

HOUSING, HOMELESSNESS & MENTAL HEALTH WORKSHOPS

DARWIN



A NATIONAL INITIATIVE BY



Australian Government
National Mental Health Commission

ABOUT THE WORKSHOPS

This initiative has involved 8 workshops during March – April 2017 (one in each capital city) aimed to get jurisdictional input to better understand the national picture of housing, homeless and mental health in order to develop policy and research directions by injecting 'housing affordability and supply' into the national mental health debate.

The workshops included highly participative exercises and were based on a discussion paper developed by the Australian Housing & Urban Research Institute (AHURI).

The feedback gathered in workshops will form a more detailed Consultation Report - this summary document is intended to disseminate major themes only, it is not the endorsed policy of the National Mental Health Commission.

The Consultation Report feedback will be analysed to form a Position Paper that the Commission will use to inform advocacy in the development of national and jurisdictional policy for housing, homelessness and mental health.

OUR FEEDBACK

This is a summary version of outputs captured during the workshop (a full report will be available)



POLICY & PROGRAM SUCCESS FACTORS

From the programs that are in place and effective, the following success factors were highlighted:

- Supported accommodation that can provide 24 hour onsite support for complex clients and respond to acute client needs
- A wide range of NGO providers participating in a Homelessness Response Group
- Specialist providers giving wrap around support
- Holistic and community focused Aboriginal mental health approaches in remote communities that respond to local needs and crisis
- Establishment of a peak body to represent Aboriginal communities and advocate for the return of housing to local community control
- Voluntary participation, engagement in a social manner, provision of mental health support and provision of shared accommodation to reduce costs as part of an NGO approach
- Supporting people living in public housing to help them to sustain their rental

HOW TO INCREASE HOUSING SUPPLY?

- Government investment in the mental health accommodation sector through bond aggregator models and social benefits bonds
- Aboriginal peak housing body working with the Northern Territory Government on remote housing and the links with mental health
- Utilise the high vacancy rates by either higher taxes to owners or Government subsidies for low income earners
- Mirror the PHN stepped care model for homelessness
- Actively work with private real estate agents to increase supply to people experiencing mental illness by putting properties on the market for a reduced rent
- Service providers to work with house owners to break barriers of stigma and make houses more available
- Supporting people to build a rental history, enabling them to apply for private rentals
- Engaging with the corporate and philanthropic sector and making them aware of the financial models, the Mental Health housing need and the outcomes possible through investing in the sector



HOW TO PROVIDE MORE HOUSING CHOICE?

- To address diverse needs, listen to and engage with local communities, using local knowledge and skills rather than just fly in
- Redevelopment of public housing to match to housing demand and client needs
- The Indigenous population particularly need education around financial responsibility and keeping themselves financially able
- Developing operational models that incorporate staffing structures and capital and operational expenses for the accommodation models
- Developing a range of housing models that address the spectrum of need and pursuing their acceptance by Government
- Facilitating a discrete project in each jurisdiction through the application of the models that come from this process
- Housing and other services required by ATSI people should be provided by other ATSI people or mainstream workers who are culturally competent
- Public Housing that is vacant due to repairs and maintenance budgetary constraints should be leased out to people at a rent applicable to the amenity of the house

WHAT DATA SHOULD BE COLLECTED?

- Research should be undertaken into the recurring cost associated with the cycle of homelessness experienced by ATSI people
- People who are currently being treated and living in public housing
- Understanding mobility issues for Aboriginal communities
- One stop shop that mirrors the MyGov model where all NGOs and service providers come together to securely provide their input / data through a centralised platform
- Increase the data linkages with Territory families, ie. DV and OOHC and mental health
- Data needs to be more relevant as the NT really has unique issues re remote and significant Aboriginal communities
- Better use of data collection through improved connections across agencies and NGOs, ie. AHURI WA data linkage project

SUGGESTED FOCUS AREAS

The following key policy issues and research areas were suggested by the participants (in order of priority)

- More education and awareness to **reduce the stigma** of mental illness, noting that reliance on fly in fly out services in remote areas can lead to less awareness and more likelihood to have a heavy handed approach
- **National framework** for housing / mental health, incorporating a stepped care model that's flexible to suit the individual
- What do Aboriginal communities identify as the **key issues** in policy and service design for housing and mental health?
- **Bond Aggregator** model to build more infrastructure
- **Automatic rent deduction** for housing / rental - Centrepay
- Research at community levels needs **cultural awareness**
- Ensure **holistic case management** is available and accessible to all to ensure sustainable housing and wellbeing for people living with a mental illness