



Community Housing
Federation of Victoria
Incorporated

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THINKING AHEAD: STRATEGIC PLAN 2006 - 2009

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PREAMBLE

This plan outlines the strategic priorities of the Community Housing Federation of Victoria (CHFV) for 2006 – 2009. It is intended to provide a sound basis for CHFV's members, partners, government and other stakeholders to understand our priorities for the next three years and the means by which we intend to address those priorities.

The strategies contained in the plan address the more significant challenges confronting the community housing sector in the next two or three years rather than presenting a comprehensive set of detailed action strategies. This approach reflects the degree of environmental change that needs to be understood and responded to by the sector during that period. CHFV's effectiveness as a peak body will rely to a large extent on our agility and capacity to respond quickly and intelligently to the opportunities and, in some cases, threats as they arise.

Like its predecessor, the 2006 - 2009 strategic plan is informed by CHFV's vision of *accessible, affordable and appropriate housing for all Victorians*. As a consequence, some of the strategies contained in this plan are ambitious and success relies to varying degrees on broader systemic change including shifts in government housing policy and on changes in community attitudes to social housing. The effectiveness of other strategies will depend on the cooperation and effectiveness of other organisations including the Office of Housing, other peak bodies and individual community housing organisations themselves.

A range of strategies in the plan focus on CHFV and its primary task, namely to *provide leadership in promoting the values and benefits of community housing and in strengthening and growing the community housing sector*. Our own efforts can be expected to have significant influence in their own right in this sphere.

The priorities in this plan have been determined by the CHFV Management Committee on the basis of consultation with our membership, CHFV staff, the Victorian Office of Housing (OoH), the Office of the Registrar of Housing Agencies (ORHA) and relevant peak bodies. CHFV's annual business plan will outline the work program each year in a manner where we can formally evaluate our efficiency and effectiveness in more tangible terms.

THE COMMUNITY HOUSING SECTOR

'Community housing is an integral part of the social housing system and aims to provide a housing option that is affordable, secure, responds to local community needs and supports tenant participation.

Community housing is rental housing for low to moderate income or special needs households, managed by not-for-profit community based organisations whose operations, in the main, have been at least partly subsidised by government (usually through funds provided under the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement) ¹.

The Victorian community housing sector is made up of over 200 housing providers operating both Director of Housing owned stock as well as properties that have been purchased or developed through non-Government community initiatives. Between them they manage over 8,800 units which represent approximately 12% of total social housing stock in the State.

¹ National Community Housing Forum 2006

A RAPIDLY CHANGING EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

The community housing sector is confronting unprecedented levels of change in its operating environment. The catalyst for much of this change has been State Government initiated reforms to the way in which community housing is structured, funded and regulated in Victoria. The key reforms are:

- the creation of Housing Associations as the primary vehicle for growth of community housing stock in the state;
- the introduction of regulation of the sector and the requirement for community housing organisations to register as either Housing Associations or Housing Providers; and
- the roll out of new funding arrangements for Housing Providers based on a rent retention model (Housing Provider Framework).

The reforms appear to present both opportunities and threats to the growth and development of the community housing sector if it is to continue to provide housing options that are *affordable, secure, responsive to local community needs and supportive of tenant participation*. The potential opportunities flowing from the reforms include:

- the potential for 'growth' in community housing stock available to the Victorian community;
- consistency in government funding arrangements;
- greater independence for housing organisations, especially larger ones; and
- incentives and resources for housing organisations to continually improve their governance, management and service delivery capability.

There are also concerns within the sector regarding the potential of the reforms to have a negative impact on community housing organisations and particularly on more marginalised individuals and families. These concerns include:

- a transfer of financial risk from government to the community sector (transfer of rent arrears and capital investment & borrowing);
- a lack of real 'fuel' for growth of Housing Associations in the absence of sufficient funding, the lack of policy and structural reforms, such as planning and zoning initiatives, land contributions and stock transfers that would support the growth of affordable housing;
- the potential for both the Housing Provider Framework and the Housing Association model to push 'complex needs' or 'higher risk' tenants out of the community housing system over time as housing organisations contend with the financial consequences of low rent paying tenants and rent arrears;
- a lack of developments that meet the changing and emerging needs of single households;
- reporting frameworks & processes that are onerous and of limited value in capturing meaningful data on effectiveness;
- the inability of smaller housing organisations to meet the requirements for registration;

At a national level there are ongoing concerns about the lack of direction and commitment to affordable housing initiatives by the Australian Government and the future of the next Commonwealth State Housing Agreement.

CHFV is represented on the Board of the Community Housing Federation of Australia and maintains strong links with national develops via this channel. CHFV coordinates with other state peaks and is able to participate with them in project and policy development.

THE COMMUNITY HOUSING FEDERATION OF VICTORIA INCORPORATED

Formed in 1997, CHFV is the peak body for community housing organisations in Victoria. At June 2006, the Federation has 81 members of which 78 are organisational members and 3 are individual members.

Membership

Membership of CHFV is open to community housing providers that support the vision, primary task and values of the Federation. Associate membership of CHFV is open to other organisations and individuals who support the vision, purpose and values of the Federation.

Accountability

CHFV is a Federation incorporated under the Associations Incorporation Act 1981 and is accountable to its membership via an elected committee of management.

Services and Activities

CHFV provides a range of services and activities to its members with the aim of maximising outcomes for current and prospective community housing residents and their local communities.

- sector development and coordination
- training and professional development
- policy and research
- advocacy
- information and support

Funding

In 2005 – 2006 CHFV had an annual operating budget of approximately \$267,000. The main sources of income for the Federation are government grants (Victorian Government's Office of Housing), membership fees and fees for service.

CHFV employs 2.8 effective full time staff. The work of the Federation is made possible by the significant voluntary contribution of many committed community housing organisations and their members.

CHFV'S GUIDING PHILOSOPHY

Vision

Accessible, affordable and appropriate housing is available to all Victorians.

Primary Task

To provide leadership in promoting the values and benefits of community housing and in strengthening and growing the Victorian community housing sector.

Organisational Values

<i>Collaboration</i>	working together as community housing providers and in partnership with others who share our concerns and interests.
<i>Diversity</i>	understanding, respecting and working with difference within the Federation and in our relationships with others.
<i>Democracy</i>	consulting member organisations and ensuring decision making processes within the Federation are participatory.
<i>Courage</i>	taking risks, embracing the new and standing up for what we believe to be right even when it is unpopular.
<i>Respect</i>	respecting the right of organisations and individuals to challenge CHFV and remaining focused on issues during times of conflict.
<i>Independence</i>	valuing and preserving the independence of individual community housing providers.
<i>Sharing Information</i>	sharing information freely and communicating clearly.
<i>Accountability</i>	maintaining honest, transparent processes for making decisions and for accounting for our use of resources.

CHFV STRATEGIC PRIORITIES 2006 - 2009

CHFV's strategies for 2006 - 2009 have been developed around five strategic priorities:

1. To promote community housing as an integral component in the mix of housing options in Victoria.
2. To increase community housing stock in Victoria.
3. To find ways to actively contribute to the development and evaluation of housing policy at the local, state and national level.
4. To support community housing providers to become registered and in so doing, enhance their governance, management and service delivery capacity.
5. To continue to strengthen CHFV's organisational capacity to take up its role as the peak body for community housing in Victoria.

Responsibility for CHFV's strategic priorities in 2006 – 09 has been allocated on the following basis:

- central – staff or Committee of Management
- local – local community housing organisations

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1:

PROMOTE COMMUNITY HOUSING AS AN INTEGRAL COMPONENT IN THE MIX OF HOUSING OPTIONS IN VICTORIA.

Strategies	Lead	Indicators of Effectiveness	Timeframes
1a) develop a profile of community housing – its defining characteristics and the way in which it contributes to healthy, sustainable local communities.	* central: staff * local: housing organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The role and attributes of community housing are promoted and better understood by Government, the community sector and the community. CHFV participates in the CHFA Mapping Project and other opportunities that provide relevant data on the size, make-up and nature of the community housing sector. 	2 yrs
1b) implement CHFV's marketing & promotion strategy at both the local and statewide level.	* central: CHFV staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A comprehensive communication strategy is developed and implemented. Media contacts are developed and maintained. 	2 yrs
1c) work with local government peak bodies and individual Councils to clarify and strengthen local governments' role as an advocate, supporter and facilitator of community housing at the local level.	* central: CHFV staff *	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participation in HALGN events and networks. CHFV develops an LGA strategy that is widely promoted. The potential role of LGAs in affordable housing initiatives is better understood. 	3 yrs
1d) further strengthen CHFV's partnership approach with the OoH and the ORHA in the development of affordable housing and building capacity within the community housing sector.	* central: CHFV staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CHFV contributes to the policy development and strategies for growth in affordable housing. CHFV develops a coordinated approach in partnership with the OoH and the ORHA to the ongoing development of the sector that increases the capacity of Associations and Providers. 	3 yrs

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2: **INCREASE COMMUNITY HOUSING STOCK IN VICTORIA.**

Strategies	Lead	Indicators of Effectiveness	Timeframes
2a) support the sector to explore the concepts and implications of 'growth' of the community housing and develop a strategy to support the form of growth that is desirable.	* Central: staff * local: housing organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Housing Organisations are able to determine their ability to grow independently or in partnership with other agencies. Community Housing Organisations have the capacity and ability to keep abreast of the changing environment and maintain focus on their communities of interest. 	3 yrs
2b) continue to lobby for new funding for increased community housing options in Victoria.	Central: staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase in funding available for community housing agencies to provide housing options for low income Victorians. 	3 yrs
2c) work with the State Government to identify real sources of growth of community housing stock managed by Housing Associations.	Central: staff, c'tee of mgt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CHFV's policy position on supporting the growth of affordable housing is better understood by the for profit sector, the philanthropic community, the Office of Housing, the Office of the Registrar of Housing Agencies and local Government. Further policy development is undertaken by the Office of Housing in collaboration with CHFV on the growth of affordable and community housing. Real sources of growth for community housing are available. 	3 yrs
2d) develop relationships with the Private Property Development Sector to promote community and affordable housing and develop partnership approaches.	* central: CHFV staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CHFV develops links with the Property Development Sector that help to raise awareness of community housing and foster partnership approaches. 	3 yrs

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3:

FIND WAYS TO ACTIVELY CONTRIBUTE TO THE DEVELOPMENT AND EVALUATION OF HOUSING POLICY AT THE LOCAL, STATE AND NATIONAL LEVEL.

Strategies	Lead	Indicators of Effectiveness	Timeframes
3a) maintain a central focus on the potential for community housing reforms in Victoria that may inhibit access for marginalized groups and those members of the community with more 'complex needs'.	* central: c'tee of mgt, staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CHFV develops and implements a policy position on affordable housing for single people and people living with a disability. ▪ Development and implementation of a monitoring framework and mechanism that will provide information on the nature of the community housing tenant profile and changes over the coming three years. ▪ CHFV, in partnership with CHFA provides advocacy to the Australian Government on the issue of rent assistance to single people. 	2yrs
3b) work with the membership to explore & implement proactive, creative and potent advocacy and lobbying strategies.	* central: CHFV c'tee of mgt. * local: housing organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ development & implementation of an agreed advocacy and lobbying strategy, agenda and timelines. 	1 yr
3c) continue to look for opportunities to extend CHFV's research capacity with a focus on partnerships with Housing Associations, government, peak bodies, and research organisations.	* central: CHFV staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ two joint/collaborative research projects are conducted on key housing issues. ▪ CHFV publishes at least two articles on key housing issues in industry journals and magazines. 	3 yrs
3d) strengthen CHFV's relationship and on-going dialogue with relevant State government Ministers and members of parliament.	* central: CHFV c'tee of mgt.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • effective representation on Ministerial Housing Council. • community housing features on the agenda of the Ministerial Housing Council. • effective communication with Minister and Minister's office. • individual housing organisations have contact with their local Members of Parliament. 	3 yrs

3e) keep building the working relationship with the OoH and the ORHA so that it is agile and robust enough to accommodate meaningful partnerships, rigorous dialogue and strong advocacy.	* central: CHFV staff, c'tee of mgt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CHFV, OoH & ORHA develop a shared agenda and complete at least two significant partnership projects that are well received by the sector. 	3 yrs
3f) work with the OoH & ORHA to create space to discuss higher order housing outcomes issues as well as more administrative and technical process matters.	* central: CHFV c'tee of mgt. * local: housing organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CHFV initiates and facilitates a series of network meetings / seminars on broad housing issues in partnership with the OoH. 	2 yrs
3g) create opportunities for key OoH & ORHA personnel to spend time in the sector interacting with community housing organisations and their tenants.	* central: CHFV c'tee of mgt. * local: housing organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key OoH & ORHA personnel spend time in the sector & report that the experience has been informative. 	3 yrs
3h) participate in national community and affordable housing initiatives and developments.	* central: CHFV staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing participation on the Board of CHFA. • Input provided from CHFV into the consultations on the national affordable housing strategy. • Identify opportunities for sharing projects, outcomes and products with other state peak organisations. 	3 yrs
3i) provide a watching brief on international community and affordable housing developments and analysis of how they relate to the Victorian situation.	* central: CHFV staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide regular articles and information on international developments in the CHFV news. • CHFV provides information to the sector on overseas experiences that have successfully expanded the supply of affordable housing. 	3 yrs

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4:

SUPPORT COMMUNITY HOUSING PROVIDERS TO BECOME REGISTERED AND IN SO DOING, ENHANCE THEIR GOVERNANCE, MANAGEMENT AND SERVICE DELIVERY CAPACITY.

Strategies	Lead	Indicators of Effectiveness	Timeframes
4a) continue to act as the conduit for information and dialogue between OoH & ORHA and the sector.	* central: CHFV staff, c'tee of mgt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of regular up-dates and communication to members on relevant issues and OoH & ORHA initiatives. • Ongoing representation of members' concerns and issues to OoH & ORHA. • Provide opportunities for members and key OoH & ORHA personnel to exchange views and have dialogue about sector reforms and developments. 	3 yrs
4b) develop and make available relevant information and general resources to support the work and registration of community housing organisations.	* central: CHFV staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CHFV provides information and resources to support the development of the sector as a whole. • CHFV provides effective resources to support agencies achieve Registration. • CHFV develops a partnership framework for smaller to medium sized agencies that wish to partner with affordable housing associations. 	2 yrs
4c) consult recently formed Housing Associations to determine the nature of services & support they require from CHFV.	* central: CHFV staff * local: housing organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development and implementation of CHFV sector development framework that includes the issues for AHAs. • CHFV provides support for affordable housing associations to further develop and build capacity. • 2 x consultation forums / meetings with AHAs on sector development and capacity building. • Development of CHFV policy on the growth of affordable housing and ongoing development of Housing Associations. 	2 yrs

4d) implement CHFV's Sector Development Framework (incorporating a sector workforce development strategy).	* central: CHFV staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CHFV's Sector Development Framework is well understood by the sector and the Office of Housing. • The OoH workforce development project achieves positive results for the CH sector. • A joined-up approach from the OoH to sector development, training, workforce development and systems issues is achieved. 	2 yrs
4e) continue to review sector registration & regulation frameworks and processes and advocate for mechanisms that enhance rather than deplete the capability of community housing organisations.	* central: CHFV staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish and conduct a review in partnership with the OoH & ORHA on the implementation of Registration and the Housing Provider Framework within the first 12 months of operation. • Identification of issues arising from the review and recommendations to address them. 	2 yr
4f) explore the options for larger housing organisations to partner smaller housing organisations in meeting the requirements of registration.	* central: CHFV staff * local: housing organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Registration Network for CHOs in partnership with the OoH is established and CHOs benefit from the opportunity. 	1 yr
4g) explore and implement sector development partnership projects with OoH & ORHA.	* central: CHFV staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two partnership projects are undertaken that support the development of the sector. 	3 yrs
4h) develop and implement a means of monitoring the impacts of new funding arrangements on the number of 'complex needs' individuals accessing and maintaining their tenancy in community housing.	* central: CHFV staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The housing needs and aspirations of singles, people with disabilities and support requirements are better understood by the sector, ORHA and OoH in the context of new affordable housing initiatives. • Policy is developed by CHFV and OoH to meet the housing requirements of people with complex needs. 	3 yrs

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 5:

CONTINUE TO STRENGTHEN CHFV'S ORGANISATIONAL CAPACITY TO TAKE UP ITS ROLE AS THE PEAK BODY FOR COMMUNITY HOUSING IN VICTORIA.

Strategies	Lead	Indicators of Effectiveness	Timeframes
5a) review CHFV's governance & management roles and build capacity in both areas.	* central: CHFV mgt. c'tee.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CHFV undertakes a review of Governance and Management roles. CHFV achieves accreditation against an appropriate set of industry standards relevant to the roles and functions of the organisation. 	2 yrs
5b) expand CHFV's income base (funding & fees) to enable it to function as an effective peak body and support the sector through the registration and regulation processes.	* central: CHFV staff, mgt. c'tee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CHFV membership fees and structure are reviewed and necessary changes made. 2 projects from sources other than OoH are submitted for. Opportunities for attracting philanthropic support are investigated. Fee for service options are further investigated. 	3 yrs
5c) continue to develop robust and transparent democratic processes to determine the views and priorities of the sector.	* central: CHFV staff, mgt. c'tee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CHFV sub-committee structures are reviewed. CHFV members' not involved in sub-committee structures have appropriate forums to attend, network and have their needs met. Increase in satisfaction of CHFV membership. 	3 yrs
5d) continue to strengthen CHFV's connection with rural & regional community housing organisations and communities.	* central: CHFV staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 regional CHFV forums are held each year. Development and support of regional information and support networks for CHOs is achieved. Development and implementation of communication strategy for rural and regional CHOs is achieved. 	3 yrs

EVALUATION

CHFV's evaluation approach is based on:

- an on-going effort to reflect on and improve our work and outcomes 'as we go';
- input and feedback from our member organisations;
- input and feedback from external stakeholders including peak bodies, government and partners; and
- a more formal process for staff and committee of management to evaluate the performance of CHFV based on external input, our own experience and pre-established organisational success indicators.

The processes used to achieve evaluation and review of the Strategic Plan include:

- quarterly reporting to the Committee of Management on achievements against the Strategic Plan;
- a formal review by the Committee of Management of the Strategic and Business Plans every six months;
- regular reports to the membership on the progress of the Strategic Plan – at least twice a year;
- regular reviews and reflections on the strategic plan by CHFV membership at Members' Meetings – at least twice a year;
- at least one survey per year of CHFV Members that provides the opportunity for input into reviews and evaluations of the organisation's performance and general feedback;
- regular meetings with the OoH, the ORHA, Peak bodies and other stakeholders;
- regular and ongoing internal appraisals of the Strategic and Business Plans;
- ongoing staff appraisal processes.

The Federation is committed to evaluating the effectiveness of our strategic priorities as well as evaluating the effectiveness of our work in implementing those strategies. We expect our evaluation framework will feature formal feedback and evaluation processes as well placing emphasis on the development of a capacity to have on-going conversations about our effectiveness both within the organisation and with external stakeholders.

Appendix 1: CHFV STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS 2006 - 2009

