organisation representative
☐ Local government representative
☐ State government representative
☐ Researcher
☒ Other (please specify): CoHA is a member-based, non-profit peak body committed to advancing resident-driven collaborative housing. We are a network of a diverse group of like-minded people living

in or interested in living in collaborative housing communities. Our network also includes academics, advocates, architects, planners, property professionals, development managers, social visionaries and general supporters of collaborative living.

Your focus areas

Select the topics or regions you are providing feedback on (select all that apply):

Topics	Regions
☒ Across sectors	☒ Regional Victoria
☒ Circular economy	☒ Urban growth areas
☒ Cities	☒ Melbourne
☒ Climate change	
☒ Community infrastructure	
☐ Education	
☒ Energy	
☐ Freight	
☒ Health	
☒ Housing	
☐ Infrastructure for Victoria's First Peoples	
☒ Transport	
☒ Water	

Your feedback

Add as many sections as you need to provide all your feedback in this submission.

Topic/area:	Victorians have good access to housing, jobs, services and opportunities
Recommendation name:	1. Build more social housing <i>Consistently invest in new social housing to provide more Victorians on low incomes with access to a secure and affordable home.</i> 7. Rezone locations near existing infrastructure for more home choices.
Recommendation number:	1 and 7
1. Do you support this topic or recommendation?	☐ Yes ☐ No ☒ In part
2. Tell us why	The Strategy should recognise the housing crisis (due to lack of supply over decades) and that its magnitude requires a major delivery of supply. The Strategy needs to treat housing, including Social and Affordable Housing, as essential infrastructure that requires significant government investment (including “sticks and carrots” for the private sector to deliver) generating a corresponding strong social return on investment; Need to include Affordable Housing so a broader range of housing (not just Social) can be supported and considered at the same time. The development sector is often not delivering the housing quality, diversity, and lifestyle attributes people are looking for. The speculative housing delivery model often does not deliver community benefit such as affordable housing. ‘Business as usual’ models of government land sales to private developers are failing to achieve timely, diverse and sufficiently affordable housing outcomes. Meeting community aspirations for housing diversity, pro-social communities, and formal and informal community amenity requires innovation, collaboration, and participation. A core innovation will be the ability to maintain subsidy retention over the lifetime of the home, rather than the length of the tenancy. Too much has been wasted on stamp duty discounts and home buyer grants. It is time to close the loop on housing subsidy so that it enables scalability rather than land price inflation. This section needs to prioritise housing diversity that supports choice and a range of affordability outcomes. Priority needs to be given to employ models of deliberative democracy and participatory planning (citizens’ assembly / citizens’ panel) to enable contribution and transparency between all stakeholders to achieve a place-based regenerative outcome. A cohousing model can contribute to broadening the concept and practice of ‘more diverse housing’ provision with social and environmental, benefits; a unique delivery model from either

	conventional speculative or deliberative development models; and a specific tenure type in a variety of legal forms that identify the rights, roles and responsibilities for cohousing residents and the cohousing community. Despite strong evidence of positive outcomes from living in cohousing, legislative, regulatory, and planning hurdles make resident-led housing a real challenge. The Cohousing model represents an alternative way to deliver more affordable home ownership that aligns residents' wants and needs allowing for a sharing of facilities to foster social connection and a sense of community. Cohousing can readily incorporate social and affordable housing. Resident-led development delivers at-cost housing with a focus on environmental and social sustainability that fosters wellbeing and resilience.
3. Share any supporting evidence or examples	Research institute such as AHURI have produce many research reports. <u>Social housing as infrastructure: rationale, prioritisation and investment pathway AHURI</u> The cohousing model is flexible and adaptable to various forms of tenure, reflecting the diverse needs and preferences of residents. Examples such as Murundaka in Heidelberg Heights, a rental cooperative, and Urban Coup, which is strata-owned, demonstrate the model's tenure agnosticism. Similarly, projects like Westside Cohousing and WinC (Women in Cohousing) in Castlemaine aim to incorporate a mixture of private ownership, community housing provider (CHP) models, cooperatives, and rent-to-own arrangements. This diversity allows cohousing communities to accommodate different financial situations, lifestyles, and long-term goals while maintaining the core principles of collaboration, shared resources, and social cohesion. By embracing a range of tenure options, cohousing continues to evolve and innovate, ensuring inclusivity and accessibility for all residents. Murundaka: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=esxaCymI2PA WinC: https://winccohousing.org.au/ Urban Coup: https://www.urbancoup.org/
4. Include proposed changes and improvements	Rec 1 should also include Affordable Housing (not just Social Housing) Rec 7 needs to add (or a separate Recommendation) reference to supporting innovative housing delivery and outcome models (such as Cohousing). This can contribute to broadening the concept and practice of 'more diverse housing' provision with social, and often environmental, benefits; a unique delivery model from either conventional speculative or deliberative development models; and a specific tenure type in a variety of legal forms that identify the rights, roles and responsibilities for cohousing residents and the cohousing community. <i>Future Option Rec 7 Mandate more affordable homes near existing infrastructure Choose a mechanism to mandate more housing that is affordable for low-income households and close to public transport, open space and services.</i> Is an urgent requirement to be implemented ASAP

	Additional Recommendations Create precincts designated for housing innovation that tap into the potential opportunity presented by publicly-owned land at scale is the ideal opportunity to support new models to be tried and the development of best practice – influencing the wider housing system and delivering housing choice desired and required by the community. Facilitate Innovative housing models* that coordinate in an integrated, non linear manner and facilitates all the various assessments and processes. This could also include facilitating partnerships with Housing Associations and Disability providers and making public land available for resident-led projects meeting affordability, and social and environmental outcomes. *Housing models (co-op/rental/ownership) with development partnerships between a resident-led housing group and a registered housing agency (using the cohousing methodology); 1. Community Land Trust housing models with not-for-profit partners for the whole site or part thereof; 2. Other Community Housing-led mixed tenure projects that include ownership and rental choices; 3. Not-for-profit housing cooperatives targeting moderate income cohorts under ground lease to structurally embed affordability over time; 4. Co-operative tenure (as an alternative to for-profit Build to Rent); 5. Road testing the Future Homes designs and other apartment designs not facilitated by the mainstream housing market.
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Topic/area:	Victorians are healthy and safe
Recommendation name:	No recommendations address relationship health and housing
Recommendation number:	Click or tap here to enter text.
5. Do you support this topic or recommendation?	☐ Yes ☐ No ☒ In part
6. Tell us why	The Strategy needs to recognise the role housing has in health both physical and mental. Housing is a pre-determinant for health. Shelter is foundational, housing security and appropriateness is also crucial for ensuring healthy internal environments, mitigated against overcrowding, limiting financial stress, preventing displacement from community connections. All these factors play a crucial role in the mental and physical health of a population, they are also the basis for social health and society.

Thus, it is vital for Australia's health, housing, and planning policies to improve and to act as the guiding light for people to live within with their ecological limits and restore and regenerate the living world upon which they depend, by providing strategic support for alternative housing models that could better assist in protecting and enhancing ecological and environmental outcomes and climate adaptation.

Thermal comfort and positive environmental outcomes can also be achieved from the passive design strategies incorporated into the cohousing buildings. Generally, passive design refers to an architectural approach that works with the local climate to effectively minimise or eliminate the need for mechanical heating or cooling, while maximizing the advantages of natural heat, light and air to maintain a comfortable interior environment in the house. In the cohousing model, this includes pro-environmental designs such as smaller houses, north facing building orientation, passive solar design enabling natural climate control and better insulated exterior walls. The large shared outdoor spaces and reduced private spaces emphasized in the cohousing design that aim to encourage people to be out with others also allow for residents to have smaller individual dwellings that are more cost-effective to heat and cool, thus requiring lesser energy. Together, these design strategies make cohousing communities energy-efficient and create low environmental impact, as less energy will be required to keep the houses at a comfortable temperature. These design outcomes are beneficial for mental and physical health. The risk of heat and cold are significant across many geographical areas and for many vulnerable cohorts. It is vitally important that design and development practices improve, especially for aging populations without strong social connections.

Land-use planning and housing development must be retro-fitted to encompass a health-star rating to ensure development density and amenity are attuned for human and environmental health, creating regenerative ecosystems. An interdisciplinary approach between the built-environment, urban planning and health/public health field holds the responsibility for minimizing the impacts from climate change, in new areas of development and in the retrofit of existing urban areas, to better adapt to the modern challenges, and plan for the current and future needs of the people. Unfortunately, the modern day environmental problems are often interconnected with social issues which are therefore hard to accommodate within a siloed approach. The housing sector, in particular, is an epitome of this complexity.

Residential communities need to evolve to be better equipped for disaster preparedness, adaptation, and mitigation. Exemplar community-oriented projects can help demonstrate climate adaptive design and governance.

Cohousing also offers opportunities to address other social issues of our time, including community inclusion for marginalised groups such as people with disabilities, single parents, older women, indigenous Australians, refugees, members of the LGBTQI+ community, social isolation and depression and many others.

Cohousing also can offer sustainability and cost-of-living advantages. These occur through technological efficiencies (energy / water / internet), social organisation (sharing tasks: gardening,

	composting, informal child-minding), and bulk purchasing (utilities, consumables, electric vehicles). Sustainable and community-based practices implemented in the cohousing model also allow residents to significantly reduce their carbon footprint, achieve sustainability, and improve individual and social health outcomes.
7. Share any supporting evidence or examples	<u>How can housing influence health?</u> <u>Housing and- Health Research-Summary web.pdf</u>
8. Include proposed changes and improvements	New Recommendation Recognise there is an important role for the health sector to take a shared leadership role in articulating the health impacts of high-emission planning and construction methods and drive the agenda for healthy and regenerative communities by design.

Topic/area:	Victoria is resilient to climate change and other future risks
Recommendation name:	Better prepare infrastructure for climate change
Recommendation number:	27
9. Do you support this topic or recommendation?	☐ Yes ☐ No ☒ In part
10. Tell us why	Housing in Australia comprises a significant portion of the nation's carbon footprint. Development alone carries increasingly high operational energy loads as well as having long-term land-use implications. Outlay around housing development, design, transportation implications and the resulting lifestyles of residents all carry significant energy and material consumption implications. Household energy use associated with conventional housing development has been a significant contributor to Australia's national greenhouse gas emissions. Research shows that the residential sector is responsible for approximately 24% of overall electricity use and 12% of total carbon emissions in Australia (Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water 2023). On average, an Australian household emits 15 to 20 tonnes of CO₂ annually (Moodie 2021). Much of these emissions were generated through the use of power, water, transportation, domestic waste and the consumption of foods and drinks, identified as the six main categories of carbon footprint in the national Carbon Footprint Calculator. Other socio-economic factors such as urban sprawl and income inequality associated with conventional housing development have also aggravated the situation by increasing people's need to travel for basic necessities and thus a higher rate of forced car ownership (Currie & Senbergs 2007). Sustainable and community-based practices implemented in the cohousing model also allow residents to significantly reduce their carbon footprint, achieve sustainability, and improve individual and social health outcomes. For instance, permaculture has been incorporated into the design of many cohousing communities. By definition, permaculture is an ecological design system that works with nature to promote sustainable and regenerative practices, such as building nutrient-rich soils and using and managing water responsibly (Butler Permaculture Design 2023). In a cohousing setting, the values of permaculture have been expressed through shared gardens. These gardens are sustained by using water collected from the rooftops, and serve as means to provide fresh food for the community, wildlife habitat, and biodiversity. Eating locally can also aid in the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions generated during food transportation processes (Cross 2022). Furthermore, the sharing of amenities and services such as cars, laundry and cooking wares will lead to significant carbon emissions savings, by cutting emissions that have occurred along the supply chains as residents buy and consume goods and services (Clark 2020). In this case, both the inner and wider communities can benefit from these gains.

	In today's car-dominant urban environment in Australia, car parking has been an important consideration of urban planning and has specific requirements stated in the planning schemes around the number and design of car parking spaces, in relation to housing and other developments. However, there has been debates about the inefficient use of urban spaces and the oversupply of car parks in the cities. Research suggests that an average of 20% of urban spaces are allocated to off-street parking in any motorized city, in addition to the 30% of spaces allocated to road networks. This inefficiency in parking provision and the historical trajectory of a car-dependent planning approach have only been strengthening people's reliance on cars in urban areas, which contributes to the increased air pollution and congestion that are detrimental to the natural environment. In order to create a sustainable future and make good use of the limited land resources, it is vital to promote greener modes of transport amongst the residents and cut back on their car usage. Cohousing communities have taken the lead in this by reducing the number of car parking spaces provided for residents, complemented by encouraging the use of alternative transport modes such as walking, cycling, public transport and car sharing. The land spaces freed up from car parking can transit into larger green open spaces and the costs saved can be used for the implementation of other sustainable designs. As a result, the residents' carbon footprints can be significantly reduced, while also facilitating the move towards non-car transport for the wider community.
11. Share any supporting evidence or examples	Cohousing, as a housing approach that structures in a sense of belonging to place through built form and promotes community-oriented and sustainable living, has a greater potential in achieving environmental sustainability at a community level in comparison to conventional housing development models. Cross, R (2022), <i>Environmental and Economic Benefits of Eating Locally</i>, Impakter website, accessed 15 May. https://impakter.com/environmental-and-economic-benefits-of-eating-locally/. Clark, P (2020), <i>Coliving & Cohousing Research: Creating Sustainable Cultures</i>, Conscious Coliving website, accessed 20 May 2023. https://www.consciouscoliving.com/research-sustainable-coliving-cohousing/. Chow, DHC (2022), 'Indoor Environmental Quality: Thermal Comfort', <i>Reference Module in Earth Systems and Environmental Sciences 2022</i>, pp. 209-219. Daly, M (2017), 'Quantifying the environmental impact of ecovillages and co-housing communities: a systematic literature review', <i>Local Environment: The International Journal of Justice and Sustainability</i>, vol. 22(11), pp. 1358-1377. Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (2023), <i>Government priorities: Residential buildings</i>, Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water website, accessed 27 April 2023. https://www.energy.gov.au/government-priorities/buildings/residential-buildings. Healy, S and Lopes, AM (12 May 2022), 'Climate change hits low-income earners harder – and poor housing in hotter cities is a disastrous combination', <i>The Conversation</i>, accessed 20 June 2023.

	https://theconversation.com/climate-change-hits-low-income-earners-harder-and-poor-housing-in-hotter-cities-is-a-disastrous-combination-180960. Your Home (2023a), <i>Passive design</i>, Your Home website, https://www.yourhome.gov.au/passive-design. Your Home (2023b), <i>Passive design: Orientation</i>, Your Home website, https://www.yourhome.gov.au/passive-design/orientation. WWF Australia (2022), <i>Impacts of global warming</i>, WWF Australia website, viewed 7 May 2022, https://www.wwf.org.au/what-we-do/climate/impacts-of-global-warming/. Walsh, D (2017), <i>Reducing our reliance on cars: The shifting future of urban transportation</i>, MIT Sloan School of Management website, accessed 6 June 2023. https://mitsloan.mit.edu/ideas-made-to-matter/reducing-our-reliance-cars-shifting-future-urban-transportation.
12. Include proposed changes and improvements	Additional recommendations: Introduce infrastructure related policies in the planning schemes (e.g. under the Planning Policy Framework (PPF)) to encourage embedded energy networks shared across households within a cohousing community, and also have potable water, storm water and sewerage solutions shared across sites to minimize environmental impacts. Embracing cohousing as a viable and innovative housing solution in the planning system and laws, inclusive, resilient and sustainable communities can be created while combating climate change, and leave a lasting positive impact on the ecological environment for future generations. Recognise the social capital inherent to cohousing communities, and the potential of cohousing communities to promote behaviour change needed to reduce emissions globally and protect the natural environment. The cohousing model should be integrated into natural hazard risk management and assist in building resilience within communities, by acting as an approach to rebuild the homes of impacted or displaced communities in a new way that will not repeat the past mistakes. Planning scheme(s) and related policies should waive minimum parking requirements (e.g. numbers and locations) for collaborative / cohousing communities.
Topic/area:	Victoria has a high productivity and circular economy
Recommendation name:	36 Reform infrastructure contributions 38 Prepare for more recycling and waste infrastructure
Recommendation number:	36 and 38
13. Do you support this topic or recommendation?	☐ Yes

	☐ No ☒ In part
14. Tell us why	36 Need to encourage and support community infrastructure eg cooperatives, community owned solar. 38 Not enough focus on minimising waste
15. Share any supporting evidence or examples	Click or tap here to enter text.
16. Include proposed changes and improvements	Rec 36 should include providing exemptions/reductions for developments that limit the need and/or impact of providing new infrastructure; e.g. energy, waste and water Rec 38 should refer to waste minimisation, supporting innovation in using waste e.g. plastic in building materials, road construction.

More feedback (optional)

Tell us about infrastructure challenges, gaps or opportunities not covered by the draft strategy. This can include things you think we should add to an existing recommendation, or suggestions for a new recommendation.

Please provide evidence for your suggestions. This can include data, specific examples, cost benefit analyses, surveys, or program evaluations. Also, explain how your suggestions align with the objectives of our draft strategy (see page 11 of the draft strategy).

Suggestions for new recommendations should point towards infrastructure opportunities that can deliver long-term benefits for Victorians. They should also be areas where the Victorian Government has a leading role.

Additional Commentary

While the Objectives of the Strategy have assisted to take a more wholistic, systematic and integrated approach to challenges the recommendations are narrowed down to more siloed responses. While it is understandable that recommendations need to be costed and allocated for delivery purposes the approach of the Strategy needs to go further to identify initiatives that can deliver on projects that maximise the outcomes objectives that would then require a greater range of stakeholders. Collaboration and participation by a wider range of implementers will have the potential to unlock greater opportunities. This requires recommendations to provide links to other initiatives that will support and lever in these further opportunities.

Supporting innovative housing models is an example of an initiative that has the potential to deliver on all objectives and provide an alternative perspective of infrastructure provision in Melbourne,

The need for alternative housing models has never been greater, we need new approaches that respond to the climate and biodiversity emergency, the social health and wellbeing crisis, and the cost of housing and living crisis.

It is vital for Australia's health, housing, and planning policies to improve and to act as the guiding light for Australian people to live within with their ecological limits and restore and regenerate the living world upon which they depend, by providing strategic support for alternative housing models that could better assist in protecting and enhancing ecological and environmental outcomes and climate adaptation.

CoHousing Australia's submission therefore suggests that cohousing, as a housing approach that structures in a sense of belonging to place through built form and promotes community-oriented and sustainable living, has a greater potential in achieving environmental sustainability at a community level in comparison to conventional housing development models.

Cohousing explainers:

Cohousing Explained: "What is a Home?"

Cohousing Explained

Co-housing, a Future Way of Living Together | Eef Tanghe | TEDxLeuven

Cohousing: The Future of Community and Human Connection | Trish Becker-Hafnor | TEDxCherryCreekWomen

Additional Recommendation

Run competitions to generate project ideas and delivery options from professional groups, researchers, community group, Not for Profits, for some of the recommendations (for example like the Future Home competition Future Homes winners announced | ovga.vic.gov.au).

