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Q1

Name of organisation

City of Ballarat

Q2

Your name

Hayley Cain

Q3

Position

Social Planning Officer

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Q10

Describe the experiences of people struggling to access affordable and suitable housing in the context of your organisation's work.

The rates of people experiencing homelessness in our City are constantly increasing. People are reporting being forced out of the rental market, and accessing housing and homelessness services for the first time. We are also seeing a lack of suitable housing options for people transitioning out of temporary and crisis accommodation, meaning these individuals cannot move on to longer term accommodation, and those sleeping rough or who are high priority for housing are unable to access temporary or crisis accommodation as a result. Rough sleeping across the Ballarat LGA is becoming more common, and more visible. Emergency and food relief providers are reporting unprecedented levels of demand of their services.

Q11

Describe the flow-on impacts of the housing crisis in the context of your organisation's work.

Receiving an unprecedented amount of reports relating to people sleeping rough or seeking housing and homelessness services. Ballarat is experiencing supply challenges in all areas of the housing spectrum, from crisis and emergency accommodation through to affordable private rentals. People who are needing crisis accommodation cannot access these services, as the facilities are remaining occupied due to a lack of transitional accommodation; this continues on to social and community rental housing. An increasingly significant percentage of households in Ballarat are experiencing housing stress, and limited diversity in our housing supply has seen many households poorly matched to the dwellings they live in.

Q12

Describe how current policy settings impact housing affordability and access to housing from your organisation's perspective.

More effective planning mechanisms are needed in order to better facilitate housing affordability and foster innovative models to deliver affordable housing. Flexible surge funding models like Victoria's successful Homelessness to Home program are needed to respond quickly to increases in the number of people who sleep rough. Similar flexible funding models are also needed which can support local communities to implement local solutions to emerging or specific issues which may include crisis or transitional housing models. Our local homelessness service providers have told us that we specifically need more early intervention, rapid housing initiatives and utilisation of 'housing first' principles. To support this we require an increase in crisis and transitional housing stock, including a women and children's refuge. There is also a need to provide trauma informed responses which involves services incorporating knowledge about trauma and its impact into all aspects of service delivery.

Q13

Describe what actions your organisation believes should be taken by governments to most improve affordability and access to housing.

Planning reforms, and additional funding to housing and homelessness service providers. To respond effectively to the differing needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and improve housing outcomes there should be a specific and separate plan or schedule developed, and a system which acknowledges and responds appropriately. This system should be responsive to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples specific housing needs and understands their connection to land, culture and family networks.

Q14

Respondent skipped this question

Is there anything else your organisation would like to share with the Commission?
