Insert date

Dear Candidate,

Zonta is an international community organisation that focuses on promoting the well being of

women and girls. Its members include people from across the spectrum of professions and

occupations in (name of LGA) who make a practical contributions to improving our community.

One of the greatest challenges facing women and girls in 2024 is access to affordable housing. Older

women are the fastest growing homeless group. Recent research demonstrates that 6% of the Queensland population is experiencing demand for social or affordable housing. Girls and women, both young and older, and those with families are increasingly facing these difficulties. The majority of social housing applicants, who head single parent families are women with children.

On 16 March 2024 Queenslanders will be voting to elect their local Councillors. One issue of great concern to voters will be that of affordable housing supply and support for the homeless. (Insert club name) members believe that there is a need for all levels of government to address this urgent and growing need.

Zonta acknowledges that local government is not able to solve the housing crisis on its own but as

the level of government closest to the people it can play an important role in facilitating housing supply and supporting women girls experiencing homelessness. Keeping in mind that homelessness is not just people sleeping rough but also people living in insecure accommodation such as couch surfing, caravan parks, and overcrowded housing.

We are asking candidates in the upcoming local government elections to commit to working with local community organisations to reduce homelessness in our city/shire. Some of the strategies that you could consider supporting are:

* Reviewing zoning in the LGA to enable higher density and more affordable housing forms.
* Not everyone can afford a detached house and as household composition changes with more people living alone the housing market needs to offer a better range of products
* Support the growth of social housing. This can be done in a variety of ways such as grants to community housing organisations; making surplus and suitable council land available to construct social housing; engaging with the Department of Housing to identify sites suitable for social housing; include social housing as a priority work area for council community engagement staff.
* Council could waive rates for local homelessness services such as shelters and drop in centres and provide grants to support these services.
* Council could work with local housing and homelessness services to identify service gaps and advocate to state and federal governments to attract investment in social and affordable housing and homelessness services in the local area.
* Council could develop contemporary protocols for its staff who engage with rough sleepers (eg rangers) that encourage supportive interactions and deemphasise conflict. Staff could be trained in how to work with local support services so that rough sleepers are offered solutions rather than having their belongings confiscated and being moved on.
* Council could identify unused or underutilised building that could be made available for temporary accommodation such as night shelters.
* In rural areas councils have built houses, developed land and operated community housing to fill the gap left by the market. These approaches could be considered more widely.

The Zonta Club of ….. is concerned that many women and girls in our community are experiencing homelessness and believe that our local council can do a lot more to help them. We know you care about city/shire as you have put yourself forward to be a leader in our community.

We urge you, as a candidate in the upcoming elections to think about how you would help address this growing social problem. We ask that you make a commitment to becoming more knowledgeable about the housing crisis and homelessness, and work with us and other like-minded organisations to find local solutions.