



31 October 2022

Media Release

Infrastructure must match housing boom

Mount Barker District Council has backed calls by a peak local government body that the Albanese Government's ambitious housing reform agenda must be co-ordinated with the timely provision of essential infrastructure and services.

As the infrastructure and services deficit in growth areas such as Mount Barker widens, federal and state governments need to take responsibility for co-ordinating the needs associated with a housing boom that will be accelerated by the one million homes scheme announced as the [National Housing Accord](#) in the federal budget.

Bronwen Clark, CEO of the National Growth Areas Alliance (NGAA) of which Mount Barker District Council is a member, rightly points out: "You can't just drop a million new houses in some paddocks and think that the job is done."

"Mount Barker is a case in point," Mount Barker District Council CEO Andrew Stuart said.

"The rapidly growing population of Mount Barker has a 'connector' road that doesn't connect – a series of no-through roads waiting for the next section to be constructed with 41 per cent (almost 4km) still to be built. This farcical situation with the Heysen Boulevard connector road is a direct result of a State Government rezoning decision in 2010 without the pre-requisite of getting essential transport infrastructure in place. This has left our community at risk and highly frustrated with their everyday commuter experience.

"Governments have been strong advocates of expansion and development of the Mount Barker area, having presided over extensive population growth driven by new housing developments. It is disappointing governments have not accepted the corresponding obligation to oversee the development of infrastructure to support this expansion.

"The absence of a co-ordinated approach will continue to hurt our communities, its connectedness and cohesion in much more broader ways far beyond just their commuter experience. The effect it has on our retail and commercial traders, our tourism offerings and everyday interactions with education and work are all affected by sub-optimal transport solutions.

"Significant investment by all three spheres of government in critical infrastructure and community services such as the Heysen Boulevard connector road is essential to underpin the rapid population growth in this region.

“It is government policy that has turned Mount Barker into the state’s fastest growing region with booming sales of ‘well-located affordable housing’, putting it on track to making it the second largest city in SA.

“But there hasn’t been corresponding infrastructure investment, resulting in nightmare traffic and incomplete roads along with a lack of basic health, education, emergency, social and community services in new areas to service the rapid growth.”

State and federal Labor governments need to commit to providing the required cash flow for the completion of Heysen Boulevard, Mr Stuart said.

The Government also must commit to a ministerial deed signed in 2012, under a former Labor administration, which identified 38 road-related projects in the area. Only 14 of the 38 projects have been fully or partially completed, despite Mount Barker welcoming around 8000 new residents since 2010. Currently at just over 40,000 people, the population of the Mount Barker district is estimated to reach 60,000 in around 15 years and ultimately between 75,000 and 80,000.

Council is playing its part, having recently delivered a new regional sports hub and currently investing many tens of millions of dollars into wastewater infrastructure.

“The Malinauskas government has now realised these needs and its commitment to a new Mount Barker hospital and an ambulance station is very welcome and hopefully there is plenty more to come,” Mr Stuart said.

The Albanese Government’s Housing Accord – to build one million new well-located homes over five years from 2024 – has the potential to transform Australia’s cities and suburbs and provide much-needed housing. But the scheme also raises questions for outer urban growth areas like Mount Barker.

“The reality is that new housing will mostly be built in the growing outer areas such as Mount Barker, where there are currently already another 12,000 land allotments to be built on,” Mr Stuart said.

“If Mount Barker is to thrive, it must be supported by appropriate infrastructure that is delivered in alignment with development.”

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MEDIA CONTACT:

Mount Barker District Council Communications Manager, Ian Hildebrand

P: (08) 8393 6470 | E: ihildebrand@mountbarker.sa.gov.au