

HOUSING, HOMELESSNESS & MENTAL HEALTH WORKSHOPS



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:

- Collaboration between housing providers and support providers
- Integrated housing and health support
- Linking rental subsidies with employment support
- Working with private rental agencies to increase access
- On-site support
- Collaboration between homelessness and mental health programs
- Support for ageing carers
- Support including accommodation and daily tasks associated with living independently
- Flexible responses to vulnerable cohorts

HOW TO INCREASE HOUSING SUPPLY?

- Create a system whereby both insurance companies and investors are not disincentivised for offering rental properties to vulnerable people
- Dedicate a % of social housing to people with mental illness
- Early intervention to facilitate access to private rental whether through support to gain employment or support programs for young people already in employment and housing
- Explore the Vic Roads project model in Melbourne for unused land and temporary, relocatable housing
- Increase rent assistance
- Introduce a vacancy tax or other financial incentives to the private rental market
- More work on philanthropic housing stock (e.g. ring fencing negative gearing for social housing)
- Inclusionary zoning and a quota for social purpose housing
- The majority of people with mental health illness are single, more single housing is urgently needed
- More CCU and PARC models to provide crisis accommodation, with tenure up to 3 - 6 months, where living skills and appropriate outcomes can be assessed



HOW TO PROVIDE MORE HOUSING CHOICE?

- Better coordination within the sector to enable information about what is available at any time; Geographic boundaries prevent providers from working across postcodes
- Learnings from good models in other sectors and existing research / programs (Winterringham model, Sacred Heart etc.)
- NDIS money follows the individual, could housing support be same?
- Quality of housing and equity of access - caravan parks and rooming houses are not adequate options for many people
- Stronger tenancy protection around the security of tenure particularly for people with mental health issues and / or behavioural challenges

WHAT DATA SHOULD BE COLLECTED?

- Data on quality of service provision and safety of placed people
- Data on how support dollars can follow the individual
- Monitoring the take up of SDA in NDIA by people with psychological disability
- More effective collection of data at Open Doors specific to mental health
- NDIS data and existing data sources to benchmark and track reform
- Number of complaints registered through services such as Mental Health Commission and Disability, regarding accessing housing and support

SUGGESTED FOCUS AREAS

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

- **Research existing models** that have had a positive impact on the community in the provision of housing and support for vulnerable populations and collate that information to drive policy
- Focus on the **social return of Government investment** in providing homelessness and mental health supports that demonstrate overall savings and economic benefit in the longer term
- How do we **address people's individual needs** in a manner that it is fluid, where they can move through varying levels of support over the long term, in accordance with their recovery?
- Establish a **national mental health data set** that links to other data sets (e.g. homelessness)
- How do we **link different data sets** to explore factors impacting on people's wellbeing (e.g. hospital discharge data and Centrelink payments / referrals to out of home care)
- Discussion around **discharge planning** for people at risk of homelessness and the competing tensions in hospitals to discharge and meet targets vs a robust discussion around an individual's wellness and capacity to manage their health in their housing situation
- Recognition that **with NDIS, many clients won't fit the criteria** but will still require support for housing
- Is there value in a **package of money that stays with the client** (support, mental health, health)? And the client is in control of how that support funding is best used for their needs, regardless of where they live?