

South Port Community Housing Group



Strategic Directions and Priorities 2015-2018



Building new housing: 330
Bank Street 2011

This strategic directions plan was developed by the South Port Community Housing Group Committee in collaboration with staff in June 2015. It sets out the outcomes that we hope will result from our work. It is against these outcomes that we will evaluate our effectiveness and report to members, government, funders, partners and local communities.

The social housing sector is rapidly changing as is the broader society within which we live. Opportunities and challenges come and go all of the time – things don't slow up to wait for the next strategic planning cycle. In this context, this plan contains strategic priorities as we saw them in mid-2015. We will review those priorities as the demands and interests of tenants, governments, the social housing sector and local communities continue to change and our response to those changes continues to evolve.



Our History

South Port Community Housing Group began in 1982 on the initiative of three people: Heather McKee, Social Worker at South Melbourne Council, Beris Campbell, Social worker at Port Melbourne Council, and Jon Watson, Minister at the Uniting Church South Melbourne. Formation of the South Port Rooming House Committee (as the organisation was then known) happened in response to three factors:

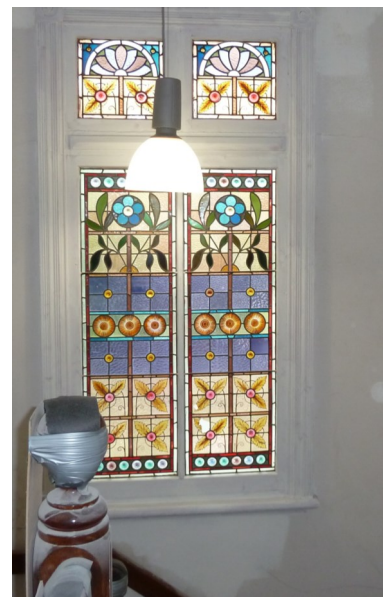
The numbers of single person households being displaced by rapid gentrification and the sale and conversion of local rooming houses, pubs, bungalows and other forms of affordable singles housing;

The existence of two State Government owned rooming houses on the Emerald Hill Estate that had been acquired by Government several years earlier;

Election of the Cain State Government which was committed to social programs and public housing and created a Rooming House Program within the bureaucracy in the early 1980s.

Stock grew quickly in the 1980s and early 90s, with the organisation taking on head-leases of 13 State-owned rooming houses with tenancy numbers totaling around 170. In response to growing numbers of homeless young people locally, a Youth Housing Program began in 1985 and received State funding in 1986.

Opportunities to take on new rooming houses dried up between 1994



Preserving history: ballroom ceiling Ferrars Place; window Dorcas Street





and 2002 but in 2002 South Port won a State Government tender for a new property that resulted in the 41 new one-bedroom flats at 306 Dorcas Street. Since 2009, in partnership with the State Office of Housing, and out of concern for the high turnover and perceived lack of safety in rooming houses, South Port has successfully achieved eight rooming house conversions. The organisation made this a priority and devoted significant time and resources to making the conversions happen over a six-year period. 106 rooms in those eight rooming houses were reduced to 94 bed-sits to achieve this result. There has been a highly significant change to stability and safety in the accommodation since the conversions.

With the support of the State Government, since 2011 the organisation has moved into an exciting new phase, taking on ownership of two properties. In 2011 a successful submission was made to the Federal Nation Building Program, a grant of \$11.5 million was received and, on land leased for 80 years from the Melbourne Roman Catholic Diocese, 40 new one-bedroom flats, owned by South Port, were constructed at 330 Bank Street, South Melbourne. In 2012 South Port was approached by the G.W.Vowell Foundation wanting to sell their 31 bed-sit flats for the over 55 age group in Emerald Street, South Melbourne. After a long campaign, South Port obtained a State grant, borrowed funds for the first time, and purchased the Emerald Street property.

Preserving history: pressed metal ceilings; a photo found behind a fireplace



Our Mission

We create and manage affordable rental housing options in the City of Port Phillip for single adults and young people who have faced homelessness and social exclusion and encourage our tenants to participate in the local community and share in the benefits of inner-city living.

We work with people who are most in need of an affordable, supportive place to live.

What we do

We are a registered Housing Provider with a capacity of 285 tenancies.

South Port owns two properties: 330 Bank Street (40 one-bedroom flats), and 15 Emerald Street (31 bed-sit flats); all other properties are leased from the Victorian State Government. We are also an accredited Homeless Service Provider through the second arm of our operations, the Youth Housing Support Program, which provides case-managed support to young people aged 15-25 who have been homeless, primarily in the areas of housing, living skills, parenting, education, employment, and relationships.

South Port has consistently focused on meeting the needs of people least well served by the private rental market: people on the lowest incomes,



New bed-sits have a personal kitchen...





young people, old people, people suffering with chronic mental health problems, people with long term drug/alcohol issues. That commitment is based on knowledge that this group has very few alternative housing options. It also requires a particular tenancy management style that involves regular personal contact and provision of practical support in numerous ways when tenants are struggling or unwell.

The target group for our housing is singles in the lowest income bracket who are coming from homelessness or highly insecure or crisis housing. Our resolve in this is firmer than ever as we see a significant risk of this group losing access to affordable housing managed by the community sector. South Port's tenant profile has changed little over the last 20 years.

We also advocate for a significant increase in affordable rental housing in Victoria and for governments and communities to work together to address the underlying causes of social disadvantage.

...bedroom/living...and
bathroom



Organisational Values

Our values guide the way we work, our decision-making & our relationships within the organisation, with tenants, partners & other stakeholders.

Fair, transparent, non-discriminatory access and service provision

We ensure fair, non-discriminatory service provision and access to services.

We are committed to housing the homeless and not rejecting people regarded as "hard to house" or "high risk" tenants.

Warm, respectful, empowering and supportive tenancy management

We work with people in a way that is warm and respectful and encourages them to take responsibility for and control over their own lives.

We provide housing services of a supportive nature, with emphasis on maintaining tenancies of people with complex needs.

Accountable, ethical and high quality

We are accountable to and governed by members of the community including tenants/clients of the organisation.

We maintain high professional standards, accountability, and ethical behaviour in governance, management and service delivery.

Courage to speak up

We have courage to challenge things we see as wrong and stand up for things we strongly believe in.

Respect individual's privacy and sensitive use of information

We do not collect personal information unless it is directly necessary for our work with tenants and clients and funding organisations.

Engagement with community

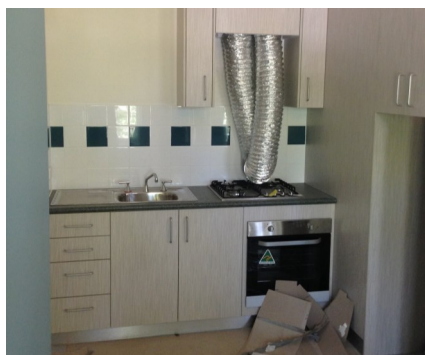
We develop "community" that is based on good relationships among staff, committee, tenants, and neighbours.

We encourage the local community and locally based businesses to share in the responsibility for tackling homelessness.



Street Party 2015 for Homelessness Prevention Week





Converting rooming houses
to bed-sits

Outcomes

In carrying out our mission, we set out to create the following conditions or outcomes –

1. A mix of affordable, innovative, community-based rental housing options in the City of Port Phillip for single adults and young people.
2. Our tenants feel safe, supported and secure in their home and are aware of their tenancy rights and responsibilities.
3. Our tenants engage in local community life and enjoy the benefits of inner-city living.
4. We are a significant voice in advocating for affordable rental housing and support services for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.
5. South Port is part of a connected network of affordable housing and support services.
6. South Port is a respected organisation known for its compassion, competence and prudent use of public resources. It is financially viable and accountable.

We will evaluate and report on our effectiveness against these outcomes.



Strategic Priorities 2015 – 2018

Our strategic priorities for 2015 – 2018 -

- Growing affordable rental housing options
- Working *alongside* vulnerable people
- Articulating the benefits and costs of our tenancy model
- Engaging in a diverse City of Port Phillip
- Strong advocacy for affordable housing
- Building organizational capacity

1. Growing affordable rental housing options

We will continue to explore opportunities to expand the availability and range of affordable rental housing opportunities in Port Phillip with the aim of better meeting demand and ensuring people most at risk of homelessness have access to community housing.

We will explore strategies to achieve this outcome and take opportunities as they arise. Consideration will be given to:

- taking on long term leases for public housing stock in Port Phillip that is suitable for single people
- utilisation of South Port's existing multi-bedroom properties



Building supportive relationships





expansion of the Emerald Street property

developing accommodation options using City of Port Phillip 'airspace'

working in partnership with other organisations to create more housing options, including housing for young people

exploring the feasibility of a 'HomeShare' type model in the City of Port Phillip



2. Working alongside our tenants

We will continue to develop South Port's approach to supporting our tenants to remain in their homes, to take part in the life of the local community and to learn new skills.

3. Articulating the benefits and costs of our tenancy model

We will complete a cost-benefit analysis of our tenancy model.

4. Engaging in a diverse City of Port Phillip

We will continue to explore ways for South Port tenants to participate actively in the local community & share in the benefits of inner-city living.

5. Strong advocacy for affordable housing

We will strengthen our voice and alliances to advocate for affordable rental housing for those most vulnerable in the

Building community



community and continue to work closely with the City of Port Phillip on local housing policy issues

6. Building organizational capacity

We will continue to learn and build our organisational capability with a particular focus on:

- * developing a longer term financial strategy for the organisation that takes account of projected growth & asset management liabilities
- * refining South Port's governance model to enshrine differentiated roles for the Committee and for management and to revitalise our membership
- * reviewing our organizational structure to ensure we have the management, strategic and operational capability needed in a rapidly changing environment
- * creating a modern, environmentally sustainable workspace for staff
- * developing high level property maintenance capability.



Innovating– providing tenants with free wi-fi



