

## 14.1 NEWROC Joint Affordable and Key Worker Housing Project – Regional Housing Support Fund

### Corporate & Community Services



Date:	12 December 2025
Location:	28 Goldfields Road, Dowerin
Responsible Officer:	Acting Chief Executive Officer
Author:	Acting Chief Executive Officer
Legislation:	<i>Local Government Act 1995</i>
Sharepoint Reference:	
Disclosure of Interest:	
Attachments:	<a href="#">NEWROC – Key Worker Housing Cost Benefit Analysis</a> <a href="#">NEWROC – Key Worker Business Case Investment</a>

#### Purpose of Report



Executive Decision



Legislative Requirement

#### Summary

Following completion of the NEWROC Worker Housing Demand Business Case by the Wheatbelt Development Commission, the State Government has recently opened applications for the Regional Housing Support Fund (RHSF), providing an opportunity for NEWROC member Shires to jointly seek funding for the Affordable and Key Worker Housing Project. To progress a regional application before the deadline, Council endorsement is required for in-principle support and a proposed financial contribution.

#### Background

The North Eastern Wheatbelt Regional Organisation of Councils (NEWROC), comprising the Shires of Dowerin, Koorda, Mt Marshall, Mukinbudin, Nungarin and Trayning, commenced a joint initiative in 2024 to address the critical shortage of affordable and key worker housing across the region. As part of this work, NEWROC entered into an agreement with the Wheatbelt Development Commission to undertake a Workforce Housing Demand Analysis, a Cost Benefit Analysis, and the preparation of a Business Case, in collaboration with JE Planning and Econosis.

The background research confirmed that workforce housing shortages are a significant constraint on the ability of local governments, businesses, and essential service providers to attract and retain staff. The analysis also identified substantial undersupply across both public and private sector housing.

Key findings for the Shire of Dowerin found:

- A survey of the businesses in Dowerin and analysis on the NEWROC Business Case showed the estimated overall dwelling demand is predicted to be 7-11 times greater than current building activity and is estimated to require between 40 and 63 additional dwellings by 2031.
- There is an estimated shortage of 22-40 public and private sector workforce dwellings in the Shire of Dowerin. To accommodate the public and private sector workforce between 2025 and 2031, an additional 27 (low estimate) to 45 (high estimate) dwellings are required.

- The report recommended a range of housing options for single workers and families.
- Construction Recommendations: To meet current building activity and increased workforce housing requirements, it is recommended that 6-9 dwellings be constructed each year over the next 7 years within the Shire, with at least 4-6 dwellings being for workforce accommodation. This figure may incrementally address worker housing shortages and maintain ongoing replacement stock and additional dwellings for the broader community.

The State Government's recent announcement of the Regional Housing Support Fund (RHSF) provides NEWROC with a timely opportunity to progress this work. The Fund supports the delivery of key worker and community housing in regional WA, offering grants of up to \$5 million (ex GST) per application (total pool of \$25million) for projects capable of being delivered in the short term.

A meeting of NEWROC CEOs was held on 24 November 2025 to consider lodging a regional application to the RHSF. CEOs reached general agreement to proceed, with each member Shire to confirm its participation, in-principle support, and proposed co-contribution. The meeting also discussed project staging, combined project costs, timelines, and the need for letters of support.

At the NEWROC meeting on 2 December 2025, delegates resolved to receive the CEO meeting outcomes and confirmed that the Shires of Dowerin, Mt Marshall, Mukinbudin and Wyalkatchem would participate in a joint grant application. The Shires not participating agreed to provide letters of support.

For the Shire of Dowerin, the proposed project involves the construction of four modular grouped dwellings—three 2-bedroom, 1-bathroom units and one 3-bedroom, 2-bathroom unit—on Lot 28 Goldfields Road, delivered over two years.

#### Comment

The announcement of the Regional Housing Support Fund provides a significant opportunity for NEWROC to advance the Affordable and Key Worker Housing Project through a coordinated regional approach. Substantial groundwork has already been completed, including the Business Case, Cost Benefit Analysis and project scoping, placing NEWROC in a strong position to submit a competitive application.

Endorsing an in-principle financial contribution at this stage will not commit Council to a final funding amount. Rather, it will allow the participating NEWROC member Shires to demonstrate collective support and project readiness—both of which are key assessment criteria for the State Government. An in-principle resolution is also required to satisfy the Fund's mandatory requirement for evidence of local government commitment and co-contribution.

The NEWROC member Shires not participating in the delivery component of the project have agreed to provide letters of support for the joint application, further strengthening the regional submission.

The collaborative NEWROC approach presents a cohesive case for investment, highlighting the shared workforce housing challenges across the region, the efficiencies of pooled resources, and the advantages of coordinated planning and delivery. A joint submission is anticipated to carry greater weight than individual Shire applications and offers the best opportunity to secure State funding.

If the grant application is successful, participating member Shires will have the opportunity to finalise governance arrangements, funding commitments, project staging and delivery structures before entering into any binding agreements.

This agenda item therefore seeks Council's endorsement to participate in the joint NEWROC funding application and to provide the necessary in-principle support to enable the business case and grant submission to proceed within the required timeframe.

### Consultation

Shire of Dowerin CEO, Manisha Barthakur

Megan Shirt, Acting Manager of Finance

Ben Forbes, Manager of Infrastructure and Projects

Russell Holleley, Technical Officer

NEWROC CEOs

NEWROC Executive Officer - Preparation of Grant Funding Strategy, business case updates and support for RHSF application

Wheatbelt Development Commission, JE Planning and Econosis

### Policy Implications

Nil

### Statutory Implications

Nil

### Strategic Implications

#### Strategic Community Plan

Community Priority: Prioritise key economic drivers

Objective: Attract external funding to repurpose the Old Bowling Greens

Outcome: 2.3

Reference: 2.3b

Community Priority: Prioritise key economic drivers

Objective: Collaborate with local groups and NEWROC to seek opportunities, funding and partnerships for the delivery of worker housing options.

Outcome: 2.3

Reference: 2.3c

#### Asset Management Plan

Nil

#### Long Term Financial Plan

The Long-Term Financial plan presented to Council in December 2022 included funding for renewal of building assets with no provision for new investment of this nature. However, the Council can review the plan based on the current economic and social climate. The Council has over the past few years been contributing funds to a Land and Building reserve, which at the end of FY26 is budgeted to have \$721K, as such these funds can be utilised for this project.

With the recent completion of the Council Plan and Workforce Plan, it is planned to commence the review of the Long-Term Financial Plan in 2026.

## Risk Implications

<b>Risk Profiling Theme</b>	Failure to fulfil statutory regulations or compliance requirements
<b>Risk Category</b>	Compliance
<b>Risk Description</b>	No noticeable regulatory or statutory impact
<b>Consequence Rating</b>	Major (4)
<b>Likelihood Rating</b>	Unlikely (2)
<b>Risk Matrix Rating</b>	Moderate (8)
<b>Key Controls (in place)</b>	Business Case, Financial Management Framework and Legislation, Risk Management Framework, Project Management Framework
<b>Action (Treatment)</b>	Nil
<b>Risk Rating (after treatment)</b>	Adequate

### Financial Implications

The estimated total cost to construct four modular grouped dwellings on Lot 28 Goldfields Road, Dowerin, is \$2,352,588, including a 15% contingency for design and construction. The Shire of Dowerin's indicative contribution is 10% of the project component attributable to the Shire, comprising a combination of cash and in-kind contributions as shown below:

ITEM	COST	REGIONAL HOUSING SUPPORT FUND REQUEST	SHIRE OF DOWERIN	STATUS
			CONTRIBUTION 10%	
Headworks, connections and fees	\$ 266,120	\$ 167,362	\$ 98,758	Funded by Reserve
Site works, internal services and landscaping	\$ 330,000	\$ 330,000		
Planning and technical costs provision	\$ 32,000	\$ -	\$ 32,000	Funded by Reserve
Construction	\$ 1,335,000	\$ 1,335,000		
<i>Three 2-bed, 1-bath</i>	<i>\$307,000 per dwelling</i>			
<i>One 3-bed, 2-bath</i>	<i>\$414,000 per dwelling</i>			
Design and construction contingency 15%	\$ 294,468	\$ 294,468		
Land Value - Lot 28 Goldfields Road, Dowerin	\$ 95,000		\$ 95,000	Owned by Council
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 2,352,588</b>	<b>\$ 2,126,830</b>	<b>\$ 225,758</b>	

#### Notes:

- The Shire's total contribution of \$225,758 includes a cash component of \$130,758 and an in-kind contribution of \$95,000 (land value).
- The cash contribution, if the RHSF application is successful, can be funded from the Shire's Land and Building Reserve (current balance \$716,241).
- Successful grant funding will require incorporation of the project into the Long-Term Financial Plan review to ensure financial sustainability.

### Voting Requirements



Simple Majority



Absolute Majority

### Officer's Recommendation

#### *That, by Absolute Majority Council*

1. Supports NEWROC progressing with the submission of a joint application to the State Government's Regional Housing Support Fund (RHSF) for the NEWROC Affordable and Key Worker Housing Project.
2. Endorses Lot 28 Goldfields Rd, Dowerin as the site for the construction of Dowerin's dwellings.
3. Endorses, in principle, a financial contribution of \$225,758 towards the Shire of Dowerin component of the project for the construction of four modular grouped dwellings (three 2-bedroom, 1-bathroom units and one 3-bedroom, 2-bathroom unit) on Lot 28 Goldfields Road, Dowerin.
4. Confirms that, should the grant application be successful, the Shire's contribution will comprise of:
  - a) Cash contribution \$130, 758 to be funded from Council's Land and Building Reserve, and
  - b) An in-kind contribution of \$95,000 representing the value of the land at Lot 28 Goldfields Road, Dowerin.
5. Authorises the Acting Chief Executive Officer to provide a letter to NEWROC confirming the Shire of Dowerin's in-principle support for the joint RHSF application, and outlining the details of Council's project contribution.