



Agency Cohousing and Community Annual Report 2022

Introduction

The Steering Committee decided at our first 2022 meeting at the end of January to give ourselves a break from formal meetings for the following 6 months. We wanted to recover some of the verve that pandemic weariness had robbed from not just the Committee, but all our members and it felt right to give ourselves some space to re-group and re-energise.

In July 2022 we started meeting again and ramped-up our activities which are summarised in this report. As before we report under the headings of our Strategic Plan (2019 – 2024) which maintains our vision, mission and aims as follows:

Vision: cohousing to be an easily accessed option for people wanting to live in their own homes but also connected to an inclusive community

Mission: to promote and support the successful establishment of Inner West cohousing projects

Aims

- Facilitate groups of people wanting to develop cohousing communities
- Promote cohousing as a concept and lobby for its support by government
- Network with similar groups elsewhere
- Develop inner west membership base
- Centralise and share knowledge for cohousing project groups
- Supporting the match of cohousing groups with potential development partners

Developing Cohousing communities

In May 2022 we made a submission on the **Bays West Stage 1 Draft Master Plan**. In summary we articulated the need for cohousing for seniors and put forward a suggestion about how cohousing could be integrated into the residential tower developments. A copy of the submission is attached to this report should members wish to read it.



Balmain Town Hall Precinct and Llewellyn Street Works Dept

In August, as part of the Balmain Town Hall precinct renewal project, Mayor Darcy Byrne asked people at a public meeting about what they would like to see at the Llewellyn Street-based Balmain Works Department Site should it become available.

To be ready for further discussion about this, we have commissioned a 3D render of our concept for cohousing and shared community indoor and outdoor space. This render (or realistic photograph of the site as it would be) will be a key tool with which to demonstrate to the local community, local councillors and local interest groups how this innovative approach to senior housing could be incorporated in a local context.

The render will be completed and ready to be launched at our AGM.

Other development opportunities

Members of the Steering Committee have visited a few local sites that have become available – mainly whole blocks of apartments in need of updating. The purchase price of these blocks, coupled with the difficulty of obtaining finance have demonstrated that, without the support of a developer, we would not be in a position to move forward on these types of opportunity.

Agency Membership

We have had 5 new members join Agency this year and existing members are gradually renewing at the new fee of \$30 a year. It is very important to us that members renew as we use our membership base as leverage when we are lobbying government and potential financial investors. So please re-join if you have not done so already.

Non-residential cohousing group

A group of 12 Balmain locals have been meeting monthly for themed dinners in person at the Uniting Church on a Friday night or, during lock downs, from our own homes on Zoom. It has been a way of building community and friendships without cohousing infrastructure.

Networking and advocating

Meeting with a Labor housing advisor prior to the election was encouraging and we hope to follow this up next year now Labor is in government

We have had a representative at meetings of the Collaborative housing in a net zero future and the Cohousing Research Network. The aim is to use grant money from the City of Sydney for research into collaborative housing models.



Agency Hub

Very few activities have taken place as part of our Agency Hub this year. This is partly due to steering group members not posting activities – possibly because interest in attending those that are posted has been very low. Pandemic weariness may have been a contributing factor. The steering group has agreed that, if interest doesn't pick up in the last few months of 2022, we may stop paying for the Meetup platform and consider the future of running events

Governance

The NSW Fair Trading Model constitution was updated in September. This was to make things easier for incorporated not-for-profit organisations. As Agency was set up utilising the Model Constitution it was agreed to move to the updated version. This requires no active change by us but will require formal ratification at the AGM.