



**Co-operation  
HOUSING**

**Strategic Plan**

**2015–2018**

## About this Strategic Plan

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This **Strategic Plan** is the overarching document that will guide the direction of Co-operation Housing from 2015 to 2018. Ongoing review of the plan will ensure that Co-operation Housing remains on track, viable and – most importantly – relevant.

**Operational Plans** will be developed annually to facilitate the implementation of this Strategic Plan. They will outline in greater detail how each of the objectives listed here will be achieved and measured against identified performance indicators.

A **Business Plan** outlines all the operational aspects of Co-operation Housing's business, including its organisational structure, services and products, assets, capabilities, growth targets and other details. The Business Plan is designed to provide succinct information to key stakeholders regarding the overall targets, operations and successes of Co-operation Housing. It is used internally by staff and the Board to guide business operations.

### The international co-operative identity

A **co-operative** is an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise.

### The international co-operative values

Co-operatives are based on the values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity. In the tradition of their founders, co-operative members believe in the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others.

**Source:** The International Co-operative Alliance, <http://ica.coop/en/what-co-operative>

## The international co-operative principles

### 1. Voluntary and open membership

Co-operatives are voluntary organisations, open to all persons able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, without gender, social, racial, political or religious discrimination.

### 2. Democratic member control

Co-operatives are democratic organisations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting their policies and making decisions. Men and women serving as elected representatives are accountable to the membership. In primary co-operatives members have equal voting rights (one member, one vote) and co-operatives at other levels are also organised in a democratic manner.

### 3. Member economic participation

Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their co-operative. At least part of that capital is usually the common property of the co-operative. Members usually receive limited compensation, if any, on capital subscribed as a condition of membership. Members allocate surpluses for any or all of the following purposes: developing their co-operative, possibly by setting up reserves, part of which at least would be indivisible; benefiting members in proportion to their transactions with the co-operative; and supporting other activities approved by the membership.

### 4. Autonomy and independence

Co-operatives are autonomous, self-help organisations controlled by their members.

If they enter into agreements with other organisations, including governments, or raise capital from external sources, they do so on terms that ensure democratic control by their members and maintain their co-operative autonomy.

### 5. Education, training and information

Co-operatives provide education and training for their members, elected representatives, managers and employees so they can contribute effectively to the development of their co-operatives. They inform the general public – particularly young people and opinion leaders – about the nature and benefits of co-operation.

### 6. Co-operation among co-operatives

Co-operatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the co-operative movement by working together through local, national, regional and international structures.

### 7. Concern for community

Co-operatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies approved by their members.

**Source:** The International Co-operative Alliance, <http://ica.coop/en/what-co-operative>

## Introduction

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Co-operation Housing was established by the Federation of Housing Collectives as a not-for-profit Australian public company in 2010, in order to support and grow Western Australia's housing co-operative sector.

It is the only registered community housing provider in Western Australia whose primary focus is housing co-operatives.

Co-operation Housing has achieved significant milestones since its establishment, including Department of Housing provider registration, organisational growth and the establishment of sound governance and operational processes. It has developed a strategic approach to position itself to facilitate further growth of the sector.

This approach is guided by the organisation's vision:

**to create and support positive, economically and socially self-sustaining residential communities based on the international principles of co-operation.**

In order to realise this vision, Co-operation Housing's mission is to be:

- ready** to respond to opportunities as they arise, through preparation and due diligence; development, implementation and maintenance of a proven *co-operative housing model* (CHM); and investment in training and development of stakeholders at all levels, including commercial, government, tenants and the broader community
- willing** to promote the principles of co-operative living and facilitate their practical implementation, through the commitment of its members and staff and through its strong management and governance structures
- able** to support co-operative living in communities and to create innovative housing and living options through the delivery of the CHM.

### The international 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

## Co-operation Housing's principal object

The principal Object of the Company shall be to strengthen and expand the co-operative housing sector in Western Australia in order to provide housing assistance.

The Company will further this Object by, within the context of co-operative housing initiatives:

- (a) providing property and tenancy management support and services;
- (b) seeking investment and grants;
- (c) encouraging socially, economically and environmentally sustainable principles and practices;
- (d) promoting tenant participation in housing management;
- (e) taking action either itself or in conjunction with other persons to increase the number of residential properties under co-operative housing management, including by owning or leasing residential properties;
- (f) providing education on co-operative housing principles to households;
- (g) promoting principles of co-operation (see Appendix 1) and co-operative housing; and
- (h) doing anything that it is reasonably convenient to do in order to give effect to the principal Object.

**Source:** Co-operation Housing Constitution (updated December 2013)

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## Our unique competitive advantage: the co-operative housing model

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Co-operation Housing's unique competitive advantage within the broader Western Australia community housing sector is its facilitation of the *co-operative housing model* (CHM).

It is the only registered community housing provider in Western Australia with the specialised expertise and experience to enable access to affordable, sustainable housing based on the international principles of co-operation.

Co-operation Housing acts as an umbrella body, facilitating the co-operative housing model within its housing co-operatives and providing support services as required in the areas of:

- > compliance
- > governance
- > financial management
- > tenancy and asset management
- > policy development
- > training and education
- > communication.

The provision of these support services enables housing co-operatives to thrive and to remain autonomous and empowered in a policy- and compliance-oriented environment.

Co-operation Housing's point of difference from other community housing providers lies in the proactive engagement of tenants in all aspects of co-operative housing living.

We support, promote and provide models of co-operative living, facilitating the CHM for the housing co-operatives under our umbrella while also creating opportunities for the growth of the housing co-operative sector in Western Australia.

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**Housing co-operatives**  
offer an affordable, sustainable alternative  
to both public and private rental housing,  
with a number of identified economic and social benefits  
to tenants, owners, government and the broader community.

**READY**

**WILLING**

**ABLE**

**The international co-operative principles**

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## The co-operative housing model in action

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The co-operative housing model is:

> **cost-effective**

The rental income generated by each housing co-operative is used to cover its operating and maintenance costs, with any surplus set aside to provide for long-term maintenance and growth of new housing co-operatives. This model eliminates the need for ongoing financial support from government or other investors.

> **self-managing**

Tenants form subcommittees and collectively manage all aspects of the housing co-operative, with limited support from Co-operation Housing.

> **self-regulating**

Housing co-operatives meet regulatory requirements and continuously improve their governance practices through the implementation of policies and procedures produced jointly by Co-operation Housing and the housing co-operative.

> **sustainable**

Many housing co-operatives have developed materially modest lifestyles in small, socially cohesive groups. What might once have been considered an ideological lifestyle is now being modelled by these housing co-operatives as an environmentally, economically and socially sustainable way of life in a time of climate change and economic uncertainty.

> **developing social capital**

Co-operation Housing facilitates appropriate mentoring and training as required to enable effective tenant participation in the management, maintenance and administration of housing co-operatives, resulting in the development of transferable skills.

> **creating stronger, healthier communities**

Independent research<sup>1</sup> has shown that tenants of housing co-operatives consistently report strong feelings of belonging, ownership and empowerment, and consequently display:

- > very low tenant turnover
- > very high tenant engagement
- > pride in their homes and gardens, and willingness to maintain them in good condition (including upon property vacation).

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<sup>1</sup> K Arthurson, A Ziersch, P Ray & E Carson, 2004, 'Labour Force Benefits of Community Housing: Preliminary Report', Southern Research Centre, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute; J Onyx, 2008, 'Co-operative Housing and Social Capital', presentation at Living Co-operatively Symposium, Sydney, 13–14 February 2008, [www.mercury.org.au](http://www.mercury.org.au).

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## Our strategic approach 2015–2018

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### READY

#### Key focus area 1: Building capacity

**Objective:** To increase and diversify Co-operation Housing stock and types of housing co-operatives

Over the next three years Co-operation Housing will endeavour to position itself to be ready to respond to opportunities for growth within the housing sector and the broader community.

Simultaneously it wishes to promote the recognition by government, business and the broader community of the value and positive outcomes associated with the principles of co-operative living, and the capacity of Co-operation Housing to facilitate the achievement of these.

#### Strategic approach

##### 1.1 *Development and promotion of the CHM*

- a) Develop and disseminate a prospectus promoting the CHM
- b) Establish and maintain key networks with government, business and the broader community, to promote the role of Co-operation Housing and the principles of the CHM
- c) Train and develop its Board and staff members in the content, intent and implementation of the CHM

##### 1.2 *Property procurement and construction*

- a) Research and investigate:
  - i. direct purchase of housing
  - ii. opportunities to construct housing
  - iii. diversification into other housing co-operative models
- b) Develop business and financial models to present to property developers, potential investors and clients, other community housing organisations and housing co-operatives
- c) Develop a strategy for the roll-out of the CHM and business and financial models to potential investors and clients and to larger community housing organisations

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## WILLING

### Key focus area 2: Facilitating the co-operative will

**Objective: To promote and increase application of the principles of co-operative living**

The Board, staff and members of Co-operation Housing are committed to the principles of co-operative living and firmly believe in the capacity of these principles to create and sustain positive and harmonious communities.

Co-operation Housing wishes to promote the benefits of co-operative living broadly and develop tools to encourage individuals, groups, housing providers and decision makers to prioritise co-operative living options over alternative models.

#### Strategic approach

##### 2.1 *Promotion of co-operative living principles and options*

- a) Develop a clear approach underpinning the role and services of Co-operation Housing, to be embedded in all aspects of governance and operations
- b) Establish and maintain networks with key stakeholders from all tiers of government, business and the broader community (including interstate counterparts)
- c) Maintain membership of key groups and peak bodies
- d) Act as an advocate for co-operative living
- e) Maintain ongoing and relevant communication with Co-operation Housing members, non-members and relevant peak bodies

##### 2.2 *Training, education and communication in the principles of co-operative living and their application*

- a) Develop and deliver training and education resources and services for housing co-operatives and the broader community
- b) Develop a promotional video and/or other resources on Co-operation Housing and the principles of co-operative living and their application

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## ABLE

### Key focus area 3: Positioning to deliver and facilitate co-operative living options

**Objective:** To achieve excellence in operational capacity and innovative practices

Co-operation Housing recognises that in order to provide access to co-operative living options for the broader community it is essential to be financially and operationally sound and sustainable.

#### Strategic approach

##### 3.1 *Provision of CHM services*

- a) Identify and secure agreements for the delivery of the CHM
- b) Maintain Department of Housing registration and compliance
- c) Attract and retain skilled staff and Board members

##### 3.2 *Investigation and facilitation of housing and living options that maximise the viability of the housing co-operative sector*

- a) Conduct a sensitivity analysis of member housing co-operatives to identify key viability measures
- b) Implement any recommendations of the sensitivity analysis, e.g right-sizing, adjusting tenant mix, infilling, demographics and other options for increasing density in existing housing co-operatives
- c) Conduct and implement the 2015–2018 Member Capacity Development process

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## Contact us

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