

Response to Newcastle Herald re boarding houses and Affordable Housing SEPP

Response given to the Newcastle Herald on 9 September in response to questions about boarding house applications in Newcastle, local character and the Affordable Rental Housing State environmental planning policy (SEPP):

In May this year, the NSW Government announced measures to develop a new system of planning for and assessing affordable housing proposals in NSW. This included immediate changes to the Affordable Housing State Environmental Planning Policy (AHSEPP) and plans to establish an Affordable Housing Taskforce to review affordable housing policy and help develop a new Affordable Housing Choice SEPP.

The Affordable Housing SEPP was revised in May to stop private developers building in low density areas, where the development is not compatible with the design of the locality and not well serviced by public transport.

These changes included the introduction of more stringent requirements for boarding houses. Tougher public transport access and parking standards now apply to new boarding house development applications. Under the new provisions, boarding houses proposed outside the Sydney Region (such as Newcastle) must now be located within 400 metres of a local centre or mixed-use zone. Existing applications were required to meet a new “character test” to be compatible with the character of the surrounding area and meet the new public transport and parking standards.

The role of the taskforce is to develop a new policy position for delivering affordable housing that takes into account local housing needs and development characteristics.

The taskforce is meeting at least once a month and has held two meetings since it was established. Further meetings are planned and the taskforce is making positive progress on its review of affordable housing policy.

The taskforce is considering issues related to boarding houses as part of its work and will work closely with councils and the community on identifying the most appropriate locations for new affordable housing developments, including boarding houses.