

HOUSING, HOMELESSNESS & MENTAL HEALTH WORKSHOPS

HOBART



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 and vice versa.

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:

- Funding for transitional support
- Gateway services for people experiencing housing affordability stresses
- Agencies providing premises for accommodation
- Step down facilities
- Supported residential facilities
- National funding for supported independent living, specialist disability funding and support services.

HOW TO INCREASE HOUSING SUPPLY?

- Social housing bond scheme with upfront support to cover rental bond and purchase of items to establish a home
- Affordable loan provider with associated insurances (could be a government managed no interest or shared equity arrangement) to help individuals purchase a home
- Discuss a Bond Aggregator Model at the national level to provide low cost finance to community housing providers to increase supply
- Consumer 101 education on how to navigate a lease and landlords
- Systemic approach to addressing behaviours that pose a tenancy risk (e.g. squalor and hoarding)
- Semi supported community areas with small units, on site support, community gardens (possibly campground style with long term cabins); capital supplied by Housing and support provided by mental health services
- Greater financial support for people identified at risk of losing their housing



HOW TO PROVIDE MORE HOUSING CHOICE?

- Involve consumers and carers in co-design of housing and support services
- Work with service providers and consumer and carer groups to identify and quantify consumer preferences; what they would like to see choice look like and what will work for them
- More localised coordination through a community based model with area coordination groups
- Ensuring sufficient recurrent funds for tenancy and professional mental health support so that consumers are able to live successfully in the accommodation of their choice
- Mental health plans and interventions for people recognised as having a housing or accommodation issue

WHAT DATA SHOULD BE COLLECTED?

- Blockages currently exist to accessing data, especially where it is across a number of services or sectors (Do GPs and health workers collect data that can inform intervention approaches? Policing information and statistics? Prison system?)
- How many people with mental illness have their homes bought by family?
- Data on carers - where are they, what are they providing, what are their needs now and into the future?
- Measure of housing stability effect on individual wellness
- Need to know the length of tenure in housing, length of time between homelessness and being housed
- Discharge planning could provide data around housing or family support
- Linking mental diagnosis data to a risk assessment (i.e. types of mental illness that are at higher risk of homelessness)

SUGGESTED FOCUS AREAS

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

- Policy needs to outlive the next term of Government and needs to acknowledge a **systems approach** (not a scattergun approach to funding a range of initiatives in the hope of a result)
- **Sustainable low cost housing** to increase housing stock
- **Educating landlords** about mental health **and tenants** about keeping leases
- **Looking internationally for best practice** around housing affordability, access strategies and inclusionary zoning
- Option to purchase? People join a scheme where they pay a certain proportion of a property to **build equity over time**
- Investigate building community support through **encouraging philanthropic investors** to take advantage of tax incentives through being involved
- Negative gearing and capital gains discount could be amended to encourage more new supply and **incentivise providing housing to disadvantaged groups** including people living with mental health illness
- **Redesign the NDIS service guidelines** to provide psycho- social support to assist people with mental illness. There needs to be flexibility to address the issues they are experiencing due to their mental illness.
- **Looking for successful models** that will improve service delivery that are outside of health services (e.g. international community plans, local government community initiatives)