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BUSINESS CALLS FOR ACTION ON KEY WORKER HOUSING

The region's peak business organisation, Business Illawarra, has today used its [submission](#) to Wollongong City Council's [Draft Housing Strategy](#) to sound the alarm on the lack of housing available in the region, citing it as the single greatest challenge facing the region's economy.

In its [submission](#), Business Illawarra has identified an affordable housing crisis in the Illawarra region that is driving workforce shortages across key industries and hampering its economic recovery. It is now calling on councils and the NSW Government to identify and implement 'game changing' proposals to urgently create more accommodation for key workers.

A research project to examine regional solutions to the crisis is currently being undertaken by housing experts Judith Stubbs and Associates, and was commissioned by Business Illawarra, supported by the Illawarra Shoalhaven Joint Organisation, the Illawarra Housing Trust, the Property Council, Warrigal, and MMJ Real Estate Wollongong.

The full report will be launched early in 2023, but has made the following preliminary findings:

- There were around 22,700 "very low", "low", and "moderate" income households in housing stress in the Illawarra-Shoalhaven Region, with around 17,750 households (78%) in rental stress and 4,950 households (22%) in purchase stress.
- There is a need for affordable housing from 2021 to 2041 of around 7,720 additional dwellings in the region.
- Overall, the regional workforce grew by 13% over the past 5 years.
- Health Care and Social Assistance workers with a high portion of "very low", "low" and "moderate" income households is by far the largest industry of employment in the region.

Business Illawarra Executive Director Adam Zarth said that businesses had a strong interest in ensuring that local people could access affordable housing close to work, citing a [Workforce Skills Survey](#) conducted by Business NSW earlier this year that found 93 percent of businesses couldn't find staff they needed, and 36 percent of businesses identified housing as a key long-term challenge facing business.

"Our region is in the grip of an acute housing crisis, and we cannot expect to realise economic growth and deliver on our enviable pipeline of major projects until we find some ready solutions," said Mr Zarth.

"Today we have called on Wollongong City Council to go beyond 'business as usual', and to bring forward game-changing ideas in its Draft Housing Strategy that will rapidly meet the escalating demand for key worker accommodation – and we will be making similar calls on other Councils and the NSW Government."

"Councils need to consider expediting the creation of new housing on land they own, unlocking existing assets they hold like carparks, and streamlining the significant regulatory impediments to bringing forward new housing."

"All levels of government need to engage the private sector and the community housing industry in the development of affordable housing, and consider partnering with large employers and

developers - and to that end the Commonwealth's establishment of a Housing Accord is a positive first step."

"As a community, we need to get behind the creation of more affordable housing, and support innovation and diversity of solutions; whether it be 'Design for Manufacture and Assembly' modular builds, modern forms of temporary accommodation as we are seeing on the Snowy 2.0 project or brokerage schemes that might see key workers matched with underoccupied premises."

"We all need to take ownership of this issue, and empower decision-makers to get on and deliver innovative solutions to house our key workers into the future, to keep our businesses staffed and operating, and prevent the stagnation of our economy."

— ENDS —

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About Business Illawarra

Formerly the Illawarra Business Chamber, *Business Illawarra* is the region's peak business organisation, and the regional office of Business NSW responsible for the south-east of the state, including the Southern Highlands.