

REGIONAL HOUSING AND WORKFORCE ROUNDTABLE

A coordinated regional response to the acute housing and workforce accommodation pressures across North-West Tasmania.

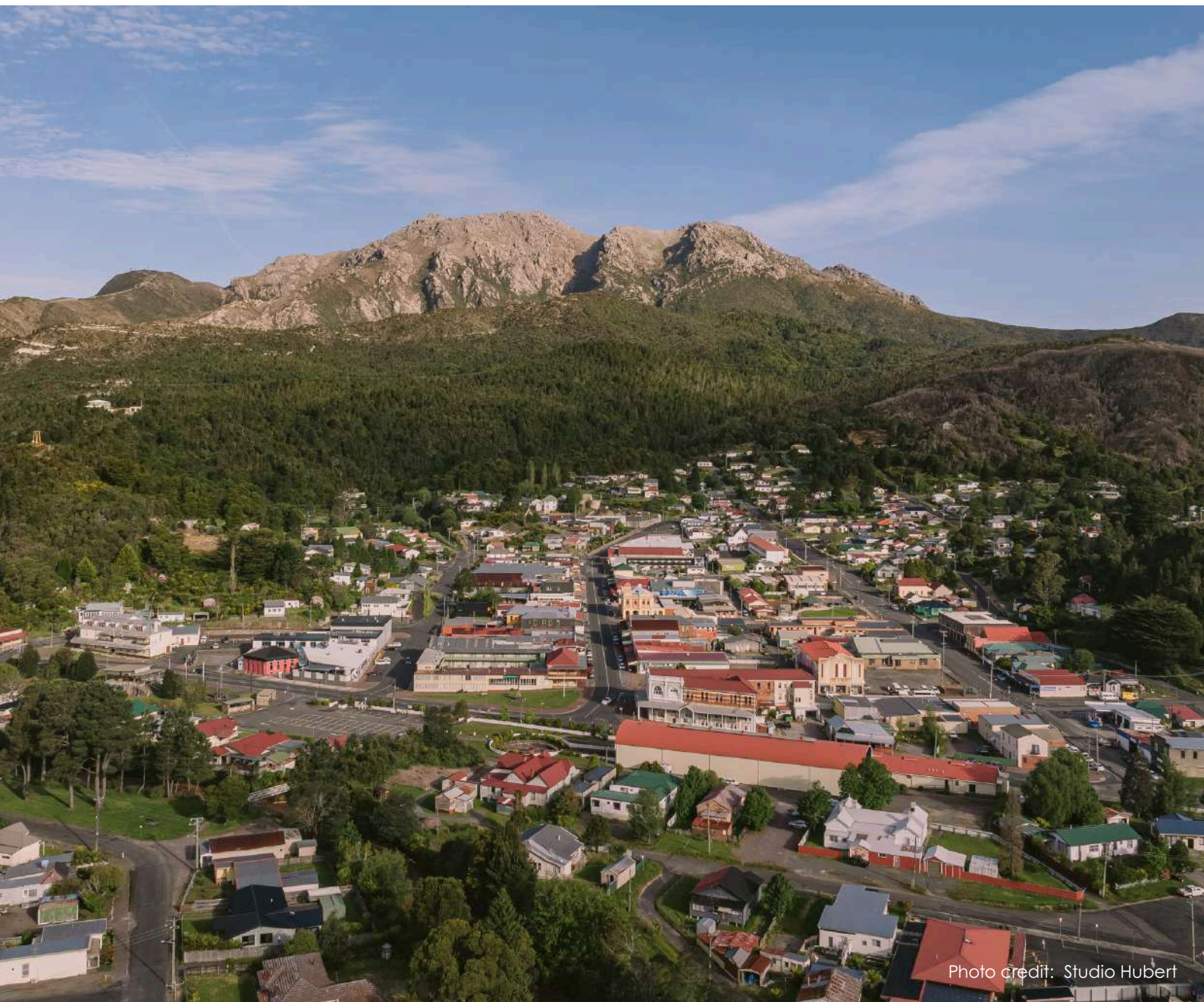


Photo credit: Studio Hubert



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The *Regional Housing and Workforce Accommodation Roundtable* was convened to facilitate a coordinated regional response to the acute housing and workforce accommodation pressures emerging across north-west Tasmania.

The discussion took place against a backdrop of significant economic opportunity, with a projected \$15 billion pipeline of major projects anticipated over the next decade, spanning renewable energy, transmission infrastructure and industrial expansion. While this investment signals substantial regional growth, participants emphasised that it will also intensify existing constraints on housing supply, planning systems and community infrastructure.

The Cradle Coast is entering this period of development from a highly stressed baseline, with rental vacancy rates in some areas already at critically low levels of between 0.3% and 0.5%. This is far below the 3% benchmark for a healthy market and residents are already experiencing the effects of limited housing availability even before major project workforces arrive.

In this context, the roundtable focused on establishing a more coordinated regional approach and mechanisms capable of aligning policy and accelerating delivery.

A central theme was the need for immediate action to ensure that workforce accommodation contributes to long-term legacy housing rather than temporary camp-style solutions, supported by shared regional data on workforce demand. We need to know how many workers, where, and when in order to guide planning and impactful investment.

Overall, the roundtable aimed to lay the groundwork for collaborative action between government, industry and infrastructure proponents to manage unprecedented demand while protecting existing communities from displacement.

Cradle Coast Authority is now progressing a Memorandum of Understanding to align the efforts of proponents, councils and the Tasmanian Government under a shared regional approach.

The purpose of this document is to provide a succinct context and develop our collective understanding of what immediate action is possible.



ROUNDTABLE THEMES

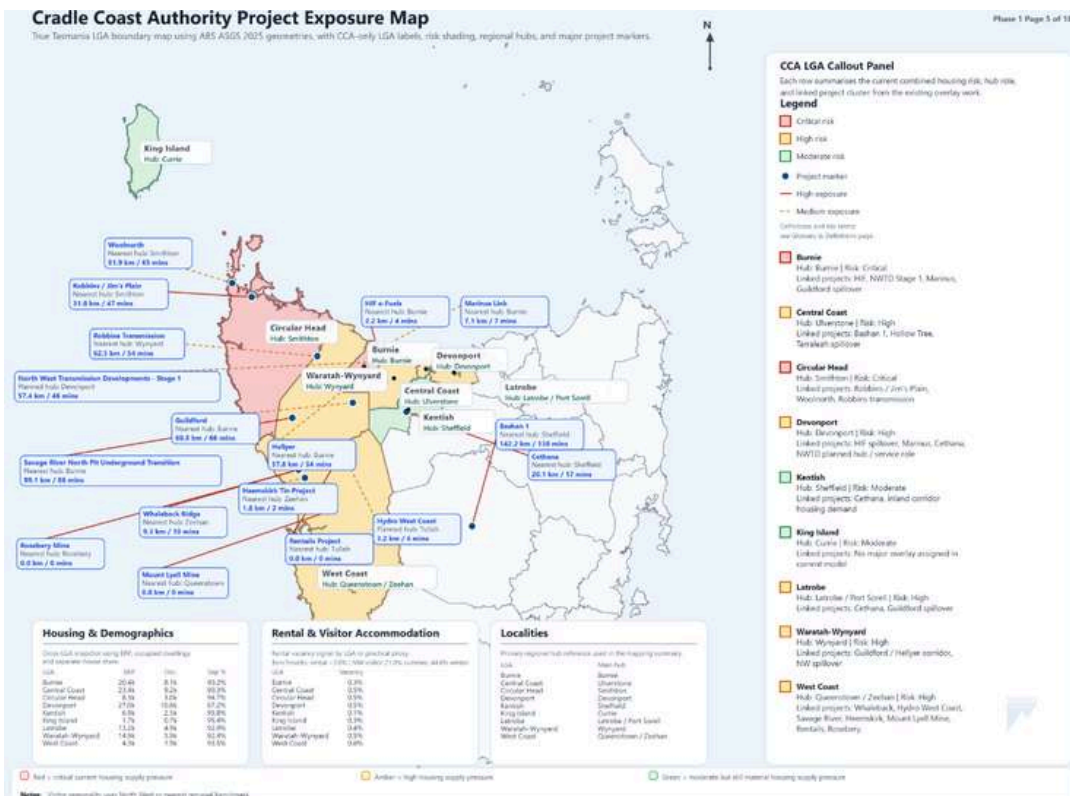
The *Regional Housing and Workforce Accommodation Roundtable* found there was strong consensus that the workforce accommodation opportunity is regional in nature and cannot be solved by any single sector alone. Participants agreed that local communities must remain central to decision-making, solutions should be locally designed but informed by leading practice. We agreed that our region faces a narrow window for action before demand exceeds capacity and existing workforce shortages will deepen and further constrain housing construction.

Housing Pressure is Already Critical

Participants agreed that many communities are already experiencing housing stress before the additional impact of major projects is overlaid. Rental vacancy rates across parts of the region are at critically low levels (reported as between 0.3% and 0.5%, well below the benchmark of minimum/approximately 3%).

This means the region is entering the project growth phase from an already constrained base, making early intervention essential. There was strong consensus that:

- Existing housing shortages are affecting residents now;
- Worker accommodation cannot be treated as a secondary issue left solely to project proponents;
- Temporary and transitional accommodation solutions must be part of the immediate response, with an eye to the long-term/legacy opportunities;
- The next 18 months are a critical window for action.



Left and over the page: excerpts from the Summit Strategy report (copy of full report available on request)

Housing Pressure is Already Critical (continued)

CCA engaged Summit Strategy to conduct analysis of the existing housing market, including available rentals, accommodation reports, housing construction dashboards and rental affordability data.

Summit Strategy then analysed workforce numbers for all known major development projects in the Northwest, including both mining and energy, to consider how and where workers will be housed, and the gap to safely and comfortably accommodating workers at an Local Government Area level.

Graphical outputs, including higher risk LGAs, were produced to inform effort in strategic planning and project development.



Detail from the Summit Strategy Strategy report (copy available on request)



Workforce accommodation to be planned as legacy where possible

Participants agreed that workforce accommodation should be planned as legacy infrastructure wherever possible. Solutions must protect communities from displacement, add to long-term housing supply, and support regional growth after project peaks. We discussed success stories such as the Pines Wind Farm, community housing project and the Squadron Energy leasehold arrangement with the former Bellhaven Aged Care Facility in Wellington, NSW.

Given projected demand, no single model will suffice. A mix of modular and prefabricated units, temporary workforce villages, adaptable short-term stock, and permanent community-integrated housing will be required. Key challenges include limited Tasmanian manufacturing capacity, national competition for modular supply, workforce limitations and the need for a guaranteed pipeline to attract providers. Participants emphasised balancing project needs with community benefit and enduring regional value.

Planning must be regional, aligned and strategically driven

There was strong support for shifting from fragmented municipal responses to coordinated regional planning, supported by faster rezoning pathways where demand is genuinely demonstrated. Participants noted that future demand cannot be calculated solely from population projections which relies heavily on historical data. Some residentially zoned areas are unsuitable for development due to climate risk or topography that increases building costs to the point where residential development is unaffordable for many community members who are struggling to get into the property market.

The emerging drivers of demand such as the once-in-a-generation renewable energy investment and the rise in single-person households are not included or reflected in the Tasmanian Government's projection methods. The historically informed data (projections) does not reflect our once-in-a-generation renewable energy opportunity. This mismatch is acting as a handbrake on regional rezoning and timely land release, impacting local housing supply and demand and putting further pressure on housing affordability, housing supply and our community.



Regionally coordinated planning and regional governance

One of the strongest conclusions of the session was that fragmented bilateral responses will not work. Participants called for a single coordinating body with regional oversight. The coordinating body needs to be supported with appropriate governance, and active regional potential and provide leadership to align government, councils, industry and infrastructure agencies.



There was strong support for CCA to play a central convening and coordinating role. This governance body would:

- Coordinate information flows;
- Align sequencing and priorities;
- Prevent duplication and fragmentation;
- Interface with all three levels of government, relevant departments, utility providers, project contractors and project proponents.



Photo credit: Moon Cheese Studio

Priorities

Participants emphasised that the region now needs shared, locally-led strategic solutions that invest in the future rather than react to the present. This requires realistic timelines and clear sequencing, but also the agility to move quickly when opportunities arise.

Learning from best practice across Australia was seen as essential to accelerate progress and avoid repeating avoidable mistakes. While defining the demand-side problem remains important, participants were keen to see action. Solutions must now take priority, with a sharper focus on what can be delivered, prioritising the order they need to be delivered in, and the pace of delivery.





Photo credit: Studio Hubert

ADVANCING A SET OF AGREED PRINCIPLES

CCA is now leading the development of *Agreed Regional Principles* to guide housing and workforce accommodation across the region. These will form a shared framework to be formalised through an MoU and support regional coordination.

The principles will balance project needs, community benefit and long-term regional value. Participants stressed that while national best practice can inform the work, solutions must be locally-led and shaped by councils, industry, utilities and infrastructure agencies.

State Government backing is essential. Stronger alignment between state policy and local implementation will be critical to speed up the delivery of solutions.



PLANNING AMENDMENTS

In addition to rapid rezoning advocacy, the following planning amendments have been researched and developed by CCA to help manage temporary worker accommodation during major construction. We recommend the following updates to the *Land Use Planning and Approvals Act (1993)* to create better economic and social outcomes:

- Prepare a Tasmanian Social Impact Assessment guideline based on the Queensland model and past Tasmanian Planning Commission (MIDAA) criteria.
- Develop an agreed framework for Community Benefit Agreements to inform how proponents and local governments can structure voluntary contributions.
- Review and amend Part 5 of the *Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993* to allow for infrastructure contribution agreements and security bonds for developments on leased land.
- Create non-binding guidelines to advise on preferred locations (favouring proximity to existing settlements), design standards, and social impact statement template.
- Demand a demonstration of reuse potential, showing how buildings and infrastructure can be repurposed, relocated, or reused for residential or tourism purposes.
- *Workforce Accommodation Strategy* to be submitted and approved prior to the commencement of works to address impacts on rental/visitor markets and cumulative regional effects.
- Establish a new *General Provision (7.16) in the State Planning Provisions (SPPs)* specifically for temporary accommodation to be made possible for Construction Phase project workers.





HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES FOR WORKFORCE ACCOMMODATION IN THE REGION

The region has a range of sites that can be activated to support incoming non-local workforces associated with major renewable energy and transmission projects. These opportunities span short-term modular accommodation, medium-term village-style developments, and permanent housing that can transition to community use once construction peaks subside. The intent is to ensure that workforce accommodation does not displace local residents and instead contributes to long-term housing supply, aged-care capacity, or key-worker accommodation.

Several council-owned, Crown, and privately held sites across the Cradle Coast provide development potential. At a minimum, these could support rapid-deployment modular units, while others are appropriate for permanent townhouse or apartment-style construction that can be repurposed after the construction phase. This mix of accommodation styles allows the region to respond quickly to peak workforce demand while building assets that remain valuable to the community.

Through engagement with member councils, there are opportunities for temporary or permanent accommodation developments in Burnie, Wynyard, Smithton, Devonport, Queenstown, Zeehan and Tullah. Each of these settlements would be well suited to single or multiple major developments identified within 45 minutes to 1 hour.



CONSTRUCTION OPPORTUNITIES

Modular construction offers the fastest delivery pathway, with units manufactured off-site and installed within weeks once civil works are complete. This approach is well-suited to temporary workforce villages, expansions of existing caravan parks, or activation of greenfield sites where long-term land use is still being determined. Modular solutions also allow staged scaling, adding or removing units as workforce numbers fluctuate.

Permanent construction is more appropriate for sites with long-term strategic value, including town-centre infill, mixed-tenure housing, or locations identified for future aged care or social housing. Permanent builds provide higher amenity and durability and can be financed through partnerships with community housing providers, institutional investors, or government development entities.

Potential providers include:

- [Modular & Tiny Homes Tasmania | Your Space Oceania](#)
- [Tasbuilt Homes | Modular Homes Tasmania](#)
- [Podmatrix - Modular Home Builder in Tasmania](#)
- [Platinum Pro Construction | Builders Tasmania | Crafting Quality Homes](#)



Mt Field Retreat Eco-Pods (Photo credit: Podmatrix)





Bellhaven Aged Care Facility (Photo credit: Squadron Energy)

EXAMPLES OF SUCCESS AROUND AUSTRALIA

The Bellhaven Aged Care Facility

Squadron Energy has leased a 32-room building that was formerly the Bellhaven Aged Care Nursing Home for five years, with an option to renew for a further five years. Squadron will refurbish the property to house workers on its Ungula Wind Farm and contract local First Nations businesses to do the work.

The 32-room development is being held up as an example of how renewable energy projects across rural Australia can drive housing supply and provide economic opportunities for communities. Refurbishing Bellhaven supports Wellington by using an existing facility, employing local builders, and freeing up local homes. The facility had been unoccupied since 2018, so the arrangement eases pressure on the local rental market and could support aged care in the future.

Source: https://www.re-alliance.org.au/housing_case_studies_report

Crisis housing initiative

The Dundonnell Wind Farm crisis housing initiative shows what a concrete, place-based community benefit can look like. Tilt Renewables contributed \$500,000 in capital as part of its community benefit plan, partnering with Women's Housing Limited and the Victorian Government to co-fund a 24-unit development. In return, Tilt secured a formal guarantee that 10 units are permanently reserved for women and children from south-west Victoria who are escaping family violence.

Access is managed through a defined local referral pathway, with Emma House Domestic Violence Service and Orange Door in Warrnambool directing survivors into the reserved units. Although the project responds to a south-west regional need, including a priority access waiting list of more than 1,900 households, the units were deliberately built in Melbourne to provide distance from perpetrators, stronger support networks, and relief from small town stigma.

Source: https://www.re-alliance.org.au/housing_case_studies_report



Pines Wind Farm Community Housing Project

The Pines Wind Farm Community Housing Project is being delivered by TagEnergy in partnership with BlueCHP, a Tier-1 community housing provider. The project is designed to address immediate workforce accommodation needs and alleviate long-term housing pressures in the Oberon region of New South Wales.

The project will deliver at least 100 new affordable homes, built under BlueCHP's build-to-rent model. Around 20% of the wind farm's construction workforce will be housed in these dwellings, with all homes transitioning to permanent affordable housing for the Oberon community once construction ends. The initiative forms part of TagEnergy's broader 35-year community benefits package, which also includes a \$5 million Legacy Project Fund and household energy bill credits across the Oberon LGA.

[Source: Media Release: The Pines Wind Farm to deliver long-term affordable housing for Oberon](#)

For further information

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