



**Strategic Plan**

# **Towards 2025**

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CEHL acknowledges Indigenous Australians as the traditional owners of the country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, sea and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures and to their elders both past and present.



CEHL is committed to equality, inclusivity and respect.

# Executive summary

**For over 35 years, Common Equity Housing Limited (CEHL) has worked in partnership with its member co-operatives to deliver an effective and sustainable housing program.**

In this time, we've demonstrated the positive value of co-operative models and being a key part of the solution to address Victoria's affordable housing crisis.

The context CEHL operates within is continually changing. This provides new and evolving opportunities and challenges which will shape how CEHL partners, supports and works with its member co-operatives over the next 5 years. Critically, CEHL will focus on creating an agile and responsive housing program that provides the resources, innovation and growth needed to support members both today and into the future.

This five-year strategy sets out how CEHL will work alongside, with and for our member co-ops, to build their capacity to participate, influence and lead the Program. Creating sustainable growth for the organisation and positive impact for co-operatives and their members and communities is critical to this.



**“We are setting the way for investment into an expanded, evidence-based and thriving co-operative Program. Creating growth and a positive impact for co-operatives and their members and communities sit at the strategy’s heart.**

I’m pleased to present our plan for the next five years which will set us on course for positive Impact and Influence in the sector and on our community.

The plan was developed co-operatively and through robust discussion and consultation with Board members, senior management team and the Co-op Program Committee.”

**Heidi Lee, CEHL Chairperson**

# Our history

**The CEHL Housing Program grew from a grassroots rental housing co-operative movement, in a time of declining housing affordability and growing social dislocation in the 1980s.**

The aim was to create a rental housing model in the social housing system which enabled co-op housing members to be directly involved in the management of their housing; bookkeeping, and member tenancies, developing skills in the process, while CEHL, provided co-ops with technical expertise, program management, asset portfolio management and resourcing. The Program evolved to provide housing co-operative models at a larger scale and in apartment buildings.



# Our organisation today

**CEHL is a leading registered Housing Association, a provider and developer of co-operative housing. We partner with autonomous housing co-operatives to deliver the CEHL Housing Program.**

Our dedicated employees work in partnership with member co-ops to equip them with the tools and resources to support their development and actively promote and grow the value and participation in co-operatives.

Our employees are the driving force of CEHL who bring purpose and value to their work every day. We see the next five years as an opportunity to continue to invest in our people, alongside our member co-ops, and direct tenants, to help the organisation grow, learn and adapt.

# Our future

**This strategic plan comes at a time of continued change within the external environment, requiring CEHL, co-ops and the Program to adapt.**

These changes bring about shared responsibility and opportunity for CEHL and member co-ops to meet our shared challenges. In particular, CEHL will need to be fit for purpose to ensure deep engagement with co-ops to set the Program Direction for the next 20 years and offering more co-op choice of tasks and responsibilities.

The next five years will be an important stepping-stone in shaping our future together.

**Our employees are the driving force of CEHL who bring purpose and value to their work every day.**

# Strategic context

**Our society and sector is rapidly changing. To remain relevant, we must be informed, agile and responsive to these changes. Outlined below are some of the trends and considerations that have informed the development of this strategy.**



## The future of co-op housing

Around the world, co-operative housing is being employed as a tool to combat the housing affordability crisis and create environments for deeper community connection and ownership. However, across Australia, co-operative housing isn't well-understood or utilised as a solution to address our housing challenges or perceived as a new way of living for different groups in our community.

Fortunately, successive Victorian Governments have supported the CEHL Program to grow over the past three decades. With social isolation, inequality and disadvantage becoming entrenched for many groups in the community, the need for co-operative housing is growing. In order to increase housing in the Program it is imperative that the power of co-operative models is captured through measuring outcomes, and promoting its social, economic and cultural benefits to society. Co-op housing is not for people just seeking affordable housing, it is for those in our community looking for a more connected way to live.



## Working together in a complex stakeholder environment

The problems experienced across the community are complex. There are a range of potential partner organisations and government bodies providing services, conducting research, and advocating for change. There is a need to create an environment where CEHL and co-ops work together to address our shared challenges and find solutions.



## Real and representative voice and engagement

Many people outside the CEHL Program lack choice and control over decisions that influence their housing situation. The co-operative principles encourage democratic member control, autonomy and independence, co-operation and concern for the community. These principles can only be realised when people have the opportunity to influence the decision-making around their lives, housing and co-op. This requires engaged and connected co-operatives that are equipped with the capability and capacity to participate and opportunities to influence.



## Community needs, expectations and priorities

Access to safe, secure and affordable housing is a key determinant for people to live fulfilling lives. As the world around us changes, so too must our Program, property portfolio and processes. From environmentally responsible practices to enhanced program choices available to member co-operatives, the Program must continually reflect on its relevance and viability and adapt. Member co-operatives must also be able to influence the design and development of a Program Direction that will be relevant and viable for current and future members.



## Responding to Victoria's housing challenges

Victoria's community housing sector exists in an environment of unmet need and growing demand for safe and secure housing. There are currently 82,000 people that need an affordable secure home and a shortfall of 160,000 homes.<sup>1</sup> Without action or investment, this problem will only continue to grow. Our voice, influence and action are required as a driver for greater and continued investment into co-operative housing.

<sup>1</sup> Hope Street Youth and Family services, Submission to parliamentary enquiry into homelessness in Victoria, January 2020



## Investment into the social housing sector

COVID-19 has made clear that everyone needs a home and society benefits by creating homes for those in need. The Victorian Government's investment of \$5.4 billion as part of the "Big Housing Build" will create 12,000 new social housing homes over the next four years. This creates opportunities to house more people, innovate and try alternate co-operative housing solutions. This investment will not completely solve Victoria's housing challenges, but if sustained will bring Victoria's proportion of social housing up to the national average. It also provides opportunities to demonstrate the positive impact created by co-operative housing and further recognise and value its importance in our society.



## Staff, capacity and retention

As the Program grows and changes, so does the need for an agile, skilled workforce in service delivery roles, co-op resourcing and program development. Our people are passionate about the Program, they are the backbone of the organisation and must be supported to deliver. This requires investment to ensure that our people are equipped with the capacity, capability, systems and technology to support tenants and enable thriving co-operatives.

# Our strategy

## Our vision

**Empowered people**

**Thriving co-operatives**

**Better housing solutions**

## Our values

### We work TOGETHER

We work together to achieve a positive impact in our community. We share perspectives, concerns and Information to create considered solutions in the work we do.

### We are RESPONSIBLE

We take pride in what we do, we are responsible for our actions. We make and support business decisions through Informed experience and good judgement.

### We CARE for one another

We treat everyone with care and value their contribution. We build trust and understanding through open and honest Interaction with our team members, stakeholders and associates.

### We make a DIFFERENCE

Our history informs our future. We learn and adapt. We believe that meaningful change comes from looking at challenges and opportunities.

## Our purpose

To partner with member co-ops to deliver an effective, sustainable and member-led co-operative housing program.

## Our role

- Provide and maintain a quality housing program
- Facilitate, resource and govern the member-led co-op housing program
- Build the capability and capacity of co-op members
- Provide an environment for co-op self-determination

## Our belief

We believe that delivering the CEHL Housing Program in partnership with co-ops delivers unique value to co-op members and the broader community.

## Our commitment to Co-operative Principles

- ✓ Voluntary and open membership
- ✓ Democratic member control
- ✓ Members' economic participation
- ✓ Autonomy and independence
- ✓ Education, training and information
- ✓ Co-operation among co-operatives
- ✓ Concern for community

## Our goals and priorities

**Creating growth and achieving positive outcomes for members, co-operatives and communities sit at the heart of the strategy. Over the next five years our strategic priorities are about creating:**



### **EMPOWERED members, co-ops and communities living well through co-operatives**

- Work in partnership with co-ops to engage and connect members using communication and engagement tools. Provide opportunities for co-op members to participate in co-op and program activities.
- Work in partnership with co-ops to build member co-op skills and capability to influence and the Program. Provide easy to use resources that support this capability.
- Acknowledge and promote the social, economic and cultural benefits of co-operatives to the broader community.



### **MEANINGFUL impact on the lives of people in the Program and community**

- Develop a measurement framework that reports on our performance and demonstrates the impact created within the Program.
- Build partnerships with organisations that complement our service to create better outcomes for member co-operatives.
- Actively advocate to reach and influence decision-makers. Seek increased investment in innovative and affordable co-operative housing.
- Use collective scale and buying power to obtain low cost services and utilities creating saving and benefits for member co-operatives.



### **A THRIVING, trusted member-led co-operative housing program providing quality housing**

- In collaboration with member co-operatives, we will design, develop and implement a program direction that will be adaptive and responsive to current and future members for the years ahead.
- Develop innovative choices for co-ops that respond to the needs and aspirations of member co-operatives.
- Provide clear opportunities for co-ops to influence the Program and key program decisions.
- Invest in our housing portfolio to ensure we manage, maintain and deliver quality housing.
- Develop governance processes and build the governance capability of member co-ops to ensure we together, meet compliance obligations.



### **A SUSTAINABLE organisation equipped to grow and strengthen current and future housing co-operatives**

- Ensure financial strength and sustainable growth. We will explore additional profit generation opportunities to accelerate our impact and grow the organisation's commitments and purpose.
- Invest in the organisation's systems, processes and technology with fit-for-purpose tools enabling quality reporting, analysis and advice.
- Invest in our people to build the capability of our team. Build on our workplace culture and provide meaningful opportunities to grow and develop within the organisation.
- Further develop social and environmental responsible policies and processes in the way we deliver the co-op program and invest in our existing and future housing portfolio.

# Measuring success

To support ongoing monitoring and evaluation, CEHL will develop a measurement framework, based on emerging practice from other co-operatives, different organisational benchmarks and other national and international measurement frameworks. This framework will provide a structure for measuring and capturing our performance and impact, and support us to communicate progress to our Board, employees, member co-ops and key partners.

## Organisational performance indicators:

These measures and indicators will help us better understand the health and performance of the organisation. Examples of these include:

- ✓ Financial reporting, highlighting the organisation's position in relation to financial and operational measures.
- ✓ Performance across our organisation, indicating the effectiveness of our engagement with member co-ops, and the progress being made in the projects being delivered.
- ✓ Member co-op data, such as the level of engagement, needs across our services and compliance across requirements.
- ✓ Staff survey results and organisational HR data, showing the diversity, retention, wellness and engagement of our staff.

## Member co-operative and community indicators

These measures and indicators provide the data and evidence on how CEHL is performing and creating a positive impact for its members, co-operatives and communities. Examples of these include:

- ✓ Member co-operative participation and experience in enabling and leading the program.
- ✓ Member co-operative feedback and service satisfaction.
- ✓ Volume and change in amount of co-operative housing available and numbers of people housed.
- ✓ Stories and examples of how co-operative models have positively impacted the lives of members.
- ✓ Stories and examples of other co-operative models or activities taking place across our member co-operatives.



