

HOW CARE PROJECT

Discussion Paper on Using House on Wheels for Caretaker Roles

OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

Using mobile, low impact, self contained houses as caretaker residences (under contract) on otherwise vacant land in urban areas to solve two independent problems:

- 1 - vacant land being allowed to become overgrown, potential fire hazards, sites of illegal rubbish dumping, and being used as sites for drug use and other illegal activities.
- 2 - a shortage of affordable housing options with access to employment areas and options.

The aim is to allow properly constructed, and certified as self sufficient, mobile houses (commonly know as Tiny Houses) to occupy these spaces under a maintenance contract that specifies the level of maintenance of the site, and the obligations of the caretaker(s) towards the owner of the land, and its immediate neighbours, in a manner that does not impinge on the rights of the land owner, its neighbours, or the responsibilities of the local government body and its agents.

HOUSE CERTIFICATION

In order to avoid low and sub-standard residences being used (including caravans and tents), it is proposed that the houses be certified by recognised industry bodies for:

Structural Competence - Engineering Certificate for base trailer frame that covers materials, corrosion resistance, static weight loading, and towing loads.

Passive Living - Design Certificate for house skin and structure that addresses issue of insulation, moisture, ventilation, fire resistance, and rigidity.

Self Sufficiency - Design Certificate covering storage and treatment of human waste; source and storage of potable water and storage of waste water; source and storage of electricity sufficient for lighting to a minimum level for safety on site - the sum being no requirement for connection to services on site required for the caretaker role. [connection to existing services may occur at the land owners discretion]

CARETAKER RESPONSIBILITIES

- Maintenance of the vacant land to a standard appropriate to the neighbourhood.
- Maintenance of any fencing, gates, and similar structures to ensure security of the site, and the safety of neighbours and allowed visitors.
- Undertake these duties in a manner that does not unreasonably impact on any neighbours.

MANAGEMENT PLAN

How Care (or any similar caretaker services provider) would manage the process. They would be the first point of contact for any case of complaint or operational issue brought by neighbours or general public. They would be responsible for the certification process and documentation.

INDUSTRY BODIES

A present there is a mix of formal and informal accreditation available. The structural frame is covered by recognised metal industry standards, and usually also meet road registration and engineering standards and certification.

The house skin and structure usually fails to meet current national house building codes, and these codes are generally impractical for the much smaller houses. A national program would have to be developed, possibly with the assistance of TAFE Building and Construction departments, so that suitable qualified people could inspect and grant certificates.

The degree of self-sufficiency could be assessed in two stages - a basic checklist of the facilities and their capacity; and a more detailed report on the safety and operation of these facilities - this second part could be incorporated into the structural qualification above.

IMPLEMENTATION STAGES

Stage One would be the acceptance by local government of the program, the certification, and the management competence of the service providers.

Stage Two would be a trial installation and operation of a caretaker service. This may be initially on Local Government land, as this would enable more detailed scrutiny and supervision by that Council, and better facilitate the reporting on function, daily operation, and commercial outcomes.

Stage Three would be a trial on private property, with a report to Local and State Government, and other interested parties.

POSSIBLE EXTENSION

This proposal looks at vacant urban land and proposes a caretaker role that could address the physical issues of fire hazards, illegal rubbish dumping, and other illegal activities.

The model of an onsite caretaker who is residing in their own house, and not requiring other services, could be applied to rural sites.

For example, elderly farmers and rural workers who need general assistance, are reluctant to leave their home, and typically rely on council and District Nursing staff, could contract a mobile caretaker.

This arrangement could provide general assistance and supervision without affecting the personal space of the land-owner, and as it is a contacted position, offering security and flexibility to the land-owner and their families.

This is a discussion paper only - no claims or rights are made, and the How Care name is used for illustration only. Should this concept be developed it is expected that a working group would be called to look at issues of insurance, national or state incorporation, levels of and manners of certification, etc

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