

## 6.10. FREEHOLD LEASE FOR SAFE PLACES UNITS

<b>REPORT AUTHOR</b>	Alexandra Earl, Community Development Officer
<b>MANAGER</b>	Lisa Golding, Manager People and Community Services
<b>DEPARTMENT</b>	People and Community Services

### RECOMMENDATION

#### That Council:

- 1. Resolves to provide in-principle support for a Freehold Lease, to an organisation determined by a State government led tender process, to deliver services related to Douglas Safe Places, and**
- 2. Commits to maintaining the Douglas Safe Places facility, including carrying out responsive and planned maintenance for the duration of a lease period.**

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Council has been working with Queensland Police Service and local community service providers to advocate for the establishment of a domestic violence accommodation facility in the region since 2017.

Douglas Safe Places is a supported accommodation refuge for women and their children escaping domestic and family violence. Built by Council, and funded by the Safe Places Emergency Accommodation Grant, the facility is ready for a department-funded organisation to now deliver services.

On 5 September 2023, Council representatives met with State Government representatives to discuss funding opportunities for the delivery of management services of the facility.

An in-principle commitment from Council to provide a Freehold Lease to an organisation determined by a tender process, and to being the responsible body for maintaining the property will strengthen Council's advocacy to the State Government for operational funding.

### BACKGROUND

In 2020, Council was successful in receiving funding to build infrastructure from the Department of Social Services via the Safe Places Emergency Accommodation Grant.

With the funding, Council established Douglas Safe Places, which consists of two co-located, self-contained units. The objective of the accommodation is to provide short term accommodation to women and their children escaping domestic and family violence.

Upon acceptance of the grant funding, Council was committing to operate the facility as emergency/crisis accommodation for a minimum period of 15 years.

For service provision to commence, Douglas Safe Places requires the appointment of a department-funded organisation to manage program delivery and a designated body to manage the facility.

## COMMENTS

### Freehold Lease

The property is currently owned as freehold by Council. The recently adopted Tenure Policy would define the organisation as a Paid Not-for-profit. However, the policy states *“organisations who provide a community service (information, advice, practical or financial help) may be afforded, by Council resolution, the Voluntary Not-for-profit categorisation for the purpose of determining rent payable”*.

The policy also recommends that a Freehold Lease be granted for a maximum of 10 years generally. At this stage it is unknown how long the initial lease period would be, but discussions with the State have indicated an initial lease period would not be more than 5 years.

### Maintenance Responsibilities

It is proposed that Council be the responsible body for maintaining the property. Maintenance responsibilities include carrying out responsive and planned maintenance, structural works and upgrades. Maintenance is inclusive of yard and landscape maintenance.

Costs related to these duties, whether undertaken by Council or an external body, will be incurred by Council. The Building Facilities and Open Spaces teams estimate maintenance costs at approximately \$25,000 per annum, increasing each year with rising goods and services expenses.

## PROPOSAL

That Council:

1. Resolves to provide in-principle support for a Freehold Lease, to an organisation determined by a State government led tender process, to deliver Services related to Douglas Safe Places, and
2. Commits to maintaining the Douglas Safe Places facility, including carrying out responsive and planned maintenance for the duration of a lease period.

## FINANCIAL/RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

The estimated cost to maintain the facility on a yearly basis has been estimated at approximately \$25,000 per annum, increasing with rising goods and services expenses.

Council may be required to undertake maintenance duties for the full duration of the Designated Usage Period of 15 years, as required by the Safe Places Emergency Accommodation Grant awarded to build the facility.

## RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

Council may be required to contribute financially towards the facility for the full duration of the Designated Usage Period of 15 years.

If this recommendation is not approved by Council, there is a high risk that Douglas Safe Places will not operate and the service will not be provided to the community.

## SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

**Economic:** The Department of Social Services reported that without appropriate action, the total cost of violence against women and their children was estimated to be \$15.6 billion in Australia in the period 2021-2202.

**Environmental:** Nil.

**Social:** Supporting the function of a short-term domestic violence accommodation service which aims to accommodate and re-establish the lives of women and children experiencing domestic and family violence.

## CORPORATE/OPERATIONAL PLAN, POLICY REFERENCE

This report has been prepared in accordance with the following:

### Corporate Plan 2019-2024 Initiatives:

#### Theme 1 - Celebrating Our Communities

Douglas Shire Council embraces the diversity of our communities and values the contribution that all people make to the Shire. We recognise that it is a core strength of the region. We acknowledge our past so that it may guide us in the future. We recognise the wrongs done to our Indigenous community and we actively seek to reconcile so that we may all benefit from and enjoy our Shire. We acknowledge early European settlers who forged an agricultural base for our economy and we welcome all new arrivals as part of our broader community.

**Goal 3 - We will develop programs that promote health, well-being and safety in the community.**

### Operational Plan 2023-2024 Actions:

New project arisen during the financial year.

## COUNCIL'S ROLE

Council can play a number of different roles in certain circumstances and it is important to be clear about which role is appropriate for a specific purpose or circumstance. The implementation of actions will be a collective effort and Council's involvement will vary from information only through to full responsibility for delivery.

The following areas outline where Council has a clear responsibility to act:

**Agent** On occasion, Council delivers services or builds infrastructure on behalf of other levels of government or organisations.

**Builder/Owner** Council makes a significant investment every year in the infrastructure that underpins the Shire through its capital works program. Council will manage its assets with appropriate frameworks and deliver its projects through robust project management.

## **CONSULTATION**

**Internal:** Open Spaces, Building Facilities, and Property Services.

**External:** Department of Justice and Attorney-General.

## **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Nil.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

Nil.