



**The South Australian Council of Social Service (SACOSS)
Submission on the 30-year Plan for Greater Adelaide**

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Executive Summary

The *30-year Plan for Greater Adelaide* is an important step towards planning for the future of the greater Adelaide metropolitan area over the next 30 years. While SACOSS welcomes the intent of the Plan and many of the recommendations and targets therein, there are some key concerns over the lack of detail regarding the true affordability of housing into the future and the issues that may well arise failing more robust planning and development legislation and guidelines.

These concerns are, in summary:

- Lack of detailed analysis of – and allowance for – social housing stocks in transport corridors
- The need for more social infrastructure in key areas and corridors
- A lack of sufficient recognition of the needs of an ageing population, including the need for more locationally appropriate aged care facilities and adaptable housing forms

SACOSS hopes that the Government can progress the Plan to later stages while taking these concerns into account. By giving adequate credence to the need for a planning framework that integrates the range of housing and social participation needs of the wider Adelaide community, SACOSS believes that the next 30 years can become a benchmark against which other jurisdictions can be judged.

Scope of interest

The South Australian Council of Social Service (SACOSS) is the peak body for social services in South Australia, and is an independent non-government organisation with a proud sixty-year history of advocating for disadvantaged and vulnerable South Australians. SACOSS is a not-for-profit independent organisation whose members represent a wide range of interests in social welfare, health and community services. SACOSS is part of a national network assisting low income and disadvantaged people, and shares with its members the vision of *justice, opportunity and shared wealth for all South Australians*.

In its role as a peak body for community services in South Australia SACOSS covers a broad range of policy areas including the impacts of disadvantage on the most vulnerable South Australians. In recent years SACOSS has led or participated in debate and advocacy in the areas of consumer credit, electricity and gas, telecommunications, financial counselling, payday lenders, food security and gambling.

The *30-year Plan for Greater Adelaide* ('the Plan') represents a point of interest for SACOSS and its members in terms of creating a more liveable and more equitable urban environment for all sections of the community. Housing, transport, urban design and a well designed and managed range of social infrastructure are vital for a vibrant and forward-thinking city and SACOSS is particularly interested in providing input into the Plan for these reasons.

Introduction

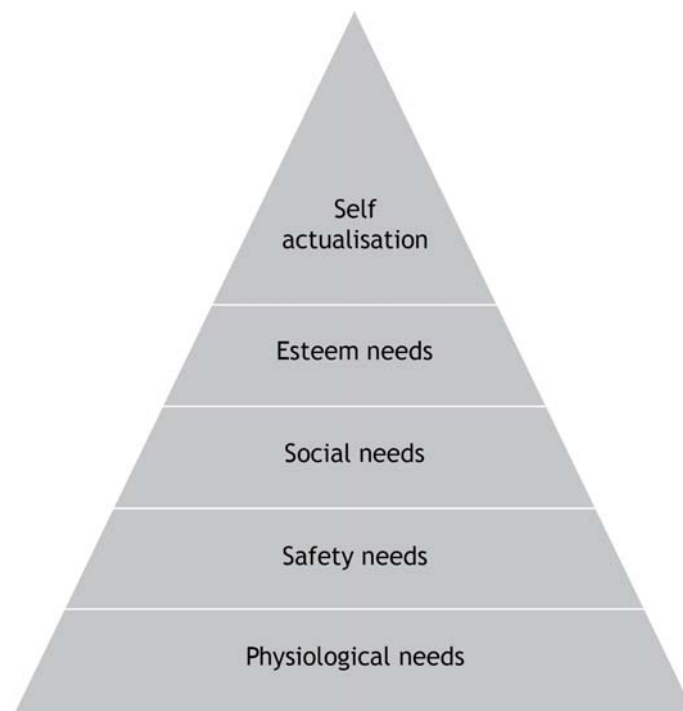
The State Government's *30-year Plan for Greater Adelaide* ('the Plan') represents an important opportunity to plan for the city that will provide for all its citizens into the future. SACOSS welcomes the Plan as a means to guiding urban and social development in Adelaide and broadly welcomes many of the initiatives identified therein. The focuses on sustainable urban development along designated transport corridors and associated affordable housing targets and avoidance of ongoing Greenfield development are welcomed in this respect, and need to be further bolstered by recognition of the social and economic needs of low income and disadvantaged people in order to truly achieve the stated aims.

This submission has as its focus the areas of housing and housing affordability in the long term, and the linking of housing in the new urban environment with employment and training opportunities and which incorporates social infrastructure such as community houses and centres, health facilities, and other mixed use infrastructure. Through consultation with SACOSS member organisations, these are the areas which have been identified as of primary concern, and which require further work in the context of the Plan.

Housing and Social Participation

Housing is recognised as one of the most important determinants of a person's health and wellbeing throughout the life cycle, and represents the most important areas of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (as illustrated below) (AIHW, 2008). Without fulfilment of the basic physiological needs of a roof over one's head and basic safety, other physical and societal needs cannot be fulfilled. In this sense, housing represents a basic human right and an important social determinant of health.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



Housing is much more than shelter and safety however, and represents a means of attaining social participation through access to health and welfare services and employment, education and

training opportunities (VCOSS and ACF, 2008). In this sense, not only the affordability of housing, but also the appropriateness of that housing in terms of housing type and location are a vital component in the role of housing in the social and physical environment of the urban landscape. Current trends in housing affordability and outer-urban development have led to many home buyers and renters being forced into areas that exclude them from social networks as well as the services and opportunities listed above.

In order to respond to the varied needs to the community, a range of housing options is necessary. While recent state and federal government initiatives aimed at providing more affordable buyer and rental housing will go some way towards addressing these needs, there is still a great need for more social housing in South Australia.

It has been well established that there are no quick and easy solutions to the problems of affordable housing – housing affordability is a long-term issue, and is bound up with complex social issues, such as changes in the nature of labour markets, the ageing of the population, changes in the composition of households, and the environmental constraints on urban development (Kierans *et al*, 2004, p. v).

SACOSS welcomes the Plan's commitment to the construction of an additional 38,700 affordable homes by 2038 (p.97). However, we note that significant unanswered questions remain regarding the details of this commitment. This is a major concern for low income and disadvantaged South Australians, as the lack of access to appropriately placed housing – in this case, situated in or very near the Plan's proposed transport corridors – can lead to or compound existing issues such as unemployment or under-employment, lack of access to education and training options, health and community services, social networks, and appropriate transport options.

SACOSS is particularly concerned with the lack of detail surrounding the inclusion of social (or 'high needs') housing in the Plan, specifically in relation to the transport corridors. Low income and disadvantaged people are particularly vulnerable to a lack of public transport in order to participate more fully in society and this issue has not been addressed in the Plan in its current form.

Affordable Targets

The need for affordable housing has particular relevance for some of South Australia's most vulnerable population groups. For example, 52.4% of South Australian single-parent families with dependent children live in rental housing, with 27.1% of these families renting from Housing SA. (ABS, 2009). When coupled with the fact that two-thirds of South Australian single-parent families live on an income of less than \$800.00 per week, it becomes very clear that truly affordable housing is a vital element of South Australia's continued growth.

However, there are enormous social and economic difficulties currently faced by low-income and disadvantaged communities when accessing housing stock. There has been a 22.7% decline in public rental housing over the last nine years – from 54,530 in 1999 to 42,165 in 2008. This has meant an extreme rise in the waiting list for community housing – an increase of 146.4% over the last eight years, from 1,748 as at 30 June 2000 to 4,307 as at 30 June 2008 (Housing SA, 2009, p.10).

Unfortunately, these alarming statistics have not been met with action – in fact, the number of people newly allocated to social housing has significantly dropped over the years, from 4,683 in 1999-00 to 2,848 in 2007-08, representing a drop of 39% (Housing SA, 2009, p.11). This includes, within the last two years, the lowest rate of Aboriginal housing allocations since 1999 – 198 in 2006-07 and 205 in 2007-08 (Housing SA, 2009, p.11).

Therefore, while SACOSS welcomes the Plan's draft policy of ensuring "at least 15 per cent of all new dwellings in Greater Adelaide will be accessible to low- and moderate-income groups" (p.97),

we are concerned that the 5 per cent specifically designated “high-needs” housing, including high-needs housing (defined by the SA Housing Trust Act 1995 as typically rents set at 25% of income), we have concerns that this measure will not be sufficient to overcome the current serious issues concerning the availability of social housing stocks for low-income and disadvantaged South Australians.

Access to Transport Corridors and Social Participation

SACOSS is also concerned with the lack of detail regarding planning for affordable and social housing within the designated Transport Corridors. The growth of Transport Oriented Developments (TODs) has shown that when well planned housing development is linked to transport, affordability is often sacrificed. This has potentially serious implications for the Plan’s targets aiming to provide 15% affordable housing and to ‘prevent...inappropriate concentrations of social housing’ (p.97). There exists a real danger that social housing in particular will be focused outside the designated corridors as those with more financial means take advantage of the opportunities implied in the Plan.

Without adequate early planning and legislative safeguards, the gradual movement of low income and disadvantaged communities to the edges of the transport corridors through a process of ‘gentrification’ poses a genuine risk to the health and stability of those communities. While initial planning may go some way towards providing some level of affordability for low income people in the short term, there remains the very real danger that in the longer term, as housing stock in strategic areas becomes more attractive, these areas will become gentrified. Thus it is vital that long term plans are put in place to ensure that housing remains affordable for buyers, private renters and high needs renters alike.

The housing and transport elements of the Plan cannot be separated from the wider social participation context and for this reason more attention needs to be paid to other needs of the residents of greater Adelaide. The Plan must include provision for the inclusion of a variety of social infrastructure in and near Transport Corridors and TODs that extends beyond sporting facilities and cycling and walking paths. Community and neighbourhood houses, support services for various sections of the community and health services of varying types all need to be integrated into the plan along with strong links to employment, education and training opportunities.

The Ageing Population

Given that the 30-Year Plan by its very nature looks to the future of the State, SACOSS contends that this forward-looking approach should also be applied to the construction of all elements of the Plan, especially the mixed-use precincts and any new housing developments. Designing housing to be adaptable over a lifetime ‘would ensure the broadest range of needs could be met, making it easier for individuals with different needs to move in and out, and to use buildings as creatively and individually as they pleased – without their activities being circumscribed by the physical constraints of their house’ (Kelly, 2001, p.71, cited in Luszcz *et al*, 2004, p. 9).

Essentially, SACOSS would argue that when designing new housing developments, a balance needs to be struck between planning for the near future, and measuring those plans against possible consequences in the more distant future. Luszcz *et al* outline a number of compelling reasons for taking this approach, though two have particular relevance for low-income and disadvantaged communities.

First, if homes are designed to be useful regardless of age or functional capacity, then the potential to extend consumer choice and widen the market is enhanced (Luszcz *et al*, 2004, p. 10). For example, if homes are designed in this way, while the cost of an individual home may decline as it

ages, its usefulness will not. This will allow South Australian families and individuals on low incomes a greater chance of being able to afford suitable housing.

Second, the design of a home, its suitability for adaptation and its location can significantly affect a person's ability to enjoy their home and carry out the tasks of self care, home maintenance or enhancement, and satisfying other needs (Luszcz *et al*, 2004, p. 10). This has particular ramifications for the ageing, a population group who may suffer disproportionately if consideration is not given to the long-term implications of housing design.

For example, the Plan provides no details as to the provision of aged care in existing residential areas, let alone a consideration of the difficulties faced by aged care providers in attempting to build new facilities. Aged care providers – as well as other health and community service providers – cannot compete directly in an open market with other forms of residential development, many of which are able to achieve much cheaper building costs and lower spatial areas per person housed,

For this reason, SACOSS argues that the Plan should require a minimum percentage provision of aged living and other types of supported accommodation within any new precincts. This provision could be supported through the use of incentives to housing developers to construct aged care, disability and other supported accommodation facilities, affording density or height exemptions or bonuses to those facilities.

Conclusion

On balance, and in consideration of the points outlined above, SACOSS supports the intent and much of the content of the 30-Year Plan. However, we suggest that some work occur within some of the detail, to ensure clarity and inclusiveness to the benefit of low-income and disadvantaged communities across greater metropolitan Adelaide.

Specifically, the Plan should recognise that appropriate housing is a key determinant of physical, social, and economic wellbeing, and that affordable housing represents a means of attaining social participation through access to health and welfare services and employment, education and training opportunities. SACOSS is particularly concerned with the lack of detail surrounding the inclusion of social (or 'high needs') housing in the Plan, specifically in relation to the transport corridors, as low-income and disadvantaged communities are particularly vulnerable to a lack of public transport, an issue that has not been addressed in the Plan in its current form.

SACOSS also has grave concerns as to how realistic the Plan's draft policy of ensuring 'at least 15 per cent of all new dwellings in Greater Adelaide will be accessible to low- and moderate-income groups' (p.97) is, especially given the current serious issues concerning the availability of social housing stocks for low-income and disadvantaged South Australians. The lack of detail regarding planning for affordable and social housing within the designated Transport Corridors also has potentially serious implications for this proposed target, as the growth of Transport Oriented Developments (TODs) has shown that when well planned housing development is linked to transport, affordability is often sacrificed. There exists a real danger that social housing in particular will be focused outside the designated corridors as those with more financial means take advantage of the opportunities implied in the Plan.

Finally, SACOSS contends that much greater consideration should be given to the issues accompanying the ageing population, particularly in regard to the development and construction of adaptable housing, and the implementation of policies to ensure aged care facilities and other types of supported accommodation are not forced to the fringes of the TODs.

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