

parity

OCTOBER 2016 VOLUME 29 – ISSUE 9
ISSN 1032-6170



Australasian **Housing** Institute
Supporting housing professionals

HousingWORKS

Volume 11 • Number 3 • October 2016
The Journal of the Australasian Housing Institute
– linking housing workers in Australia and New Zealand

Sustaining a Home: The Future of Housing Support



Contents

Council to Homeless Persons

Jenny Smith	Chief Executive Officer
Kate Colvin	Manager — Policy and Communications
Ian Gough	Manager — Consumer Programs
Lynette Deakes	Office Manager
Noel Murray	Publications Coordinator, Parity Editor
Lanie Harris and Catherine McGauran	Media and Communications Officers
Angela Kyriakopoulos	HAS Coordinator
Cassandra Bawden	Peer Education and Support Program Team Leader
Trish Westmore	Capacity Building and Policy Officer
Leonie Kenny	Service Coordination Project Manager
Natasha Trajanovska	Accountant
Address	2 Stanley Street Collingwood Melbourne VIC 3066
Phone	(03) 8415 6200
Fax	(03) 9419 7445
E-mail	parity@chp.org.au
Website	www.chp.org.au

Promotion of Conferences, Events and Publications

Organisations are invited to have their promotional fliers included in the monthly mailout of *Parity*. Rates: \$90 National distribution, \$70 Statewide distribution only.

Write for Parity!

Contributions to *Parity* are welcome. Each issue of *Parity* has a central focus or theme. However, prospective contributors should not feel restricted by this as *Parity* seeks to discuss the whole range of issues connected with homelessness and the provision of housing and services to people who are homeless. Where necessary, contributions will be edited. Where possible this will be done in consultation with the contributor.

Parity on the CHP Website

www.chp.org.au/services/parity-magazine/
Contributions can be sent by email to parity@chp.org.au in a Microsoft Word or rtf format. If this option is not possible, contributions can be faxed on (03) 9419 7445 or mailed to CHP.

Proposed 2016 Parity Publications Schedule

NB: Please note that this may be subject to change. Please check out the CHP website: www.chp.org.au for updates.

November: Responding to Homelessness in NSW

The views and opinions expressed in *Parity* are not necessarily those of CHP.

Australasian Housing Institute

Andrew Davis:	President
Kelly Badewitz:	Executive Officer
Olena Sydorenko:	Marketing and Member Services Manager
Donella Roberts:	Manager, Training and Events
Lisa McBean:	Administration Officer
Bakewood:	<i>HousingWORKS</i> Writer and Editor
Address:	PO Box 6100 Mawson ACT 2607
Phone:	02 6494 7566
E-mail:	admin@housinginstitute.org
Website:	www.housinginstitute.org

Disclaimer: Unless otherwise stated this publication has been subject to standard editorial procedures. The opinions and viewpoints expressed by the various authors and contributors to this publication are provided independently and do not necessarily reflect official opinions or viewpoints held by the Australasian Housing Institute.

Cover artwork

Cover art provided by Catherine Beadnell, Communications Manager, Launch Housing.

CHP Editorial | 3

Jenny Smith, Chief Executive Officer, Council to Homeless Persons

Welcome to this joint edition of *HousingWORKS* | 4

Andrew Davis, AHI President

Dear *HousingWORKS* | 5

Letters from *HousingWORKS* readers

Vox Pop | 6

"What is the most effective form of housing support and why?"

Meet a Tenant | 8

Tania Roberts is 56 years old and currently resides in St George Community Housing, New Leaf Community in Bonnyrigg, NSW, where she has been living for 32 years having moved three times throughout the renewal and transformation of the Bonnyrigg estate.

AHI NEWS, VIEWS and MOVEMENTS | 9

From across the Australasian housing industry

Feature —

Sustaining a Home: The Future of Housing Support

Emerging Social Policy, Housing Support | 10

and the Role of the Community Housing Sector

Professor David Adamson, Research and Development Manager, Compass Group

Housing Focused Support | 12

Nicole Thompson, Inner Melbourne Manager of Crisis and Accommodation Services, VincentCare Victoria

Housing First: Transforming A Philosophy to Practice | 13

in Fort Collins, Colorado

Vanessa Fenley with input from Julie Brewen and Michele Christensen

It's All About Access | 16

Michelle Gegenhuber, General Manager Housing and Development, AnglicareSA

Probing Tensions Between Housing and | 18

Age Friendly Communities Policies for Future Direction

Dr Erika Altmann and Dr Max Travers, University of Tasmania

Separation of Housing and Support: | 20

Not Yet a Reality for People with a Disability

Joseph Connellan, Director, MC Two Pty Ltd

One Future for Housing Support: Elizabeth Street Common Ground | 22

Camille Heagney Manager Elizabeth Street Common Ground and Cathy Beadnell Manager Communications (Housing) Launch Housing (with thanks to Common Ground partners in South Australia, Queensland and New South Wales for their contribution)

It is Time to Stop Filtering out the Community | 24

When Accessing Homelessness Services

Tony Clarke, Manager, Northern Community Hub, VincentCare Victoria

Housing First Programs Can End Street Homelessness | 27

Leonie Kenny, Service Coordination Project Manager, Council to Homeless Persons

Consumer Voices | 29

Consumer Voices is a regular feature in *Parity*. Articles are written by and with consumers to ensure they have a say about the issues that directly affect them.

Insight into Youth Homelessness: Consumer Advocate Perspectives | 31

Karuna Santosa, Undergraduate in Psychology and Sessional Academic — Assistant Researcher at Swinburne University, and Monica Thielking, Director, Postgraduate Psychology Programs, Swinburne University

It Takes Partnerships to Support Long-term Housing Solutions | 33

Jeanette Large, CEO, Women's Property Initiatives.

The Future of Housing Support | 34

Bianca Nash, Community Health Nurse, RDNS Homeless Persons Program, Melbourne Street to Home

Look who's new at the AHI:

Corporate Member | 36

CHC Affordable Housing

Certified Housing Professional | 38

Jon Eastgate

AHI Member | 40

Mary Marshal, CEO, Murchison Regional Aboriginal Corporation

Opinions

John Blewonski | 43

Chief Executive Officer, Vincent Care Victoria

Dr Heather Holst | 46

Deputy CEO and Director of Services, Launch Housing

CHP Editorial

Jenny Smith, Chief Executive Officer, Council to Homeless Persons



This joint edition of *Parity* and *HousingWORKS* underlines the important role that provision of support plays in achieving positive housing outcomes, particularly for people experiencing long-term homelessness.

It points also to the fact that for many 'support' in and of itself will not be sufficient to achieve positive housing outcomes without also being able to secure access to appropriate and affordable housing. The understanding of the interplay between provision of support and housing has evolved over time, and this change is implicit in emergence of various approaches to 'Housing First', some of which are presented in this edition.

There is now something approaching a consensus about the best way to deliver positive long-term secure and sustainable housing outcomes to people experiencing long-term homelessness. The consensus assumes the joining of housing with appropriate and personalised supports that are tailored to meet the specific needs and requirements of individuals and

households. The Housing First approach usually frames this as complementing secure housing with the right level of support whether these supports be 'wrap around' or along the continuum to 'light touch'. The benefits of 'wrap around services' for those experiencing long-term homelessness has been demonstrated by successive evaluations of Housing First programs.

There has also been a growing recognition that we can do more to prevent tenancies from breaking down and tenants exiting into homelessness. Programs that work with social housing tenants whose tenancies are at risk have demonstrated that these tenancies can be salvaged and secured with the right supports and services. The programs are both cost effective both in financial terms and in preventing further personal and social dislocation and marginalisation of those already socially disadvantaged. Most importantly these programs protect vulnerable children and improve their life chances for social and economic success.



Voyuer3 by Jenny Minogue, provided by Mandy Leveratt, St Kilda Community Housing from their most recent photography exhibition

To increase the scope of this vital preventative activity it is important that these effective early intervention services are also extended to preventing tenancy breakdown in private rental and community housing. This is particularly critical as community housing plays an increasing role in housing people on social housing waiting lists, and many states are using innovative private rental brokerage and head leasing programs to create private housing tenancies to house people experiencing homelessness.

We still have a long way to go to make sure that the responses are in place to support both people exiting homelessness, and those struggling to remain housed. If delivered this support can prevent the trauma that often accompanies the dislocation of homelessness, and can swiftly re-establish secure and lasting tenancies.

For those experiencing long-term homelessness, and others with complex needs, who may need ongoing support, the evidence is in that Housing First Programs can succeed in sustaining people in housing; the challenge remains to embed Housing First approaches.

Acknowledgments

The Council to Homeless Persons would like to once again thank our partners in this joint edition of *Parity* and *HousingWORKS*, the Australasian Housing Institute (AHI). For the last several years CHP and the AHI have worked closely together to develop and prepare joint editions and we look forward to continuing this productive relationship.

CHP would also like to thank our other edition co-sponsors, VincentCare Victoria and Launch Housing.

Welcome to this joint edition of HousingWORKS



The Australasian Housing Institute (AHI) has enjoyed a long and fruitful partnership with the Council to Homeless Persons (CHP). This annual joint edition of our respective publications *HousingWORKS* and *Parity* is the latest in a partnership that began in 2004. I would like to express the AHI's appreciation of our highly valued collaborations with CHP.

This joint edition is packed with articles and insights that address many contemporary issues and challenges facing the social housing and homelessness sectors in Australia and New Zealand. This edition serves to emphasize the inextricable link between the provision of safe, secure and affordable housing and addressing chronic homelessness.

Community Housing is undergoing a transformation and growth around Australia and New Zealand, giving rise to increasingly more sophisticated partnerships between housing providers and specialist support providers. This is set to increase exponentially with the unfolding of the Specialist Disability Accommodation framework under the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). Yet debate still rages about the issue of separating the provision of housing and support, and we feature several articles that address this key issue.

An article by Professor David Adamson on *'Emerging Social Policy, Housing Support and the role of the Community Housing Sector'* examines the implications of current housing policy, and contrasts it to the experience of the United Kingdom. Nicole Thompson from VincentCare Victoria presents a frontline view in her article *'Housing Focussed Support'*. It portrays the varied service approaches and support partnerships needed to meet the individual support needs of people recovering from homelessness.

Vanessa Fenley's article titled *'Housing First: Transforming a philosophy into practice in Fort Collins, Colorado'* provides a United States perspective of the issue and examines exactly what is meant by 'housing first'. Leonie Kenny's article *'Housing First Programs Can End Street Homelessness'* also provides an international perspective, referring to the growing evidence base that a housing first approach successfully addresses chronic homelessness.

In her article *'It's all about access'*, Michelle Gegenhuber provides Anglicare SA's perspective on the provision of housing and 'wrap around support', and gives examples of how this has been applied in a large-scale stock transfer project.



Finally, in his article *'Separation of Housing and Support: Not yet a reality for People with a Disability'*, Joseph Connellan provides a reminder that this is typically not the case for people with a disability who have high support needs. His article highlights that the NDIS still has many issues to be addressed.

This joint edition also features your letters and vox pop feedback, a heartening tenant success story, and Certified Housing Professional and Corporate Member profiles. It includes articles that share innovative ideas and best practices from the front-line of AHI member organisations. A truly good read with something for all housing and homelessness professionals. Enjoy!

Andrew Davis
AHI President



THIS EDITION, WE ASK:

“What is the most effective form of housing support and why?”



A soapbox for the **AUSTRALASIAN HOUSING COMMUNITY**

Trudi Ray

Executive Director of Metro, BSW and Corporate Services @ Haven; Home, Safe

‘It seems obvious the best form of housing support and the best way to fight homelessness is to just give people permanent and stable housing. This is the most effective technique for keeping people supported in safe and sustainable tenancies.’

‘While understanding this is the most expensive option, we need to take into account the costs associated with supportive services and other crisis-related programs — not to mention the cost to the health and education systems. Studies (particularly in the United States) have found that costly and intensive services provided through crisis and transitional housing — such as mental health, help with employment options, etc. — have relatively little impact on housing stability, which could further suggest that, for some, homelessness and housing crisis is more a housing affordability problem that can be remedied with permanent housing solutions.’

‘So, that is why, for me, permanent stable and secure housing is the most effective form of housing support.’

Jo Leckie

Housing Services Manager @ Rockingham Forest Housing, United Kingdom

‘This is a provocative question that will undoubtedly spark debate. When viewed subjectively, commentators might advocate one area of housing-related support over another. For example, the argument could be that effective pre-tenancy support mitigates the risk of a tenancy failing in the future. Conversely, others might argue that even the most prepared and knowledgeable individuals might fail to sustain a tenancy without continued support being available should their circumstances change.’

‘There is no right or wrong answer to this question. Whether support is provided to obtain a tenancy, sustain a tenancy or prevent homelessness, the success of any support plan will depend on the individual’s desire to accept the support that is being offered and to work proactively with the provider. Therefore, in order to obtain buy-in to a support package, the support offered must meet the individual’s wishes and future aspirations.’

‘Objectively, the most effective form of housing-related support must be proactive rather than reactive, person-centred, focused on outcomes and tailored to an individual’s needs. Taking a person-centred approach creates an environment where the person feels able to express themselves freely, allowing the provider to work with the individual to create actions that are based on the individual’s personal experiences, needs, wants and desires.’

Stephen McIntyre

Chief Executive Officer @ Wentworth Community Housing

‘Wentworth Community Housing believes that Housing First is the most effective form of housing support. Why? The Housing First model is focused on quickly finding a home for people experiencing homelessness and then wraps supports around the person to help sustain their housing.’

‘Housing First is about first meeting the primary need for a secure, affordable and suitable home. It is the opposite of the ‘housing ready’ approach, which requires people to meet prerequisites

before housing, such as a period of time in transitional accommodation or overcoming addictions. Too often people fall through the cracks or become too unwell to meet any prerequisites for ‘readiness’.

‘A Housing First approach recognises that, once in housing, some people may require support for a period of time, while others with high needs may require more intensive support or permanent supportive housing.’

‘Of course, there are challenges within the Housing First model, in particular, timely access to secure and affordable housing. But Wentworth is specifically taking on this challenge through a whole-of-community project called ‘Heading home — ending homelessness here’. We believe there is additional capacity in the system and we’re working with real estate agents, local council planners and service groups to develop diverse housing and support solutions.’

Cameron Kevin**Support Coordinator @ SGCHg**

“A customer-led approach helps engage tenants and support them in sustaining their tenancy. By ‘customer-led’, I mean that a team of staff works with the customer and their family, where possible, to determine the customer’s needs.’

‘The team encourages the customer to play an active role in the decision to engage with support and presents them with a range of available support options. The customer then chooses whether they want support. We believe there is additional capacity in the system and we’re working with real estate agents, local council planners and service groups to develop diverse housing and support solutions.’

and which option to take. This approach also builds individual and family capacity, skills, resilience and connections to the community.’

‘Customers can have a range of complex needs and it is important to identify vulnerable people early and provide them with assistance. We have a number of specialist teams including our Sustainable Tenancies Team and Income Recovery Team who work with customers who have fallen, or are beginning to fall, into rental arrears.’

‘Having numerous points of contact with tenants through other teams also means we can monitor tenant wellbeing and look for vulnerability flags.’

Edward Doherty**Team Leader, Sustainable Tenancies@ SGCH**

“SGCH supports our vulnerable tenants through effective partnerships with a wide range of community-based support services. We value these partnerships and invest time to build positive relationships so we can ensure integrated and coordinated responses across the full range of services relevant to the customer’s needs.’

‘Some of the key elements we look for when engaging with our support partners is choice and multiple pathways. This includes organisations that look at the bigger picture and provide holistic support with mental health, overall health, social inclusion, employment and financial counselling, to name just a few.’

‘For us, it is important the service believes in the potential and strengths of the customer, and can offer people the support to motivate them and also instil a sense of hope. A customer’s situation can regularly change so we rely on services that can adapt and provide flexibility for them to choose which direction to take.’

‘Each day, I see the results of collaborative partnerships with helping customers achieve economic wellbeing, live independently, participate in their community and achieve a better quality of life.’



Meet a Tenant

Tania Roberts is 56 years old and currently resides in St George Community Housing, New Leaf Community in Bonnyrigg, NSW, where she has been living for 32 years having moved three times throughout the renewal and transformation of the Bonnyrigg estate.

To describe Tania Roberts as passionate is a significant understatement. When we make contact with her for this edition of *HousingWORKS* and describe the nature of our interview request, she launches straight out of the blocks on a subject close to her heart: changing superannuation law and allowing people to access their retirement savings to purchase a house.

'If I could access my super, we — my youngest daughter and myself — could put a deposit on a unit and pay it off,' she says eagerly. 'I'd be out of a [Department of Housing] house and then somebody else could come in. It doesn't make sense to me. It also gives people equity so it would take money off the pension later on. I've made money on my super myself so that's less pension for the government... (she pauses)... They need to put their thinking caps on.'

The forthright and driven manner in which Tania argues her position provides a unique insight into what makes her tick. Having successfully raised three children as a divorced mum, Tania possesses an undeniable aura of self-assurance and determination; an attitude born from overcoming a number of hurdles in her life but still standing once the dust has settled and looking forward to a positive future.

Tania's one of those fortunate few that has found their true purpose in their lives. 'I work with people living with disabilities,' she says proudly. 'I am passionate about my chosen career. I make a real difference in the lives of individuals who were either born with a disability or have acquired one later in life. Some people go to work to earn income to pay their bills. They're not really there for the right reasons and that's a sad thing. We need to

love what we do. If we don't love what we do, eventually it will make us sick — and that's the truth.'

A strong believer in holistic healthcare, Tania's faith in a multi-faceted approach to wellbeing inspires her when caring for people. 'I believe you've got to treat the mind, the body and the spirit. If you treat all these things, you really connect, and you can build bridges and remove any existing barriers.'

Physical exercise and simple pleasures, like singing, are key ingredients in holistic care. 'I believe in 'use it or lose it',' she laughs. 'Like the guy out of *The Wizard of Oz* — the Tin Man — if you don't move, you rust so, if you don't exercise, you rust. And it's the same with the mind; you need cognitive exercise as well. We do singing, swimming, reading and art and creative things. My clients love singing and that's good for reminiscence, which is recovery of knowledge known to our soul. It's a memory thing. And it's stimulating and fun as well.'

In the 32 years Tania has been living in Bonnyrigg, she has witnessed some big changes, like the shift away from the old Radburn designs into more contemporary styling that has created a stronger sense of community: 'In the old days, the dwellings they built were real 'houso'. There was no integration and that's where you got the street crime and drugs because people weren't integrated. Segregation can be harmful and limit growth.'

'Now they're doing nice homes,' she continues. 'Seventy per cent are private and 30 per cent are public so the private and the public don't know who's who, unless you wish to tell them yourself. They're a nicer style of house too. They give people pride in themselves and this reflects in the

care of their yards and the houses are closer together. Our community's closer together, safer, and has cut down the crime.'

Not surprisingly, given these positive changes, Tania is a big advocate for social housing: 'I like social housing because they adapt to change and circumstance. When I was unemployed, they were there for me. When I got part-time work, they adapted. When I got full-time work, I paid full rent. When you're in the private sector, if you lose your job, nobody really gives a damn. It leads to so much more stress and you're just another statistic, which is wrong.'

'Social housing has helped so many people along the way so I've got the utmost respect for the Department of Housing, St George Community Housing and New Leaf Communities. I'm deeply grateful for all their help over the years, and for their genuine care, concern and empathy.'

'I love Bonnyrigg, and I love New Leaf Communities because they do so many things for our community. They run programs and courses like 'Learn to Speak English' and bi-lingual support groups. We've got a Men's Shed that focuses on preventative health and reducing isolation for men. We have a Neighbourhood Watch group and many other social groups like a walking group that encourages wellness. As people get older, they can sometimes get isolated but, when a community has so many things like New Leaf does, this then helps prevent isolation.'

'My life's my choice in life,' concludes Tania. 'It's important to me to get out and meet people, meet my neighbours. That makes me feel a part of my community and that in itself is real growth adding new branches to our tree of life.'

AHI NEWS, VIEWS and MOVEMENTS

From across the Australasian housing industry

Email your news to admin@housinginstitute.org

SGCH Begins Energy Upgrade Rollout To 1,400 Households

As part of a pilot project under the Home Energy Action Program, the New South Wales (NSW) Government and SGCH are investing \$2.7 million each to improve energy efficiency across 1,400 SGCH households in metropolitan Sydney.

The upgrades include new rooftop solar panels, installing ceiling insulation, replacing electric water heaters with heat pump systems, installing LED lights and introducing sustainable improvements to new building projects.

After months of planning and preparation, the first stage of works has begun with SGCH contracting social enterprise YourTown to retrofit over 400 homes with:

- draught-proofing for doors
- LED light bulbs
- ceiling insulation, if not already installed.

Homes in the Sutherland Shire and St George area are the first to receive the new energy-efficient measures, with a wider rollout over the next few weeks in the southwest, inner west and eastern suburbs.

SGCH Group Chief Executive Officer, Scott Langford, says, 'The dollar savings our tenants will see from these energy-efficient improvements will make a real difference not only to their energy bills but also to their health and wellbeing.'

Kirrawee tenant Pauline McKelvey is one person who is looking forward to the energy bill savings: 'Savings are always welcome for people on low incomes but what is also important to me is that everyone gets behind supporting our environment.'

'It's exciting to hear about the new energy-efficient measures,' Pauline says.

Cross-Party Inquiry into Homelessness Releases Report

The New Zealand Labour Party, Green Party of Aotearoa New Zealand and the Maori Party joined forces to hold an inquiry into ending homelessness and released their report on 10th October 2016.

The Cross-Party Inquiry into Homelessness made a number of recommendations. These include rolling out Housing First as the primary response to severe homelessness, building more affordable homes through an increase in state housing stock, measures such as reducing the cost of building homes and long-term funding for community housing providers to build homes, and creating a national strategy to end homelessness.

The Inquiry heard repeatedly from organisations and others that they

were stressed and unable to cope with the level of homelessness they were facing.

Wellington social worker Jude Douglas said the experience of working with the homeless is 'like a medic in a war zone with no supplies.' Comcare Trust housing support services manager Annette Sutherland said, 'Do I choose a woman who is eight months pregnant living in a car? Or do I choose somebody who is homeless in hospital and about to be discharged? These are the choices you have to make when you're running emergency housing.'

The report went on to say:

'Our existing organisations can make a real difference to help the homeless when there are enough temporary beds, enough resourcing for full wrap-around services, people are given the help they are entitled to, and enough permanent affordable housing is available for people to move in to. However, none of these conditions are currently being met.'

'There is no nationwide system to provide people with the homes they need. The resourcing providers are receiving is not enough to deal with the large volume of homelessness we are now facing and some people are falling through gaps in support. This means we need both an increase in funding and to look at some new approaches to help a greater number of people receive the assistance they require.'



SGCH is introducing sustainable improvements to new building projects including its highest environmentally rated property, underway in Peakhurst

To find out more, as well as access the report itself, visit:
<http://www.communityhousing.org.nz/resources/article/cross-party-inquiry-into-homelessness-releases-report>

Feature — Sustaining a Home: The Future of Housing Support

Emerging Social Policy, Housing Support and the Role of the Community Housing Sector

Professor David Adamson, Research and Development Manager, Compass Group

In recent years the emergence of hybrid organisations providing both housing and support services has redrawn the boundary in the conventional separation of support and housing provision. Innovative approaches to services provision have developed to more fully meet the needs of those seeking and sustaining housing. Mainstream Community Housing Providers (CHPs) are proactively developing comprehensive housing services with an increasing component of support provided to sustain tenancies and generate wider social outcomes. This article will explore the implications for housing policy and specifically the impact on the future role of CHPs.

Historically, there has been an international evolution from the basic provision of ‘bricks and mortar’ housing services towards a range of support approaches. In the United Kingdom (UK) where large concentrations of social housing exist in urban estates, an approach has evolved in which community-based regeneration initiatives are delivered. Evolving over time from relatively simple community development methods, there are now multi-dimensional projects delivering urban renewal, social regeneration and employment support for tenants. Deploying social procurement strategies, schemes create employment opportunities at estate level and deploy the direct ‘targeted and recruitment’ of tenants, supported by training and employment initiatives to overcome the impact of long-term unemployment.¹

In Australia, where social housing is more dispersed, the evolution of support approaches has been more individualised and primarily focused on sustaining tenancies. The emphasis has been on securing social and psychological support for tenants

confronting personal barriers to sustained housing solutions. Approaches have used both community development techniques and more individualised approaches. In the UK social housing provides approximately 16 per cent of all housing and the social housing population is more diverse with a wider range of incomes, educational qualifications, work experience and general socio-economic status. This lends itself to the types of strategies identified above. Consequently, whilst residualisation has occurred, social housing in the UK is not as residualised as it is in Australia. This suggests that resolving social housing issues in Australia cannot be simply addressed by engaging with UK and wider European experience.

The greater extent of residualisation in Australia has resulted in the risk of a future housing service becoming an ‘ambulance service’.² A service that only houses those with acute needs will require more personalised interventions that address specific family and individual needs. This arises from the tightening of eligibility for social housing to most individuals and families experiencing accommodation crises that range from homelessness to urgent escape from family violence. High levels of economic inactivity characterise social housing communities and additionally, tenants experience high levels of both physical and mental illness. Inevitably, a needs based allocations system, to a housing commodity in short supply, tends to distil social problems into social housing communities.

In a recent review of a regional town social housing location managed by Compass Housing, 95 per cent of tenants allocated through the New South Wales (NSW) Housing Pathways system had Very High or High needs.

Over 44 per cent were homeless at the time of allocation. This brings acute difficulties to both the tenant and the CHP in maintaining tenancies and creates the need for substantial use of support services to create the ‘wrap-around’ level of support required by tenants. This type of situation is experienced by all CHPs and even in less pressured locations, the needs of individual tenants can require significant support.

These challenges create a dilemma for CHPs in terms of the extent to which they directly deliver support services or instead forge partnerships with service providers specialised in meeting specific needs of tenants. In general terms three levels of engagement with tenant support have emerged:

- A simple referral mechanism where the tenant is either provided with sufficient information to seek their own route to support services or initial contact is made on their behalf. Further engagement by the tenant is a personal matter and not supported by the CHP.
- An ongoing development of a support network of partner agencies that routinely receive referrals and engage with the CHP tenants. The CHP tracks and supports continued engagement by the tenant and may relax compliance requirements while support is ongoing.
- Delivery of direct support services by the social housing provider.

These approaches have evolved over time and few large CHPs in Australia do not operate in close accord with a network of service providers. This often involves a range of relationships varying from formal Memorandums of Understanding, to tenancy nomination rights for support service providers and less formal agreements to work collaboratively.

However, the increasing needs of tenants coupled with emerging trends in social policy are beginning to impose new pressures on the level of support provided by CHPs to their tenants and CHPs are proactively developing an increasing range of support activities.

CHPs enjoy a unique relationship with their tenants characterised by routine and regular contact through inspection regimes and the wider pattern of tenant landlord relationships. For CHPs, social housing tenants are not the 'difficult to reach' social groups they are often seen as by other service providers and government agencies. Recognition of this capacity of CHPs to work directly to support tenants is also beginning to find its way into the social housing policies and procurement patterns implemented by state departments. The remainder of this article will examine the NSW, Future Directions policy and its implications for CHP delivery of tenant support services as an example of an emerging trajectory in social housing policy.

Future Directions: Housing Policy Development in NSW

Future Directions for Social Housing in NSW³ is the new ten-year strategy. It identifies three strategic priorities:

- more social housing
- more opportunities, support and incentives to avoid and /or leave social housing
- a better experience in social housing.⁴

Under the second of these priorities there is an emphasis on 'opportunity in work and education' and 'access to the private rental market and affordable housing' as alternatives to social housing. The Future Directions policy also identifies the Social and Affordable Housing Fund (SAHF) as the key mechanism for achieving these objectives. SAHF is a \$1.1 billion seed fund, income from which will enable purchase of housing solutions from the private and not-for-profit sectors. SAHF targets an increase of 3,000 additional social and affordable housing units.

The implication for support provision by housing providers lies in the stated aims to:

- increase the numbers of households successfully transitioning out of social housing by 5 per cent over three years

- improve the educational outcomes of students living in social housing
- reduce the numbers of children growing up in social housing who take on their own social housing tenancy
- increase the proportion of young people aged 15 to 24 who successfully move from specialist homelessness services to long-term accommodation by 10 per cent.⁵

Most importantly, the policy will:

'Hold all providers (government, non-government and private) accountable for the social and economic outcomes for people in the social housing system'

This represents a significantly enlarged role for housing providers in which they will be required to 'coordinate access to support services tailored to each household member'.

Given the residualisation of social housing and the complex tenant needs identified earlier, this represents a significant challenge for CHPs to comprehensively change the social trajectory of their tenants towards better health, educational and housing outcomes. In this model, success will be primarily judged by transition from social housing to affordable or private rental tenancies. Such a transition is only likely to arise from better educational, training and employment outcomes for tenants. This will pose significant challenges where coordination of support will be a critical element of the performance matrix for providers funded by the SAHF program.

In the Future Directions approach social housing is seen as a form of welfare dependency to be discouraged and if possible ended by the tenant moving out of social housing to 'independency'. There is a risk of further residualisation in this approach as the most capable tenants are effectively promoted to move on, leaving behind tenants with more difficult to resolve challenges. Future Directions recognises this in its distinction of an 'opportunity cohort' and a 'safety net' cohort. The latter is likely to require long-term or even life-time access to social housing and the SAHF priority for this cohort is to stabilise tenancies.

The Future Direction policy has much to attract CHPs and few would forego the opportunity to improve the lifestyle and outcomes for tenants. Altruistically, this would be a good thing to do and many CHPs are already delivering programs with similar objectives. More instrumentally, providing support services to tenants, or at least coordinating them and ensuring their effectiveness, can reduce tenancy management issues including rent debt, anti-social behaviour, abandonments and ex-tenant debt.

Consequently, we will see a trend of continued proactive development of support roles by CHPs both for altruistic and instrumental motivations. This trend will be reinforced by a new social policy paradigm in which the capacity of CHPs to engage with their tenants and improve a range of social outcomes will be increasingly recognised. However, state and federal government must recognise the need to resource such an evolution by a range of methods that will include innovative funding and financial models, and large-scale stock transfer to the community sector. Without incentives and resources CHPs will find it difficult to develop a role that many would welcome.

The elaboration of the Australian Priority Investment Approach to Welfare on the 20 September 2016 and the announcement of the \$96 million Try, Test and Learn Fund is a clear indication that the dominant policy paradigm in Australia for the time being is to reduce welfare dependency. Even in a context where expenditure reduction may be the primary motivation CHPs can proactively develop progressive approaches that benefit tenants and their families. This will be achieved by developing CHP capacity to coordinate and to directly deliver innovative patterns of support to tenants.

Endnotes

1. <http://www.cih.org/i2i>
2. Fitzpatrick, S and Pawson, H. (2014): 'Ending Security of Tenure for Social Renters: Transitioning to 'Ambulance Service' Social Housing.' *Housing Studies* (Routledge) 29, no. 5, pp.597-615.
3. New South Wales Government 2016, *Future Directions for Social Housing in NSW*.
4. *ibid.*
5. *ibid* p.13.

Housing Focused Support

Nicole Thompson, Inner Melbourne Manager of Crisis and Accommodation Services, VincentCare Victoria

VincentCare is a homelessness focused organisation committed to supporting those in our community who are most disadvantaged. Our purpose is to create opportunities and lasting change for the most marginalised by:

- supporting individuals and their families so that their basic needs are met in terms of food, shelter, safety and security
- providing access to programs and pathways that strengthen an individual's resilience and support them in accessing opportunities within their communities
- advocating and building capacity in order to redress the structural inequalities in the community that create disadvantage.

Research shows a critical link between homelessness and trauma. Subsequently, recovery from homelessness can be a long and complex journey. VincentCare Victoria provides a range of programs, services and accommodation options to support people through the journey and empower them to achieve their goals and aspirations.

For those experiencing homelessness, the provision of and access to secure housing is essential, however; housing without support is not always sustainable for those who may have experienced disadvantage. VincentCare acknowledges this and works from a recovery focused client centred approach, through the Homelessness Recovery Model, which is designed to support and empower clients. In recognising that there may be a range of factors contributing to a person experiencing homelessness, it is then necessary to commit to providing the support required to

address these issues, and provide access to the resources and services needed to achieve this.

VincentCare operates one of the three funded Crisis Accommodation Services in Victoria, Ozanam House which is a 59 bed facility funded to provide accommodation for males over the age of 18. Accommodation is not all that is provided at this service. Case Management Services are based at Ozanam House and each resident participates in the creation of a case plan focused on providing housing options and addressing the factors contributing to homelessness and the opportunity to connect with appropriate services in order to achieve their goals. We recognise the need to work with the whole person, and provide a wrap-around service approach to provide a continuum of care to support people in their recovery from homelessness.

Once a resident exits Ozanam House and secures further sustainable housing, ongoing outreach case management is provided to assist in this transition.

At Ozanam House residents are able to address their medical and physical health needs as they have access to an onsite nurse through the Royal District Nursing Service Homeless Persons Program. This enables residents to receive immediate attention to medical conditions and timely and quality assessments and referrals. Residents are also provided with three nutritious meals per day, acupuncture on a fortnightly basis and access to an onsite gym.

Ozanam House also has a long standing, strong partnership with City 1A Mental Health Outreach

Team who provide onsite support to residents. Mental health issues can be a substantial barrier for those experiencing homelessness, which can impact the ability to maintain employment, engage in social inclusion activities and maintain relationships. The identification of, and support regarding mental health concerns, is essential for people experiencing homelessness.

Alcohol and other drug issues can also be a significant barrier to accessing and maintaining housing. In recognition of this Ozanam House also offers the Brief Intervention Program, which consists of two AOD clinicians who provide brief intervention, ongoing support, outings, groups and referrals regarding alcohol and other drug issues.

Engagement and social inclusion play a large part in supporting people to access and maintain housing. Residents at Ozanam House are offered the opportunity to participate in free activities onsite such as weekly music and art therapy groups.

All services and programs operate from a recovery focused client centred approach and resident feedback plays a large part in the provision of services. Regular 'have your say' meetings occur at Ozanam House. These feed directly into the groups and activities from which the residents most benefit.

Recovery from homelessness is a journey that is individual for each person, and the support needs vary accordingly. VincentCare empowers clients to identify their goals and aspirations as well as the supports and resources required to gain and maintain the outcomes they are seeking.

Housing First: Transforming A Philosophy to Practice in Fort Collins, Colorado

Vanessa Fenley* with input from Julie Brewen and Michele Christensen



In March 2015, the doors opened on Redtail Ponds, the first true permanent supportive housing community in Fort Collins, a small city of 161,000 residents in Northern Colorado. Unlike any other housing community in Fort Collins, Housing Catalyst (Fort Collins' public housing authority) utilised Housing First — the philosophy that by providing housing first and then offering supportive services, people can better retain their housing — to inform building design, tenant recruitment processes, and service delivery at Redtail Ponds. As a result, Redtail Ponds serves some of the most vulnerable residents in Fort Collins. In addition to meeting a vital community need, Housing Catalyst was awarded multiple local, state, and national awards for building and project design.¹ Now operating successfully for almost two years, the experience of Redtail Ponds illustrates how the broad philosophy of Housing First can translate into applied practices, including the need to accommodate for the realities of serving severely disabled and chronically homeless individuals.

What is Housing First?

Housing First has only recently been adopted broadly in the United States, including being incorporated into federal funding priorities. The term 'Housing First' began to appear in federal documents in the late 2000's, including serving as the framework for Opening Doors, the federal strategic plan to end and prevent homelessness.² It may therefore seem a new and novel approach to addressing homelessness.

However, in addition to being a philosophy and program model that took shape in the early 1990s,³ Housing First stems from other movements of non-governmental organisations in the human services field. Harm reduction,⁴ providing housing for vulnerable populations in an integrated rather than isolated community environment, and consumer choice — all components of the Housing First philosophy — are well-established movements.⁵ These tenets, combined with the overarching intention of moving individuals out of homelessness and into permanent housing as quickly as possible and without preconditions, help frame the Housing First philosophy now gaining momentum.

Housing First replaced the assumption that people must be 'housing-ready' to access housing assistance. Individuals moved from the street, to emergency shelters, into transitional housing, and finally into permanent housing. Moving through this linear process was contingent on meeting certain benchmarks such as remaining compliant with treatment plans, abstaining from alcohol or other drug use, or accessing and building income.

This linear, housing-ready model created poor outcomes. First, individuals remained homeless longer, if they were able to escape homelessness at all. People are most successful in improving their standing when they have permanent housing. Making progress while living in the unstable and often unsafe condition of homelessness is difficult and time-consuming. Second, it cost more financially. Providing care through emergency and transitional programs is expensive. With longer stays in those programs as people become 'ready' for housing, fewer people are able to escape homelessness with the funding available. Third, it left behind those with the most severe needs. Individuals with severe disabilities, including mental health and substance use disorders, may struggle in the shelter environment. Navigating complex processes and rules of shelter or transitional programs may prove near impossible for someone with a severe mental illness, a developmental disability, or a brain injury. With no other choice, these are the people who would return to the street.

The specific housing resources needed in a Housing First model will vary depending on the households' needs. Two primary housing interventions could qualify as Housing First: rapid re-housing and permanent supportive housing. In both, the household holds a lease in their name and has the same rights as other renters. Supportive services are offered in both interventions but participation is not required as a condition of remaining housed.

Rapid re-housing provides short-term financial assistance to help a household regain permanent housing (typically a home leased from a private landlord). Supportive services, such as counselling or job training, are provided to the

household throughout the move-in process and often well into a household's tenancy. These supportive services are client-driven and usually provided by the housing provider or a partnering non-governmental organisation. Rapid re-housing typically serves households that have been homeless for shorter lengths and with fewer barriers to access housing.

Permanent supportive housing provides long-term financial assistance and supportive services. It best serves individuals who are disabled, chronically homeless, or otherwise facing significant barriers to access housing. Permanent supportive housing is provided by utilising housing vouchers to pay partial rent on apartments leased on the private market, or by developing a building in which all or some of the apartments are dedicated as permanent supportive housing. As with rapid re-housing, the supportive services offered and accessed by residents are also client-driven. Tenants have the autonomy and authority to determine their own path and pace forward to ultimately meet the goals they have set for themselves. This stands in contrast to the 'housing-ready' model in which client goals were largely determined by the program.

How Does Housing First work in Practice?

Housing First, as it is often cited and promoted, is an ideal for which providers and communities can strive. The reality of helping people access permanent housing is rarely as tidy in practice as in theory. In 2013, the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) published a checklist for providers to assess whether they met the basic standards of Housing First.⁶ Additional criteria used by the most advanced Housing First programs were also included, illustrating the variation seen in how and to what degree programs can incorporate Housing First.

To meet the core standards of Housing First outlined by USICH, a program must not require income for admission, must not require sobriety or compliance with treatment for admission, and must not evict tenants for not accessing services or treatment. More advanced programs will recognize the unique challenges facing many tenants and actively work

with residents to overcome those challenges. This could mean setting up payment plans for a tenant with income who falls behind on rent. Or a program may integrate harm reduction principles into programming to encourage safer behaviors when using alcohol and other drugs rather than adhering to abstinence-based messaging around substance use.

Housing Catalyst, as the building manager and program operator of Redtail Ponds, has worked to translate the Housing First philosophy into applied practices and principles informing building design, staff training, and service programming. The building includes dedicated space for staff who provide supportive services and programs. For instance, staff from the community mental health centre and from the Department of Veterans Affairs occupy office space in the building, allowing them to more easily meet the needs of their clients who are residents. In addition, one room was designed specifically to meet the standards of local healthcare providers to provide basic medical care on-site.

Along with the traditional case management and counselling that occurs, staff also must step into unusual roles that would be unheard of in other apartment complexes. For instance, one resident at Redtail Ponds was at-risk of losing his apartment as his hoarding tendencies had become unmanageable and the condition of his apartment constituted a lease violation. In any other apartment, that resident would have been evicted. Redtail Ponds staff instead worked with the individual to thoroughly clean his apartment, reaffirm the expectations of his lease, and offer additional support to help him manage his hoarding. This mentality of going to extremes to help individuals keep their housing is a common refrain among Housing First-oriented permanent supportive housing programs.

While Housing Catalyst adheres to Housing First practices with Redtail Ponds, there are very practical limitations to implementing Housing First that have emerged. First, a core tenet of Housing First is that the housing process is client-driven. In an ideal situation, a client in need of

housing would be offered multiple housing options from which to choose. They could select a building for the neighbourhood it was in, for its accessibility to public transportation, or for other amenities that accompanied that program. In reality, and depending upon the community's resources or rental market, clients' choices may be severely limited. The realistic choice may come back to moving into one particular available unit, or waiting for many more months or years for another unit or another resource to open up.

In addition, Housing First affirms that every person is housing-ready. While sobriety, having income, or compliance with service plans is not needed, there is a degree of willingness that must exist within potential residents. Several residents at Redtail Ponds struggled with the transition from homelessness to housing. Some managed this transition by at first sleeping on their floors. Others found it difficult to even sleep inside and occasionally spent nights outside during their first weeks at Redtail Ponds. Even for these individuals, though, there was a willingness to sign a lease and eventually move inside. Many others who are homeless do not have this willingness — at least at first. Housing Catalyst staff rely on shelter staff, street outreach workers, and others in the community to encourage and support individuals who may be unwilling to move inside. With time, the initial uncertainty will shift and that individual will be willing to sign a lease.

Housing First is a philosophy that takes effort and commitment to translate into practice. The results of this effort and commitment from Housing Catalyst are apparent. In the first year of operations of Redtail Ponds, no residents were evicted. And, 60 individuals continue to have the opportunity to live in their own apartments at Redtail Ponds with the support and acceptance that comes with Housing First.

* Vanessa Fenley is an independent contractor based in Fort Collins, Colorado, with expertise in homelessness and community development. She is currently a PhD candidate in the School of Public Affairs at the University of Colorado-Denver. Until recently Vanessa was the Director of Homeward 2020, Fort Collins' Ten-Year Plan to Make Homelessness Rare, Short-Lived, and Non-Recurring.

Endnotes

1. Awards include the 2016 NAHRO Award of Excellence for Project Design, the 2015 Housing Colorado Eagle Award, the 2015 Fort Collins Board of Realtors Housing Hero Award, the 2015 Colorado NAHRO Mountain Plans Award for Affordable Housing Design, and the 2015 Colorado NAHRO Affordable Housing Project Award.
2. United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) 2015, *Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness*. Accessed at https://www.usich.gov/resources/uploads/asset_library/USICH_OpeningDoors_Amendment2015_FINAL.pdf
3. For example, see <http://www.pathwayshousingfirst.org/>
4. Defined by the Harm Reduction Coalition, Harm Reduction is 'a set of practical strategies and ideas aimed at reducing the consequences associated with drug use. Harm reduction is also movement for social justice built on a belief in, and respect for, the rights of people who use drugs.'
5. Padgett DK, Henwood BF and Tsemberis SJ 2015, *Housing First: Ending Homelessness, Transforming Systems, and Changing Lives*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, pp.3-4.
6. United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) 2013, *The Housing First Checklist*. Accessed at <https://www.usich.gov/tools-for-action/housing-first-checklist>

About NAHRO

History

The National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials is the oldest US organisation of professionals who operate government-assisted housing. NAHRO members also manage urban regeneration programs, known as Community Development. NAHRO began in Chicago, in 1933, when a group of housing officials organised to focus on housing needs. Their activism led to the federal Housing Act of 1937, which was the basis of all subsequent social housing legislation and programs.

In 1953, NAHRO added redevelopment to its activities in order to address slum clearance, renewal and broader urban issues. It was instrumental in the passage of the federal Housing Act of 1949, containing the goal of 'A decent home and a suitable living environment for every American family.' This created several urban renewal programs, which were combined in 1974 federal legislation, rebranded as 'Community Development' and added to NAHRO's membership and activities.

Mission

Part of NAHRO's mission statement is [to] 'make available resources for its members and others who provide decent, safe, affordable housing and viable communities that enhance the quality of life for all Americans, especially those of low and moderate income.' As federal support has diminished, NAHRO's determined voice and advocacy has become even more important, with housing and renewal agencies inventing new ways to serve those in need.

Benefit

NAHRO's national scale combines the goals of 50 states and several thousand agencies into one strong, unified voice, addressing decision makers in Congress and federal regulatory agencies. The broad membership provides a powerful advocacy tool to renewal and housing professionals, that could not be achieved alone and cannot be ignored.

Six national committees and eight Regional Councils facilitate networking, the exchange of ideas, thorough research and consensus positions, to advance to decision makers. One such group, the International Research and Global Exchange Committee, transfers information and networks worldwide.

Membership

NAHRO is comprised of more than 18,000 individual members and associates and more than 2,900 agencies. These represent housing authorities, redevelopment agencies and community development departments of cities and counties.

NAHRO agency members own or administer 674,000 units of public (social) housing, 1,724,000 units with rental assistance subsidies and 285,500 units of other assisted housing. NAHRO members serve 7.9 million low and moderate-income people.

Programs and Services

NAHRO has a staff of 27, based in Washington DC. They provide current news, advocacy for laws, funding and regulatory improvements, training, conferences and publications. Those include a twice-monthly newsletter (the *Monitor*) and the flagship *Journal of Housing and Community Development*, published six times annually. There is a comprehensive website at www.nahro.org.

NAHRO holds a Washington DC Conference every March, then a Summer Conference in July and the National Conference in October, in rotating locations. Eight regional councils have similar activities and annual conferences in their regions.

Note

The information above is excerpted from pages of the NAHRO website: www.nahro.org

It is also from the 'Guide to NAHRO' 2012 edition at www.nahro.org/guide-nahro

It's All About Access

Michelle Gegenhuber, General Manager Housing and Development, AnglicareSA



Housing stock is limited. The National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS) is no more. Affordable rental properties are few and far between. These factors, combined with the growing incidence of smaller households, increase demand for affordable housing.

Housing access and support remains a fundamental challenge for communities around Australia. It is not a problem unique to South Australia.

AnglicareSA is South Australia's largest social services agency, assisting more than 58,000 vulnerable and disadvantaged people each year. AnglicareSA Housing, in partnership with government and other providers, manages and provides community, affordable and transitional housing. AnglicareSA also has a Community Services division which provides wraparound support services to assist those who are experiencing homelessness or who are at risk of homelessness.

Homelessness remains one of our community's key challenges and it's on the rise. The demand for transitional, public, community and affordable housing is ever increasing. In the first

nine months of 2014/15, nearly 20,000 people required assistance from the Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) sector in South Australia.¹ More than 80 per cent of all new South Australian households in the 2011 census included just one or two residents,² and this figure is expected to increase in the 2016 census findings.

Support Programs

AnglicareSA uses an integrated approach to case management and housing access through its broad range of wraparound services and programs, with a strong focus on support and assistance to individuals and families who are at risk of homelessness.

One such initiative is the Private Rental Workshop. Each week, AnglicareSA's Northern Housing Inclusion Program offers support and assistance to people seeking affordable private rental options in Adelaide's north.

Gail (not her real name) was a client who utilised the Program's Private Rental Workshop service over several weeks in May this year. Recently separated, Gail and her four children were staying in crowded conditions at the home of an aunty. The lease on Gail's previous property had expired before she was able to secure a new home. Gail's children were aged between three and 10 years. The end of a relationship, homelessness and ongoing recovery from a substance abuse issue melded to make this a particularly difficult time in her life.*

The Private Rental Group, held each Wednesday morning, enabled Gail to focus on securing a new home. Internet access

allowed her to target properties in an area close to the school attended by her older children. Administrative support provided in the workshop included photocopying, fax facilities, email and telephone access, and blank application forms for local real estate agents.

A crèche operated by AnglicareSA to coincide with the workshop gave Gail some space to concentrate on her search for housing. With a small amount of help, Gail was able to produce effective private rental applications. It took her three weeks of attendance at the workshop and 15 applications before securing a new home. Gail was also connected with AnglicareSA's financial counselling service which assisted her to access funds that enabled the purchase of a new refrigerator.

For clients like Gail, access to the right resources can make a huge difference.

Rental Affordability Snapshot

Affordable rentals are not easy to come by. Earlier this year, results of the Anglicare Rental Affordability Snapshot were released. It showed that of the 3,942 private rentals advertised across Adelaide on 1 April, only 157 or four per cent were appropriate and affordable for households on income support. The snapshot also revealed appropriate and affordable rental accommodation was in extremely short supply for households on income support.

It showed that of the 14 household types considered, there was no accommodation available for seven of the groups including a single person aged over 18 on a youth or Newstart

allowance, a single person on the aged pension, and a single person with a young child on either a Parenting Payment Single or Newstart allowance.

The research also showed that only two per cent of properties were affordable for couples on Newstart allowance with two children, and three per cent of properties were available to couples on the Age Pension with no children. Just one per cent of properties were available to a single parent with two children on Parenting Payment.

Alternative Accommodation

Outside of the private rental sphere, AnglicareSA currently provides accommodation to more than 1,200 low income households. The AnglicareSA Housing goal is to provide innovative, flexible and affordable housing pathways for vulnerable and disadvantaged people and communities.

Our approach to housing is based on working in partnership with our tenants and partners to provide quality housing within communities that are attractive, vibrant and safe. We also provide wrap around services and community connections to ensure sustainable tenancies. To achieve this, AnglicareSA Housing has a strong focus on getting to know our tenants, building on their individual strengths and involving them in decisions about their properties and community.

AnglicareSA's new development, St Augustine's Court at Woodville Gardens, is one of a number of sites with housing options for vulnerable people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. It offers 23 two-bedroom single and two storey units for people aged 55 years and over who can live independently and are on low incomes. This accommodation is targeted specifically at older people who have experienced economic and social vulnerabilities. It provides them with a safe and affordable home with security of tenure and includes a community centre for social interaction with other residents.

Jared (not his real name) is a vulnerable individual who suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder. He was forced to flee previous accommodation in regional South Australia after*

being physically assaulted by four men who also attacked his vehicle and damaged his property. Police advised him to leave the premises and escorted him as he removed what was left of his possessions.

Jared approached AnglicareSA, desperate for affordable accommodation as he was not in a financial position to be able to secure a private rental. Jared was initially housed in short-term accommodation until construction of St Augustine's Court was completed earlier this year. Now Jared is the very proud tenant of a ground floor two-bedroom unit where he lives with his beloved 11 year-old dog. The provision of safe and secure accommodation has enabled Jared to move forward with renewed confidence and to reconnect with family members also living in Adelaide.

Elizabeth Grove

In October 2015, as part of a collaborative partnership between AnglicareSA and the State Government's Renewal SA, the management of nearly 500 community housing properties in Adelaide's north was transferred to AnglicareSA Housing. Since the transfer, the Housing team has received numerous positive endorsements from tenants due to the level of personal customer service and the access to AnglicareSA's wraparound services. In this initiative, AnglicareSA acts as landlord while the government holds the titles. It is underpinned by a vision of community development, neighbourhood engagement, and housing renewal and rejuvenation.

So Where to Next?

There is an ongoing pattern of housing unaffordability being at crisis levels for people across Adelaide including workers on low incomes, retirees and people on benefits. It highlights continual inaction to address affordable housing options for low income households.

We do not want to continually see people seeking help from AnglicareSA because they are having to make the tough choice between paying their rent or putting food on the table and we don't want to see more homeless families because they can't find a house they can afford to

rent. Action must be taken with a coordinated, systemic and broad approach to addressing housing affordability and homelessness.

AnglicareSA calls for a long-term national policy framework and action plan for social and affordable housing, which includes the following key priority areas:

- Reform the tax system to support cheaper rental housing and reward investments in social and affordable housing.
- Supply a mix of housing that increases choice and meets the different needs of people across the housing continuum.
- Grow the supply of social and affordable housing through building capacity of Tier 1 community housing providers with strategies that provide access to secured finance.
- Consistent inclusionary zoning with targeted social and affordable outcomes.
- Review of social housing rental policies to protect those in most need.

The transfer of public housing to community housing providers shows great promise but requires redevelopment and neighbourhood rejuvenation to truly take effect and to have a long-term positive impact on the community and its surrounds.

Dealing effectively with homelessness and the huge shortfall in affordable housing stock will require a sustained and consistent commitment and investment from the Federal Government. It is important that all levels of government and the community services sector work together to identify ways to increase the opportunity for people on lower incomes to have a suitable and stable roof over their heads. Models that incorporate key elements of private capital, community benefit, and government investment and regulation are most likely to have lasting impact.

Endnotes

1. Homeless 2 Home (H2H) 2016, *Housing SA, Homelessness Strategy*.
2. Australian Bureau of Statistics 2012, *2011 Census Community Profile Series: South Australia (4) Basic Community Profile*, 'Table B30: Household Composition by number of persons usually resident', data cube: Excel spreadsheet, cat. no. 2001.0, viewed 7 October.

Probing Tensions Between Housing and Age Friendly Communities Policies for Future Direction

Dr Erika Altmann and Dr Max Travers, University of Tasmania

Significant tension exists between past and current housing policies and the move towards age friendly communities. These tensions need to be highlighted and resolved if older Australians are to undertake the roles allocated to them in later life such as working, volunteerism and family assistance, remaining active, healthy and able to contribute to society in later life. Little awareness exists of the disjunct between policies in these two areas at national, state or local levels despite the impact on a growing number of older Australians.

Population aging is a significant issue for Australia and across the globe. Not only is Australia's population predicted to almost double over the next three decades to around 40 million people,¹ the current profile is for those in the 65 years and older age bracket to increase from 3.2 million in 2012 to 5.8 million in 2031, and up to 11.1 million by 2061.² This reflects an overall percentage increase from approximately 13 per cent of the population to just over 25 per cent of the population as the those born during the baby boomer period reach retirement. Of these, around 800,000 are expected to be older renters by 2050.³ This change to larger groups of older renters has come about through past housing and employment policies.

From the 1980s there has been a significant move away from social housing support that provided security of tenure for renters and a pathway into home ownership for low income workers in favour of market mechanisms for the home ownership and rental sectors. In conjunction with this, the 1990s saw changes to employment contracts with fewer people able to purchase and greater numbers of people renting for longer

periods of their life, limiting the ability for people to create financial security in later life.

Since then, escalation of house prices to unrealistic levels due to high rates of landlord investment and property flipping combined with urban densification policies has meant that fewer people are able to enter into home ownership. The result is that fewer people in the future are expected to own their own home in later life, placing increased pressure on rental markets which are further destabilised through the flipping process.

At the same time, existing housing policies place emphasis on urban consolidation through increasing housing density particularly in middle ring suburbs. There are frequent calls for older people to give up their three bedroom homes in established middle ring suburbs to make way for 'working families' and move into apartments. This continued focus on working families has left little room for discussion of the needs of older age groups.

There are known links between health and housing for all age groups. Health inequalities widen with insecure tenure⁴ particularly for the elderly. Aging in place policies advocate that older people have better quality of life and manage better in an environment that is familiar to them, close to public transport so that they are not disadvantaged if they stop driving or continue working, are close to medical and community services and to social opportunities.

Past housing policies and higher rates of home ownership among the elderly have meant that a larger proportion of the

population has aged and lived with associated disability in their own homes up until now. They have been able to predominantly age in place, in their own homes, known neighbourhoods and with community ties in place. Help has been close to hand and physical modifications have been easier to undertake in owner occupied home but also within social housing contexts.

Given that the rental market in Australia is notoriously fickle and security of tenure among renters an almost impossible dream, aging in place for renters remains elusive, none more so than for people living with dementia and their carers. There is growing recognition of the advantages of enabling people with dementia to remain in a familiar environment. Familiar surroundings assist people with dementia with memory tasks by allowing established routines to remain in place. A key element in achieving this continuity is housing security, particularly during the mild and medium stages of cognitive decline.

Dementia has gained prominence as a key health, aged care and social policy challenge and is predicted to become the leading cause of disability in Australia by 2030. Figures cited by Gabriel et al⁵ indicated that approximately 13,500 people with dementia rent within the public or social housing sector and 16,500 rent privately. However, the number of people living with dementia is expected to double for each of the next four decades. People with dementia, renting privately, are an important subsector of the aged community and require targeted housing support if they are to age in place and we are to achieve an age friendly society.

While many landlords are socially responsible, there are those who are not. Even among socially responsible landlords there is often resistance to making minor physical modifications such as handrails and ramps. There is often the perception that these will detract from future rental opportunities or house resale value where the property is likely to be flipped. Seeking modifications required to meet the cognitive changes people undergo with dementia is even more difficult as the needs of people living with dementia are so little discussed or understood. As a consequence, people with dementia renting privately enter aged care facilities at a younger age than those in owner occupied housing or social housing.⁶

Many cite the difficulty of aging in place and inaccessibility of home modifications in rental properties as a reason for early entry into aged care facilities. When people enter into aged care facilities they lose the connection with their neighbourhoods, necessary for healthy aging. However, even this option will be curtailed over the next 40 years.

At the same time that the number of older people in private rental is increasing and rates of dementia are increasing, aged care placements are decreasing as a percentage of the population in line with aging in place policies. For example, the rate of people with dementia living in community is expected to increase to 85 per cent of the population by 2050. An easy option is to call for increased investment in social housing for older people. There is certainly a case for this. However, it is at odds with Australia's private rental expansion, creating tension that has hitherto been ignored by both aged care and housing policy makers.

Aging, and age related illness such as dementia need to be better understood as a life stage that brings

benefits to society and to landlords. Older tenants are more settled, have less parties, take fewer recreational drugs and are better at paying their rent on time than other age groups, making them ideal tenants.

More needs to be done to understand the resistance that landlords have to leasing to older tenants and physically modifying properties to meet the needs of an aging population of renters. Modified properties such as units and apartments will be attractive to an increasing number of older buyers seeking to downsize. The issues facing people in older age such as insecurity of tenure and negative effects on health need to be better understood. The positive aspects of aging in place need to be highlighted. This may include the benefits that older people bring to voluntary community services, family child care support and population diversity.

Looking towards the future, there needs to be new focus on housing for the aged at the policy and practical levels that allows older people to age in place, particularly renters, preferably in a home that they are familiar with, definitely in a neighbourhood that is familiar to them. There also needs to be genuine engagement with landlords that highlight the needs of an aging population including those with dementia as they age in place. I suggest a five stage approach to achieving this.

The first step is to acknowledge that negative attitudes towards the aged exist. The second step is to ensure that policy makers and landlords aware of the issues facing older people as they age and the predicted increase in older renters. This includes education about the tensions currently existing between housing and aging in place policies. It also includes an understanding of how the two issues of housing tenure and

aging in place are best addressed as a cohesive whole.

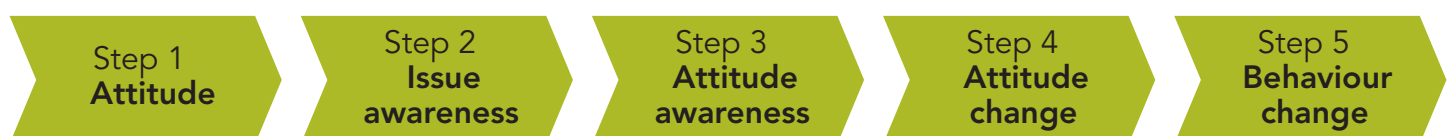
To facilitate this, more cross disciplinary research needs to be undertaken into age friendly communities, dementia friendly communities, attitudes towards aging and housing for the aged. Step three requires an awareness among policy makers that brings together silo oriented health and aging in place policies and silo oriented housing policies into a cohesive whole. A cohesive statement on aging in place that recognises the importance of housing as a central pillar supporting better health in aging needs to be developed and targeted at landlords and property managers. This will support and enhance positive attitude change (step 4) towards elderly renters and lead to behaviour change (step 5).

Academics at the University of Tasmania are currently undertaking projects to probe the tension and raise awareness of this important issue through the Maintaining Housing: Dementia Friendly Communities Project.

Endnotes

1. Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2012, *Population Projections, Australia 2012 (base) to 2101*, www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/mf/3222.0
2. *ibid.*
3. Sharman A, Ralston L and Parkinson S 2016, *Security in Retirement: The impact of housing and key critical life events*, Swinburne Institute for Social Research, Swinburne University of Technology October 2016.
4. Eltanani M K and Smith K E 2014, 'What kinds of policies to reduce health inequalities in the UK do researchers support?' *Journal of public health*, vol.37, no.1. doi: 10.1093/pubmed/fdu057
5. Gabriel M, Stirling C and Faulkner D 2015, *Housing priorities of people with dementia: security, continuity and support*, AHURI Final Report No. 242, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne, <http://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/242>.
6. *ibid.*

Figure 1: 5 Steps to decreasing tension between housing and age friendly communities policies



Separation of Housing and Support: Not Yet a Reality for People with a Disability

Joseph Connellan, Director, MC Two Pty Ltd

Occasionally a statement will jar us into considering how different policy and practice are in closely related service streams. In this case it was the *Parity/HousingWORKS* 'Call for Contributions' that stated that:

'institutional separation of 'housing' and 'support' in government is now, by and large, a thing of the past.'

This is typically not the case for people with a disability who have high support needs. It is, however, a very live issue driven by the roll out of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). Each State and Territory has its own story with similar elements but differing timeframes. This will be a description of the Victorian story.

Broadly, funding and policy for housing for people with a disability has seen ownership begin to move from a mixture government/non-government organisation (NGO) ownership to private/NGO ownership (typically housing rather than

disability NGOs). At the same time there has been a move away from combined housing and support management to move towards separated arrangements.

The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) has proposed a separation of housing and support¹ as part of commitment to choice and control. As a consequence, under the NDIS, supported accommodation is split into two parts (SDA and SIL), each contracted and funded separately.

- *Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA)* refers² to accommodation for participants who require specialist housing solutions to assist with the delivery of supports that cater for their significant functional impairment and/or very high support needs. SDA does not refer to the support services, but the homes in which these are delivered. SDA may include special designs for people with very high needs or may have a location or features that make it

feasible to provide complex or costly supports.

- *Supported Independent Living (SIL)* is defined as including personal care and other assistance to enable a participant to live in a secure, independent environment in the community. SIL incorporates assistance with and/or supervising tasks of daily life in a shared living environment or other domicile of the participant's choice. This support category does not include rent or board, or other living expenses such as food and social expenses, because the NDIS is not intended to fund these expenses.³

The NDIA's policy to separate the two as the NDIS rolls out has placed the issue firmly on the agenda for providers (both disability services and housing) and NDIS recipients. That policy is articulated in the Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) Decision Paper on Pricing and Payments:⁴

'The Agency expects SDA and SIL to be separable and ultimately separately provided. The Agency and States are currently examining the legislative and other requirements to enable the separation of SDA and SIL supports across all States and Territories. The objective is that SDA providers will need to demonstrate meaningful separation of the functions delivering the two types of support in the same residence.'

Subject to a review of jurisdictional legislative and other processes, the Agency expects that there will be a transition period in which:

1. In cases where the SDA provider (or a related party)

Diagram: Policy and Funding Trends in Ownership and Management of Housing for People with a Disability

Ownership	Government ownership	NGO ownership		Private ownership
Management		Disability NGO	Housing NGO	
Combined housing and support management				
Separate within one organisation				
Housing and support management in two organisations				

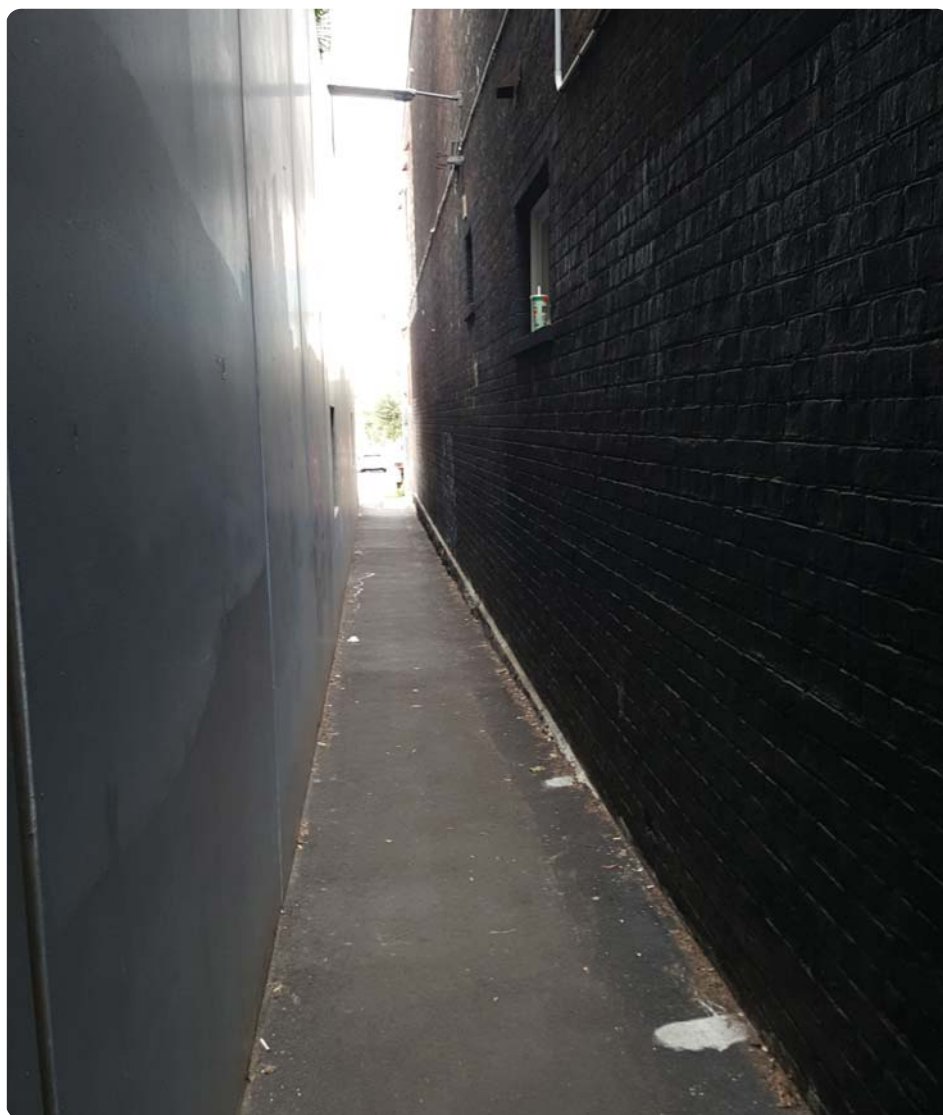
also provides SIL services to residents of the property they will need to provide participants with separated contracts for each service at no cost to the participant

2. Conflict of Interest (COI) provisions will be introduced to manage any real or perceived conflict of interest between SDA and SIL services. The active management of conflicts of interest are required to give clear effect to the participant's rights as a resident of the house separately from the support services they receive.'

As such in Victoria the roll out of the NDIS is signalling a move from 'Shared Supported Accommodation (SSA)' to 'Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) plus Supported Independent Living (SIL)'. It is also worth noting that SDA is NDIS funded housing for those with the highest support needs (the top 6 per cent typically). It is useful to consider the interrelationship between housing ownership, assignment and management.

SDA in Victoria is typically the 1,100 group houses that are predominantly owned by the Victorian Government. The largest cohort (maybe 50 per cent of all SDA) are those with housing and support provided in a combined fashion by the Victorian Government. There is also a significant number where disability NGOs combine housing and support either in state owned stock or their own. Where housing NGOs have a management or ownership role separation (usually but not universally) takes place.

It is noted that the separation of housing and support for people with a disability has long been part of the Victorian landscape for a relatively small number of people. Which of the diverse range of viable and sustainable models already in place in Victoria will be acceptable and in what form and what issues will be confronted in the transition process are as yet unclear. One of the consequences of this separation and the move to choice of provider is likely to be the end of the nomination rights system that has been in place for SSA in Victoria. It is unclear if and how the separation requirement will



Light at the end of the tunnel?

be applied in non-NDIA funded (i.e. non SDA) accommodation.

As we begin this transition we are predictably confronting a number of issues including:

- a lack of clarity about the detail and reach of the NDIA policy and funding as we await the finalisation of the administrative arrangements
- confusion about the NDIA policy focus on management not ownership
- a lack of understanding of current provisions and options
- a lack of clarity about the scale and nature of growth of the SDA and how the housing needs of those not eligible for SDA (94 per cent of NDIS recipients) are to be met
- the emerging and changing roles of housing agencies
- how the associated choice of provider policy is to be implemented in share houses
- what is the future of nomination rights? (if any).

In other words, everything you would normally anticipate in the roll out of new policy and funding regime.

So broadly, following a start over 20 years ago and slow progress, it looks like people with a disability in Victoria with high support needs will see a move to the separation of housing and support driven by the NDIS roll out. For them the combined housing and support will become indeed 'a thing of the past.'

Endnotes

1. NDIS Principles as outlined in the *National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Act 2013*; 2014 Section 4.
2. NDIA, *Operational Guideline — Planning and Assessment — Supports in the Plan — Specialist Disability Housing (SDA)* (2016)
3. In some cases, capital costs related to SIL could be funded by separate NDIA payment arrangements currently in development.
4. Page 30 NDIA released the *Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) Decision Paper on Pricing and Payments* (2016)

One Future for Housing Support: Elizabeth Street Common Ground

Camille Heagney Manager Elizabeth Street Common Ground and Cathy Beadnell Manager Communications (Housing) Launch Housing (with thanks to Common Ground partners in South Australia, Queensland and New South Wales for their contribution)

The move toward supportive housing — put forward as a permanent and coordinated solution — represents the antithesis of Australia's former homelessness crisis system that was not resourced nor intended to provide permanent housing.¹

People who have experienced long periods of homelessness and disadvantage need a safe, secure and affordable home as the first remedy combined with wrap around support services. The Common Ground model, founded in the USA,

demonstrates the success of this approach and has gained a strong following in Australia in recent years.

As a fledgling model that started in Adelaide in 2006 Common Ground has experienced significant growth. It now operates across six states and territories with new developments in progress, providing supported housing to close to 1,000 people nationally. Common Ground developments include a mix of supported and affordable accommodation options.

The Common Ground model works on the assumption that it is best for people who have been homeless for long periods of time to avoid a drawn out process of moving from crisis and transitional housing with the hope of eventually finding secure housing.

In the grander scheme of things people who experience chronic homelessness and rough sleeping account for only around 5 to 6 per cent of those impacted by homelessness. These are people who may need sustained support

Location	Total number of tenants	Average length of tenancy	Gender split	Does supportive housing work in your experience?
Common Ground Adelaide	222 tenants across 35 dwellings in Adelaide and Port Augusta. Commenced in 2006	2.2 years	56 per cent male 44 per cent female	Supportive housing relies on good communication between all staff and also tenant/support worker communication. Assertive case management is critical as is the willingness of the tenant to fully engage with support services.
Common Ground Brisbane	146 tenants at one site in Brisbane Operating for four years	2.8 years	50 per cent male 50 per cent female	Supportive housing works as it would be impossible for many of our complex needs tenants to sustain their tenancy without the supportive outlook and service resource to help address issues. The concierge service is invaluable in terms of preventing external issues impacting on the sustainability of some tenancies.
Common Ground Sydney	114 tenants at one site in Sydney Operating for five years	93 per cent of tenancies sustained since opening	60 per cent male 40 per cent female	The average length of homelessness for tenants at our Common Ground is 13 years. We now have 30 formerly long-term homeless tenants who have sustained their housing for over four years. These statistics speak for themselves.
Common Ground Melbourne	65 tenants at one site in Melbourne	2 years	78 per cent male 22 per cent female	Common Ground offers support to tenants to maintain responsibilities that come with having your own home. It also offers assistance to people to address issues that have led people into homelessness. A lot of people who experience long-term homelessness feel invisible. At Common Ground they can be part of a community again — they can belong and be seen.

alongside housing. The beauty of the common ground model is that it works effectively for this relatively small section of our communities who need it.

Elizabeth Street Common Ground (ESCG) in Melbourne opened its doors in 2010, providing vital housing and onsite support services to some of our most disadvantaged and vulnerable citizens.

It comprises 131 studio apartments. Of these, 65 are rented to people identified as experiencing chronic homelessness who have complex support needs including mental illness, intellectual and/or physical disability, substance addiction and/or acquired brain injury. The remaining 66 properties are deemed affordable and tenanted by people on low incomes.

The support services at ESCG are provided by staff from housing and homelessness agency Launch Housing and the tenancy management is provided by Yarra Community Housing (YCH). This is an important aspect of the model which allows support staff to concentrate on important issues of stability, health and wellbeing and not have a conflicting role of tenancy management.

Common Ground providers around Australia report high tenancy retention rates and all agree that the combination of accommodation (first) and wrap around support is the key to success.

The best evidence of the success of the Common Ground model comes from the experiences of the tenants. This is Jane's story.

Coming to ESCG has literally been a game changer — I wouldn't be alive without it. It has offered me safety, care, community access to health and support — most of all it has held me in a safe space that has not even been contingent on performance of box ticking 'success'.

It has been a soft place to fall and a supportive environment that has advocated for me, protected me, cared for me, helped me, and accompanied me regardless of the



Tenants and Workers at Elizabeth Street Common Ground

direction I was heading. I've never been truly alone since moving in.

ESCG has helped me to make or not make changes based on my personal goals being the directive. It's important to say I've never felt forced to make changes or be held accountable to someone else's criteria.

I'm now working as a consumer consultant with Launch Housing

and St Vincent's Hospital. I work part time. It's an amazing feeling to be contributing to society in a way that uses my skills, is meaningful and congruent with my values. I also believe I will contribute to change in these areas.

Endnote

1. Fopp R 2002, 'SAAP is one program with no gatekeepers: exit points in SAAP', *Parity*, vol. 15, no.9, pp.14–15.



Tenants and Workers at Elizabeth Street Common Ground

It is Time to Stop Filtering out the Community When Accessing Homelessness Services

Tony Clarke, Manager, Northern Community Hub, VincentCare Victoria

With the advent of the homelessness and housing Launch Sites as part of the homelessness sector reform process underway in Victoria, we are presented with a unique opportunity to enhance services for people experiencing, or those at risk of experiencing homelessness or housing stress. This paper proposes that we as a sector utilise the opportunity the Launch Sites bring as a chance to reflect on what has been developed to date. The creation of Launch Sites can also afford us the opportunity to consolidate our programs into a consistent and easily navigated series of coordinated services. Our future service system should encompass five components: Access Model, Eligibility Criteria, Flexible and Responsive Coordinated Service System, Targets, and Housing.

Utilising a co-design model, Launch Sites will be working with the sector to test and implement a revised service delivery model over the next two years, commencing with three pilot sites in Brimbank/Melton, Gippsland and Hume/Moreland. The Victorian Government and the homelessness sector are showing a keen interest in enhancing the existing service system through the consolidation and simplification of its programs into four distinct streams: access and pathways, flexible funding, client support and a consistent approach to client assessment.

A defining feature of the partnership between the Victorian Government and the homelessness and social housing sectors has been the ongoing commitment to innovation and the capacity to identify service system gaps. As a sector we have demonstrated our ability to develop initiatives and to work in partnership across service systems to meet the

needs of clients. Over time this partnership continues to improve as the sector matures and we enhance our service model and skills to meet client needs.

Examples of our collective innovations include a coordinated service system in Opening Doors, flexible brokerage funding for young adults to support their transition into private rental, early intervention programs that go upstream to intervene before a crisis ensues, and programs that are targeted exclusively for clients experiencing mental illness and substance abuse. This has led to a considerable range of successful programs that meet the needs of the many they seek to serve.

An unfortunate by-product of this staggered progression over many years is the establishment of a myriad of finite and dispersed programs with their own distinct and variable service targets, objectives, timeframes and resourcing parameters. There are programs that provide case management services that have no access to brokerage to financially support clients to achieve identified outcomes, while other services have limited funds with strict funding requirements while other programs are able to provide financial support upwards of \$5,000 per client.

As a sector we operate brokerage programs that are targeted towards particular age cohorts while others miss out. Similarly; there are support programs with nomination rights to Transitional Housing that haven't been reviewed for at least a decade to ascertain whether this approach is still meeting the needs of the cohort it seeks to assist. Many organisations manage multiple budgets that encompass a range of specifically funded programs.

These are indeed impressive programs that are targeted towards those who require such services, however one question remains: how can we consolidate or replicate these programs for all people in the community who may benefit from this type of support?

As we move into the Launch Site initiative over the next two years, there are a range of questions we need to address as a sector. The first question is how can we expect stretched Initial Assessment and Planning teams at our Access Points to retain a vast amount of information about a myriad of support services and initiatives in an effort to match clients with existing resources? VincentCare Victoria's Northern Community Hub alone has 16 uniquely funded programs which Initial Assessment and Planning Workers are expected to know and consider when matching clients to available resources. This does not even include the diverse services of our partners or indeed the wider service system.

The question that arises out of this is how many clients are excluded from services based on the specified and multi layered criteria that filters them out? How do we take the innovations in given regions and for certain cohorts, and apply these across all within the community?

With the current range of service eligibility and access guidelines, it can be completely arbitrary as to what resources a client has access to. This can be down to something as random as the day of the week they are assessed on or in what catchment they seek assistance, or it could be down to something as fundamental as their age or gender. While the sector is highly adaptive and will often

cobble together resources through a series of referral pathways, this is incredibly inefficient, unequitable and costly.

Since the introduction of the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program in 1994, the closest thing that we have come to undertaking service system reform was the introduction of the Opening Doors framework in 2008. With the advent of the Innovation Action Projects focusing on prevention and early intervention support models, we now have an opportunity to work towards creating a service system that has a combined focus on providing both preemptive and responsive services to effectively address the needs of clients and to minimize service system recidivism, while continuing to provide holistic and effective support to those clients already in the service system.

It's time for us to develop a new service model which is focused solely on the client and work in genuine partnership with them to address their own identified needs and aspirations. Our aim should be to build a support program that is tailored to the person and that is able to respond to their needs regardless of the amount of support required or complexity of need.

With that in mind, what could the ideal renovated service system look like?

The first area of consideration should be our *access model*. The Opening Doors Access Point system has dutifully served clients for the past six years. However, the funding of prevention and early intervention programs in certain regions has identified the need for Access Points to better assist this client group. Access Points need to be able to provide services not only to people in the highest need but also to respond to people who are entering the system for the first time, including access to all case management programs, brokerage and housing options.

Without a service system response that effectively supports clients to find appropriate accommodation or to sustain their existing housing, we know that they will remain within the

service system for extended periods of time. This has significant impacts for clients including the experience of trauma, poor physical and mental health outcomes and prolonged absences from education and employment. Furthermore, this has a detrimental impact on our service system requiring greater resources to address additional and ongoing support needs.

Eligibility criteria

Existing program eligibility criteria can be strict and prohibitive, and can lead to unequitable access to certain resources. The sector should review current program eligibility criteria, re-establish broad benchmarks and develop a single flexible brokerage pool for broad client groups. The eligibility for accessing services could be as straight forward as:

- people experiencing homelessness for the first time
- people who have been in the service system and are returning

- people seeking to engage with the available support services.

To enable access to all necessary services required by the client, and to ensure service integration, the development of formal regional partnerships between all homelessness organisations as well as education and employment, mental health, health, legal and alcohol and other drug (AOD) providers should be established. These networks will assist in ensuring that clients experiencing homelessness are able to receive access to specialist services based on their case plan.

A flexible and responsive coordinated service system

With most Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) having their original service parameters devised in the 1990s with the introduction of the SAAP Act (1994), it is not surprising that the client need in catchments may have shifted over the years.



EEEvolution by Bill Tsialtis, provided by Mandy Leveratt, St Kilda Community Housing from their most recent photography exhibition

For instance, in areas where we may have seen high concentrations of young adult case management services, this may no longer reflect the current client need. How do we, as a service system, adapt and respond to the changing needs of our client groups? Are there ways in which we can work in partnership and in a coordinated way to identify and respond to emerging client groups and trends? This could include the establishment of networks that convene regularly based on specialisation and expertise in working with specific client groups.

Target

Our support services continue to operate within and adhere to funding and service agreements that specify support episode timeframes that were often devised decades ago using out of date algorithms. Modern service delivery is person centred and understands the value in achieving self-directed outcomes at the pace the client requires.

An example of an effective and flexible funding arrangement is that of the contract between the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and VincentCare's HomeConnect program.

HomeConnect is one of seven Innovation Action Projects that are funded to address homelessness from an early intervention and prevention approach. The funding and service agreement specifies an annual program target but has no specifications on the duration of support episodes.

The program is able to establish the duration of its own support episodes and does this through a stratified support model. Clients are streamed at the point of intake based on their housing and support needs, as well as personal vulnerabilities, and are allocated to a stream. Support episode length is determined based on the client's stream and can range from four weeks to one year.

Housing

The introduction of the Victorian Housing Register is a significant innovation that enables an oversight of those who require access to long-term community and public housing. The register introduces consistency and fairness to the allocation of social housing. However, there are further presenting opportunities on the housing front for people who are experiencing homelessness. This can include the provision of full funding to registered housing organisations

to purchase properties as opposed to partial funding. Partial funding has required tenants to have a higher income to increase rental revenue to allow housing organisations to service the loan. As a result, the client group that benefits from this resource is not necessarily the group most in need.

Further, if we are to maintain Transitional Housing into the future, a practical reform is needed to prioritise access to long-term social housing for Transitional Housing tenants. Clients with low support needs who require support prior to entering private rental could also be assisted with a short-term lease in a transitional property. Finally, a diverse range of sustainable housing options should be funded and made available to clients including Transitional Housing, public and community housing and brokerage to access private rental.

In summary, Launch Sites are an opportune time to move beyond the existing service system that is highly targeted and restrictively funded. Our service system should be able to identify and respond to the changing needs of our clients and community through flexible and responsive support models.

Social Housing Sector Update

Share your news with your peers!

Social Housing Update is a new *HousingWORKS* column, where social housing providers and businesses involved in the sector can share their company short (up to 250 words) news and announcements.

How to publish your company announcement in *HousingWorks*?

Free submissions. Company news that contain newsworthy items for the social housing sector will be published for free. We don't guarantee publication, however will do our best to include newsworthy items. Free company announcements can include: innovative projects, big social initiatives, large scale stock transfers, new providers launched, new tenders awarded. It is always advisable to include a broader context to ensure the item really is newsworthy.

Advertorial submissions. If you would like to submit an announcement about upcoming events, staff appointments, office relocations, new services for social housing providers, please consider a low-cost 'advertorial' space. The cost of the advertorial submission is \$300. Advertorial space includes your company logo and contact details. Advertorial submissions are FREE for AHI Corporate Supporters and Members.

How to submit?

Please, send your submission to admin@housinginstitute.org for consideration of the AHI editorial team. Submissions should not exceed 250 words and should be submitted within general publication deadlines. We reserve the right to edit, revise and condense free contributions and to determine the placement and titling of the announcement as per the general *HousingWORKS* Contributor Guide.

Housing First Programs Can End Street Homelessness

Leonie Kenny, Service Coordination Project Manager, Council to Homeless Persons

Evidence continues to pile up from the United States, Canada, Europe, the United Kingdom and Australia that Housing First Programs can end homelessness for people who have been chronically homeless. These programs are not new to Australia. However, they have not been widely funded and where they do exist limited outreach capacity and a lack of dedicated housing stock has constrained their capacity to reduce street homelessness in an environment of limited social housing and decreasing housing affordability.

Housing first is not housing only but is premised on housing as a human right and on housing providing a base for having other needs met. Housing First Programs are a form of permanent supportive housing for people who have experienced long-term or chronic homelessness. Housing First Programs include people with mental illness, substance use, disability and often histories of trauma and typically end homelessness for at least 80 per cent of the people they have worked with.¹ Rapid rehousing also employs housing first principles but is designed to assist people who are experiencing homelessness who have maintained housing and whose primary need is housing with some temporary support.

The Housing First approach was developed in the late '80s through the New York Pathways to Housing Program. This program provides permanent scattered site housing and multidisciplinary wrap around treatment and support to people with severe mental illnesses and chronic experiences of homelessness. It employs the assertive community treatment team model. Housing First Programs can also be delivered through intensive case management

where health and other community services are accessed through existing services in the community.

The key elements of Housing First Programs are:

- providing rapid access to permanent housing based on a rights based approach rather than 'housing readiness'
- separation of housing and treatment (with no requirement to accept mental health or drug or alcohol treatment although there may be requirements to meet regularly with support staff around housing sustainment)
- active engagement
- person centred planning
- flexible support for as long as required
- choice and control for service users
- recovery orientation
- harm reduction.²

Some of the key principles of Housing First Programs such as harm reduction, recovery and the separation of tenancy and support have been common in the Australian housing and homelessness service system for decades.³

However, Housing First Programs have provided a common framework internationally for describing, evaluating and building an evidence base for providing rapid access to permanent housing with flexible long-term support as the most effective way of ending homelessness for people who have experienced chronic homelessness.

There is debate around adherence to the Housing First Program model with publications such as the Canadian Housing First Tool Kit providing both guidance for developing programs and checklists to assess program

fidelity.⁴ However, it has also argued that variations in the implementation of Housing First Programs often necessarily reflect different welfare and housing environments.⁵

The original Housing First Programs mandated dispersed housing as a normalised living environment. However, single site housing has also been used in some programs, including in Australia. A review of evaluations of five European Housing First Programs provides a balanced discussion of the merits of single site versus dispersed accommodation, noting a consumer preference for dispersed accommodation while identifying a need for single site or congregate options for a small subgroup where dispersed housing has failed.⁶

Street to Home programs were funded across most Australian capital cities by the Australian Government with the aim of reducing rates of rough sleeping.

The Street to Home Programs combine a Housing First Program approach with assertive outreach and the Vulnerability Index screening tool to target the most vulnerable people sleeping rough.

In Melbourne, Street to Home (MS2H) commenced in 2010 and is delivered through a partnership between Launch Housing, Salvation Army Adult Services and the Royal District Nursing Homeless Persons Program (RDNS HPP). The service provides intensive case management and is delivered via assertive outreach that incorporates health expertise through the inclusion of community outreach nursing. The final evaluation of the MS2H Program demonstrated that 70 per cent of participants were housed after two years.⁷

Evaluations of Street to Home programs across Australia identified a lack of dedicated housing stock as a key government policy oversight for the programs. In 2012 Wylie and Johnson queried, *whether Street to Home services have sufficient housing and support capacity to contribute to the overall reduction in the prevalence of rough sleeping in each jurisdiction.*⁸

Given the significant increase in the number of people sleeping rough in Melbourne in recent years the answer to this question seems to be in the negative. Street to Home is an evidence based and widely respected program for people sleeping rough who have experienced chronic homelessness. We know that Housing

First Programs do work for most people who have experienced chronic homelessness, not just people sleeping rough in central Melbourne. The future of support is in ensuring that those people who will benefit from these Programs have access to them and that the people who house and support this group of people are able to provide their clients with the housing and support that will make a lasting difference.

Endnotes

1. Bretherton J and Pleace N 2015, *Housing First in England an evaluation of nine services*, Centre for Housing Policy University of York, York, United Kingdom, p.12.
2. Pleace N 2016, *Housing First Guide Europe*, FEANTSA, Brussels, p.4.
3. Johnson G Parkinson S and Parsell C 2012, *The role of assertive outreach in ending 'rough sleeping'*, AHURI Final Report No.179, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, RMIT Research Centre, Melbourne, p.13.
4. Polvere L MacLeod T Macnaughton E Caplan R Piat M Nelson G Gaetz S and Goering P 2014, *Canadian Housing First toolkit: The At Home/Chez Soi experience*, Mental Health Commission of Canada and the Homeless Hub, Calgary and Toronto.
5. Johnson G Parkinson S and Parsell C 2012, as above, p.14.
6. Busch-Geertsema V 2013, *Housing First Europe Final Report*, European Commission, Brussels.
7. Johnson G and Chamberlain C 2015, *Evaluation of the Melbourne Street to Home program: Final Report*, HomeGround Services, Melbourne, p.27.
8. Wylie N and Johnson G 2012, *Mapping Services for Rough Sleepers in Hobart, Canberra and Melbourne*, RMIT University, Melbourne, p.6.



Consumer Voices

Consumer Voices is a regular feature in *Parity*. Articles are written by and with consumers to ensure they have a say about the issues that directly affect them.

Getting Housed and Staying Housed

The Peer Education and Support Program (PESP) is the consumer participation program at the Council to Homeless Persons (CHP) in Victoria. PESP is a diverse group of people who have experienced homelessness and are trained and supported to undertake a range of activities to improve the response to homelessness, educate and raise awareness about homelessness and promote consumer input into homelessness policy and service design and delivery.

Introduction

Trevor, Christine and Jason have all experienced homelessness. For this

article they were asked to draw on their experience and expertise to provide advice to services on how they can deliver effective support to people who have experienced homelessness, help stabilise the tenancy and prevent recurring homelessness. The opinions and views expressed in the article are those of Trevor, Christine and Jason.

Getting Housed

Having more than one caseworker is helpful, for example a health worker and a housing worker. Jason needed more than one caseworker to support achieving his goals: 'It's a tough job, you need more than one

person on it'. Case conferences, service co-ordination and good communication are all critical in order to achieve positive outcomes: 'services have to want to work together with other services'.

It is important caseworkers are assigned to people as soon as they access a service. The caseworker should have a counselling qualification because all people accessing homelessness services are going through tough experiences and will be asked to talk about those experiences in their assessment. Given the trauma people have experienced they believe more



NOMINATIONS FOR THE 2017 PROFESSIONAL EXCELLENCE IN HOUSING AWARDS ARE NOW OPEN IN ALL AUSTRALIAN STATES AND NEW ZEALAND

The 2017 AHI Awards Program features eight categories:

Individual Awards



INSPIRATIONAL TEAM MEMBER



OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT

Tenant Award



TENANT LED INITIATIVE

2017 Awards Silver Sponsor:



Team Awards



LEADING INNOVATION



LEADING HOUSING DEVELOPMENT PROJECT



LEADING ASSET MANAGEMENT



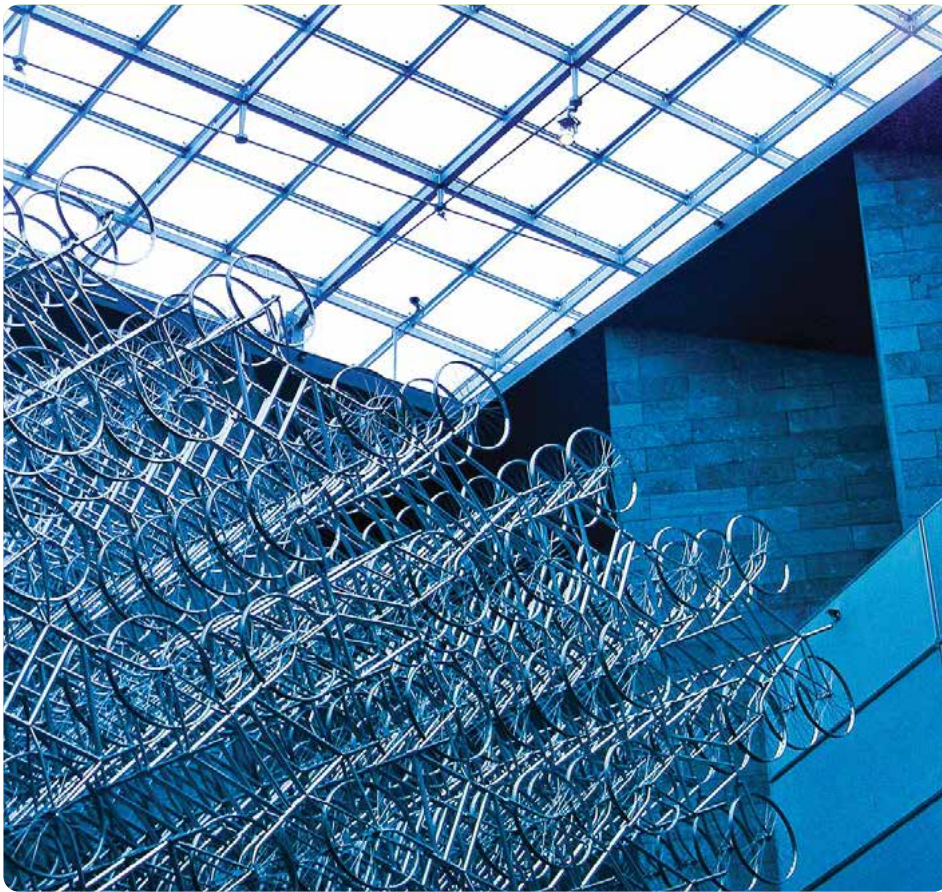
LEADING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PRACTICE



EXCELLENCE IN SOCIAL HOUSING

A category winner will be selected in each Australian jurisdiction and in New Zealand. Awards receptions will be held in all Australian jurisdictions and New Zealand in April- October 2017. Finalists from each jurisdiction will automatically be entered in the Australasian Awards. The Australasian Award Winners will then be announced at the Awards Gala Dinner during the National Housing Conference 2017 in Sydney on the 29th of November.

For more information and to nominate online, visit housinginstitute.org/Awards.



Geomaze by Rochelle Kindler, provided by Mandy Leveratt, St Kilda Community Housing from their most recent photography exhibition

counsellors should be employed in homelessness services.

Services should remember that the person accessing your service is experiencing trauma and should have a trauma informed approach to service delivery. If the consumer is not eligible for social housing, other options should be explored. Services need to be honest about the limitations but also creative about finding solutions. A positive and empathetic approach is helpful.

It is important to have streamlined services; develop hubs so that a range of services that support and house people experiencing homelessness are in one physical location. This strips back the demand on people who are accessing a number of services to attend numerous appointments at different locations throughout the week. The service system should try to meet the needs of the person, rather than the person fitting the requirements of the system.

There are a number of programs that assist people into private rental however all services should have such responses, as social housing is not an

option for some people and for those who are eligible, the waiting list is too long.

The Housing Establishment Fund could be used to provide bonds, rent in advance and pay landlords' insurance. These private rental programs could dedicate a worker to building relationships with real estate agents and encouraging leasing to people who are consumers of those programs. They could also support consumers to develop referrals, assure landlords that they will support the tenancy and guarantee the condition of the property on return. All of these things would act as incentives for landlords to lease to people experiencing homelessness.

Staying Housed

The importance of making a house a home cannot be underestimated. If people do not feel like they are living in their home, they will not settle and could become homeless again. When experiencing homelessness, you program into survival mode. In order to switch your state of mind to relax and keep your housing, it must feel like a home, then you are more likely to be entrenched in a housing lifestyle which gives you dignity.

It is important that peoples' furniture needs are considered. If the house is furnished, it makes it your place. Otherwise, it's just rough sleeping with four walls and a roof. Without appropriate furniture you still can't invite people over to socialise. It is important to build connections and social networks to re-establish life in a home. It is difficult to do this if you are unable to invite people into your home.

The provision of support should be more flexible, so that it genuinely meets the needs of the person until they decide they no longer require it. Carefully assess people to gauge the appropriate length and level of support. Often people struggle when they are first housed; traumas which were pushed to the back of the mind while homeless can surface when life begins to stabilise. It is important that support continues after being housed; it should lessen as the person stabilises and feels less need for support and increase again when people require more intensive support. It is also important to be able to re-access the system when necessary.

It is really important to respect and respond to peoples' self-assessment, in order to keep people housed. People know when they are vulnerable and need assistance to prevent a crisis. Never assess someone's vulnerability by the way they present.

Housing Options

The reason housing and homelessness support workers have such a tough job getting people into housing is because of the shortage of affordable, inclusive social housing. A steady increase of social housing is needed and PESP would like to see advocacy for this in the homelessness service system.

Workers are on the front line; they are particularly affected by this lack of housing. Advocating to government for increased affordable housing should be part of their role. PESP suggest that each worker could record statistics each week, which could be reported by managers to government. The reports could state that over a given period x number of people accessing their service are in need of safe, secure affordable housing.

Insight into Youth Homelessness: Consumer Advocate Perspectives

Karuna Santosa, Undergraduate in Psychology and Sessional Academic — Assistant Researcher at Swinburne University, and
Monica Thielking, Director, Postgraduate Psychology Programs, Swinburne University

We would like to acknowledge and thank the young leaders listed below who provided their insight and feedback for this article prior to publication.

On the 4th of May 2016, the Council to Homeless Persons (CHP) held a forum to launch the May edition of *Parity*, titled 'The Future of Youth Homelessness Support'. A panel of five people with direct experience of being a young person without a home, discussed their experiences and insight into the youth homelessness sector. One of the panel moderators was Morgan Cataldo, Melbourne City Mission's Policy and Strategic Projects Officer. The other moderator was Ian Gough, the manager of CHP's Consumer Programs, who has worked in the social welfare sector for eighteen years and worked with CHP since 2012. The four panel members who have contributed to this article are Aleisha, Hayley, Joal and Karuna.

Common trends and solution focused strategies arose during the one hour presentation. The panel discussed the role of family breakdown, autonomy, legal and social support, quality of caseworkers and the importance of accuracy in file notes specifying system failures and traumatic events limiting access to housing.

What are the key ingredients for ending youth homelessness?

Aleisha is a youth leader with Melbourne City Mission and a member of Frontyard's Youth Services Action Group. She has completed studies in counselling and community services, with volunteer experience in the Middle East and in Melbourne. Aleisha spoke about the necessity of effective relationships between case workers and young people. She

detailed the relationship should be established on mutual trust and focused on developing a sense of belief in the consumer's abilities.

Hayley is also a young leader with Melbourne City Mission's Youth Action Group. She is a single mum, works part-time and is currently completing her Diploma in Health Science. Hayley also stressed the need for an effective relationship between young people and housing workers, to break the homelessness cycle. She discussed the importance of the worker being able to see a 'client' as a person first, rather than automatically categorising the young person. Hayley emphasised the importance of workers being reliable and focused on outcomes, applying consistent engagement strategies across time, along with flexible approaches to casework. Additionally, to help young people exit homelessness Hayley stressed the importance of youth support workers prioritising consumer skill development.

Joal a Graduate from CHP's Peer Education Program and a make-up artist, reflected how she had experienced homelessness as a child, as a young person and as a mother. She also asserted the importance of workers facilitating the development of life skills of young people. Joal articulated the challenges she faced due to organisational and structural issues within the sector. She detailed how this resulted in the need for housing workers to go above and beyond their job description to break the cycle of homelessness. Like the other panel members, Joal agreed that workers need to focus on providing practical support and explain how housing in the homeless sector operates. Joal also spoke about the importance of support

workers providing effective referrals for additional services and social supports for young people.

Karuna is an undergraduate student in Psychology. She works as a sessional academic assistant researcher at Swinburne University and works at two centres on campus, the Learning and Academic Skills Centre and the Swin-Peer Assistance Centre. Karuna has worked in the community sector intermittently since 2004 and is a previous winner of several awards including the Swinburne University Student Leader of the Year Award, Vice-Chancellor Outstanding Achievement Award and the Swinburne Research Award. Karuna discussed how the findings and research from the Victorian Family Violence Royal Commission and the National Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Abuse can both be applied to demonstrate the correlation between homelessness and abuse. Karuna's own experience as a homeless person validated this. She stressed the importance of legal representation, advocacy and formalised documented victim processes to address key factors of the cause of homelessness for a significant amount of people. Karuna discussed the need for furthering client centred approaches under the guidance of human rights and consumer legislation. Such an approach should be directed by clients and supported by both youth advocates and legal representation.

The Need for a More Accountable and Integrated Youth Homeless Support System

During the second half of the presentations, the panel discussed common gaps in service delivery within the sector. The panel raised issues related to the long waiting

lists that are barriers to young people finding temporary and long term housing, as well as a lack of service integration in the sector. One consumer had attended an access point eighteen times before receiving the help they needed. The panel made the connection between unsafe housing options, prolonged recovery and delayed access to permanent housing.

Some panel members provided examples of being passed from one case worker to the next without effective exchange of information between workers. The panel spoke of being exposed to negative narratives about other clients along with ineffective responses to institutional failures and abuse. They discussed how many young people are placed in positions where they need to re-tell their story over and over again in disempowering circumstances. Issues

were raised about the lack of file notes relating to their service needs, minimising the experiences of young people and resulting in a lack of documentation around effective strategies for intervention at the client and system level.

The panel also provided insight into the long-term traumatic impacts of failed service engagement and delivery. They discussed how this exacerbated the impacts of homelessness on their education opportunities, socialisation, identity, family relations and their ability to assert their consumer and human rights. Three of the four panel members had observed a lack of knowledge within many organisations about the diversity of options to assist consumers with housing issues.

The one hour discussion raised issues and provided solutions that

reinforced the need to empower consumers to direct their casework, while ensuring they are well-informed by accountable housing and support specialists. The panel spoke of the importance of young people accessing lawyers when needed to ensure accountability within the system. They spoke of the benefits accessed when their rights and legal matters were dealt with professionally to prevent the very difficult situation of being left to fend for themselves in the face of what can be dysfunctional or inefficient institutional systems. The panel identified additional effective strategies used by support services. These included solution and strength based approaches that focused on supporting professional advocacy as well as self-advocacy, with the aim of eradicating discrimination and barriers that limit young people's ability to meet their full potential.



Panel Moderator Morgan Cataldo, Melbourne City Mission's Policy and Strategic Projects Officer

It Takes Partnerships to Support Long-term Housing Solutions

Jeanette Large, CEO, Women's Property Initiatives.

Women's Property Initiatives (WPI) provides affordable, long-term homes for over 180 women and children around Melbourne. Like most community housing providers, we have a tenancy management model with additional support being provided by other community services. We work in partnership with many support agencies such as mental health, disability and family services to help our tenants live with dignity and contribute to their communities. These partnerships enable the women we house to achieve the long-term tenancies necessary to build a secure future.

We are a small organisation and the reality is that we are able to offer homes to far fewer women than we would like. Nevertheless, our approach is definitely housing first. This is based on the belief that the primary need of women who face homelessness is for stable housing. Housing is a basic human right and should not be denied regardless of any health or social issues a person faces. Solutions to these issues cannot be a condition for access to housing because stable housing is the foundation on which solutions are built. Having somewhere to live empowers people to acquire life skills, contribute to their communities and reduces reliance on government and welfare services. Issues that impact the household can and should be addressed once the need for housing is met.

That is not to say that we do not look carefully at a woman's situation before offering her a home. Our aim is to achieve long-term tenancies for women and it would not be constructive to put women in homes who due to the issues they face, or a lack of support, have no realistic chance of achieving this. In many

instances we work hard, alongside our referral services to make sure adequate support is in place in the lead up to our tenants establishing residency.

We highly value the contribution of housing support services. The strength of our partnerships with support providers and our ability to access them is critical to enabling our women to live successful lives. It is our obligation to look at housing support from the perspective of women and we have found great partners with the skills and expertise to capably support them.

The factors that make women more vulnerable to homelessness than men, also influence the support services they require. Women earn less, face discrimination with regard to access to rental properties and job opportunities, are more likely to experience family violence and often face limits on their ability to work because they are caring for children. Many of our tenants are escaping violent situations, others are from culturally diverse backgrounds or exiting correctional facilities.

Our tenancy and property managers look carefully at the suitability of the local community for the needs of the prospective tenant and if the necessary support services are available close by. As a housing service, we are sensitive to the individual needs of women and look at the availability of women specific services if necessary.

When we are able to offer a woman a home we link them to support services that address the problems at hand. However, just as importantly this enables them to establish social connections and

engage with their community. The availability of support services locally is crucial to our women and their families establishing deeper connections with the community and being able to contribute meaningfully to them. And it is not just the most obvious support around health, trauma counselling and employment, education, and training. So many of our tenants speak about the difference made by being connected to a diverse school, a local sporting club or an organisation for which they can volunteer. Support services often provide vital pathways to accessing community resources, inclusion and engagement.

With funding for housing support stretched to the limit, Women's Property Initiatives also provides women with much needed support. We are very respectful of our tenants and we work with them to achieve tenure and this often requires overcoming difficulties. Our property and tenancy managers work with women who are experiencing financial stress to find solutions that enable them to stay in their homes. They will look for alternatives if a particular support service is not a good fit. They take a flexible approach that can provide breathing space when things go wrong. They maintain our properties to a very high standard that allows our tenants to feel safe, secure and in control.

In the future we want to creatively increase the range of organisations that we partner with to support the women living in WPI homes. There are many people out there who want to help and donations of time and goods could transform the support we provide and offer new pathways to independence.

The Future of Housing Support

Bianca Nash, Community Health Nurse, RDNS Homeless Persons Program, Melbourne Street to Home

The Melbourne Streets to Home (MS2H) program offers a new approach in addressing the cities growing homeless population. Piloted in 2010, with ongoing funding from the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), the program is currently funded until 2017. Run in partnership between Launch Housing, the Salvation Army Adult Services, the Salvation Army Crisis Services and Royal District Nursing Service Homeless Persons Program (RDNS HPP), MS2H is based primarily on the Housing First model, with a central aim of offering safe, sustainable, long-term housing to those experiencing chronic homelessness, as a secure base from which to then address their health and social needs.

In accordance with Housing First, it is assumed that fulfilling this principal need for housing is a key first step for those experiencing long-term homelessness to begin participating in their rehabilitation and reintegration.¹ Housing-focused support, first developed in the US in the 1990s, has challenged conventional approaches to chronic homelessness, in which consumers were required to address substance use and mental health issues before gaining access to housing.²

An example of success in MS2H Housing-First model is Stewart's story. Stewart (not his real name), a 50 year old man with complex health and social needs, secured private rental in early 2016 following a 30-year history of homelessness. Despite ongoing challenges, he has maintained rental payments and has incurred no breaches of his tenancy agreement. In the past, Stewart presented to the emergency department weekly. Since being housed, presentations have declined and he has made only three

presentations in the previous three months. The self-management of his chronic illnesses is a source of much pride for Stewart, something which likely would not have been achievable if it wasn't for securing housing and intensive support.

Stewart is not alone. Results of housing-focused support programs have been compelling; with evidence suggesting that it leads to enduring outcomes.^{3,4} Despite this promise, the central difficulty that all Housing First programs are confronted with is accessing suitable housing in a timely manner. Thus, even though this general approach has been adapted worldwide, Victoria's housing and welfare systems make it increasingly challenging to deliver positive outcomes to the city's most vulnerable. Clients are eligible to apply for public housing through DHHS via 'Homeless with Support' Segment 1, which prioritises those currently homeless and linked into ongoing support services (www.dhs.vic.gov.au). However, wait periods in the metropolitan area have increased, with some applicants waiting years before being granted a property. The private rental market has remained an option open to only a few within MS2H. Most clients are priced out of desirable properties and may have limited or no favourable references/rental history to support an application.

HomeGound Real Estate, an affiliate of Launch Housing, actively seeks rental properties suitable for those receiving Centrelink benefits and low income earners. Acquisition is slow and many property owners remain reluctant to consider clients for a tenancy. These barriers keep our clients' locked in repeated cycles of using crisis accommodation, couch surfing, and inpatient hospital

admissions as temporary forms of shelter. Rough-sleeping remains the norm, with incarceration a common occurrence. An evaluation of MS2H⁵ found it took on average nine months for stable housing to be secured, with 20 per cent of clients remaining homeless or incarcerated/hospitalised twelve months after receiving support.

The wait period then becomes a time to address the client's other health and social needs. During this time, clients are encouraged to meet with the RDNS HPP community health nurse to undergo a thorough assessment of their health history and concerns. Goals are identified, a care plan devised, and referrals to appropriate services are placed. The addition of an RDNS HPP nurse has been viewed as a distinct advantage to the MS2H team. More than 60 per cent of MS2H clients reported improvements in their health due to the combined effect of accessing housing and healthcare. Linking clients to primary health care services is a fundamental goal.

Many clients report on the positive impact on their management of chronic health conditions and pain levels as a result of the unconditional support and advocacy provided by the RDNS HPP nurse. Presentations to an emergency department appear to decline drastically, in line with similar findings abroad.^{6,7}

Despite the documented achievements of MS2H housing-focused support, clients continue to endure lengthy wait periods for suitable accommodation. They would benefit from improved access to public and private rental. Fundamental policy changes led by the government and community sector are needed for this to be

achieved. In the meantime, MS2H support staff will continue to be persistent, utilising creative alternatives, and advocate for clients to access safe, permanent affordable housing — a fundamental human right.

Endnotes

1. Stefanic A and Tsemberis S 2007, 'Housing first for long-term shelter dwellers with psychiatric disabilities in a suburban county: A four-year study of housing access and retention', *Journal of Primary Prevention*, vol. 28, no.3-4, pp.265-279.
2. Tsemberis S and Eisenberg R 2000, 'Pathways to Housing: Supported Housing for Street-Dwelling Homeless Individuals with Psychiatric Disabilities', *Psychiatric Services*, vol. 51 no.4, pp.487-493.
3. Keller C, Goering P, Hume C et al 2013, 'Initial Implementation of Housing First in Five Canadian Cities: How Do You Make the Shoe Fit, When One Size Does Not Fit All?', *American Journal of Psychiatric Rehabilitation*, vol. 16, pp.275-289.
4. Tsemberis S, Gulcar L and Nakae M 2004, 'Housing First, Consumer Choice, and Harm Reduction for Homeless Individuals with a Dual Diagnosis' *American Journal of Public Health*, vol. 94, no.4, pp.651-656.
5. Johnson G and Chamberlain C 2015, *Evaluation of the Melbourne Street to Home program: Final Report*, HomeGround Services, Melbourne.
6. Gulcur L, Stefanie D, Shinn M, Tsemberis S and Fischer S 2003, 'Housing, hospitalisation, and cost outcomes for homeless individuals with psychiatric disabilities participating in continuum of care and Housing First programmes' *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology*, vol.12, no.2, pp.171-186.
7. Larimer M, Malone D, Garner M et al 2009, 'Health care and public service use and costs before and after provision of housing for chronically homeless persons with severe alcohol problems' *Journal of the American Medical Association*, vol.301, no.13, pp.1349-1357.



Image provided by Bianca Nash



Aboriginal Home Ownership Scheme

The Aboriginal Home Ownership Scheme is designed to educate, support and provide an opportunity for eligible Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to buy an affordable home. Under this scheme, two home ownership options are available, subject to loan approval.

Shared Ownership

Under the **shared-ownership** arrangement, the Housing Authority may purchase and own up to 40%* of a property, to assist you into home ownership.

Over time, you can increase your share in the property when you can afford it, subject to approval.

The income and property value limits applicable to shared-ownership are specified below.

Applicant Type	Income Limit	Maximum Property Value
Singles	\$60,000	\$412,000
Couples	\$70,000	\$412,000
Families	\$80,000	\$412,000

*Subject to the Housing Authority owning a maximum of 40% or \$150,000 (whichever is the lower).

All applications are subject to the applicable Keystart credit approval criteria.

ABN: 27 009 427 034 Australian Credit Licence: 381437

Full Ownership

- ▶ Deposit of \$2000 or 2% of the purchase price (whichever is greater)
- ▶ No savings history required
- ▶ No lenders mortgage insurance
- ▶ No ongoing monthly account keeping fees
- ▶ Maximum property value for metropolitan areas – \$480,000
- ▶ Maximum property value for regional areas – \$500,000
- ▶ Different income limits apply to metropolitan and regional areas – please refer to Keystart's website for the current limits

Contact 1300 578 278 or visit www.keystart.com.au



Government of Western Australia
Housing Authority



Look who's new at the AHI:

Corporate Member

- > **Name of Organisation:** CHC Affordable Housing
- > **Location:** Canberra, ACT
- > **Chief Executive Officer:** Kim Sinclair
- > **Joined AHI:** August 2015

Vision of of organisation:

'Since 1998, our vision has been to make affordable housing available to relieve poverty and housing stress for low to moderate income households. In 2007, we became a developer as well, allowing us to better deliver on increasing the supply of affordable housing. The transition was facilitated by a low interest loan facility from the ACT Government. Since then, we've delivered over \$100 million worth of projects. A portion of our developments are sold and a percentage is retained as affordable housing rental. This model helps our business be self-sustaining financially.'

Summary of services provided:

'We are a property owner and manager, delivering a diverse range of housing projects and several housing programs. This includes income-based rent models, which is based at the affordable rent rate of 74.9 per cent of regular market rate. Within that, we have specialist housing programs such as apprentice housing and housing for refugees. CHC is also creating and improving the supply of appropriate affordable housing through adaptable housing choice in development projects for sale or rent to seniors and older Canberrans looking to downsize, or people with disability.'

Defining features of organisation:

'Our independence is a key distinguishing feature that sets us apart from similar community and affordable housing providers. This independence allows CHC agility to respond to changing needs of the market and community conditions, and to be innovative in our delivery of products and services.'

'As we build and manage the houses we rent out, financial reserves are particularly important for a sustainable business model where long-term asset management and maintenance features strongly. For example, we developed a group home design for young people first leaving home or for singles and couples. Tenants have their own ensuite and a little lounge as their own quiet area and the kitchen, laundry and lounge areas are shared. This design offered an innovative solution improvised from one-bedroom apartments, which are still out of reach for many people in this target group.'



Achievements of organisation this year:

'A major achievement is that we have finalised plans following four years of negotiations with the government and the community on an in-fill site. It is the first major in-fill site we have had access to and we are hoping we will have more. It is 32,000 square metres and is intended for mixed use with apartments, townhouses and independent living units, as well as a childcare centre and retail commercial space.'

'CHC wants to offer not just affordable housing but a very diverse housing portfolio based on different demographics where a need has been identified. Ultimately, we want to offer a home for every age and every stage of life.'

Current programs:

'The mixed-use development site is a \$100 million project that we will be delivering over three to four years. In addition to that, we've taken advantage of the ACT Government's Land Rent Scheme and we've been able to increase our construction program through that. This year, we're bringing our project sales in-house and we'll be looking at how we can help our tenants transition into home ownership through this scheme.'

'We're really aware that we have a cohort of tenants who will always be our tenants but probably around 20



to 25 per cent of that portfolio is transitional and have aspirations beyond continuing to rent. We've already had about 10 examples over the last few years of people who have capitalised and built on the savings they made renting a CHC affordable home for a few years to move into home ownership themselves.'

Comment on the current state of housing:

'Housing needs to be on everyone's agenda. It needs to be up there with health and education. If someone does not have a stable housing situation, it's very difficult to be engaged with employment and education. This has been very evident from our first-hand experience with our tenants.'

'The current climate, although not new, is that we're not delivering sufficient affordable housing supply to meet demand. This is a prevailing and perpetuating market condition, and does not take into account addressing the needs of, and looking after, those that are more vulnerable and in lower income quintiles that community housing addresses. In general, federal schemes are still tailored around conventional methods of how programs are delivered. Having observed the market trends for eight years now, my concern is that this approach stifles the varied innovations and growth that could be possible, and delivering reduced timeframes.'

Why did you become a Corporate Member of the AHI?

'I've attended a few conferences and seminars that are run by AHI and found them to be very relevant and useful. Being a Corporate Member allows our staff to benefit from this training and development. AHI is a recognised body in the community and social housing sector and membership allows access to sharing in the industry-specific knowledge culture, and is strategic in order to progress in the wider aspect of responding to issues and initiating solutions on a collective basis.'

'Being in Canberra means we are only a small jurisdiction

in terms of community housing providers but we maintain a vigilant nation-wide watch to see what's happening so we can be early adopters of new policies, as well as observe and learn from best practices others have implemented.'www.chcaffordablehousing.com.au

■ www.chcaffordablehousing.com.au



Look who's new at the AHI:

Certified Housing Professional



- > **Name:** Jon Eastgate
- > **Occupation:** Partner, 99Consulting
- > **Certification Level:** Level 3
- > **Years in Housing:** 30 years

Why did you seek accreditation?

'That's a good question. Often, as a consultant, you're bidding for jobs and one of the things people ask you is about the formal accreditations you have. Because I come from a slightly undefined professional background, I'm never able to fill anything in on it! This is a way for me to say, here's an independent body that's recognised my knowledge and experience.'

What does a day in your life look like?

Do you have a routine?

'My routine changes all the time, depending on what sort of work I'm doing. Sometimes I'll be meeting with clients. Some days I'll spend facilitating a planning workshop or something along those lines. I do a lot of research work for people so some days are just sitting in front of my computer finding research reports, summarising them, writing stuff up. It's a pretty varied life.'

How do you think you can personally contribute to the housing industry as a CHP?

'I've been in housing for 30 years and a lot of that has been spent doing policy work, research work and supporting organisations. I think the contribution I make is that I have a depth of knowledge about policy issues, about research, about the evidence around housing and the skill to apply that in different situations. So I really am able to contribute to organisations, or to the system as a whole, in improving policy and improving approaches to doing the work that we do.'

What is your secret housing 'weapon'?

'I don't think it's a secret, but the [work] history I have gives me two things: a whole lot of relationships across the country — people that I can call, or talk to — and I've got a long memory of what's happened over the years. I know where things have come from, what the intention was behind them originally and then how they've developed, which I can kind of dip into and go 'Okay, well, that's why that happened so what do we want to do with it now?'

'I've always been just slightly outside the mainstream. I worked in little community housing organisations when



they started to move into the mainstream. I spent 12 years doing housing work in Brisbane City Council and then, for the last 10 years, I've been a consultant. I haven't been caught in those kinds of mainstream systems or departments or big housing organisations so I have a different perspective. I'm able to question the orthodox view of how things are done.'

How do you think the housing industry compares to other industries in terms of recognising its professionals and professional development?

'I think we're getting better but it's inconsistent. It's only in the last couple of years that there's been any kind of certification as a housing professional.'

'Housing is so diverse — people come at it from a variety of different backgrounds and there isn't any one thing that says, 'This is what a housing person does'. You'll have people with a real estate background and they'll be really good at collecting the rent, and making sure the maintenance gets done and all that kind of stuff but they might struggle with supporting the kind of high-need tenants that a lot of social housing organisations house. Or you have people with my background who are really good at supporting people but they kind of stuff up on the rent collection. It's a rare combination to have both and that's what real social housing professionals have to have. We're just starting now to really consolidate that and this accreditation scheme is one way that the game will be improved.'

What do you hope this accreditation will mean to you and others in the future?

'One of the reasons that I did it — apart from just my own personal thing — is this is something we need to encourage in the housing sector, to recognise there's a set of skills people need to work in this sector, which



might be related to people in other sectors but is not automatically the same. For the industry, it's really good to have that scheme where those particular qualifications are recognised.'

'The other thing is, in housing and homelessness, we're still quite a way behind some other human services sectors in the use of evidence-based policy and evidence-based interventions. I think an accreditation scheme is just one way of starting to move us in that direction of being more evidence-based.'

What five things would you take to a desert island and why?

'Five things? I would have to take a guitar and, especially if I was on a desert island, I could play it without people complaining because I'm not that good. I'm a legend in my own lounge room (laughs). I'd have to take some books — nothing in particular but I'd need some good reading material. If I couldn't take the actual people with

me, I'd need some photos of my kids and my grandchild because I'd miss them. And that would probably be enough. And a hat! I'm bald and I'd end up with sunstroke.'

That's four. You don't want to go for a fifth?

'That'll be fine! I'm a simple guy. I have simple needs. (laughs)

- For more information about becoming a Certified Housing Professional, visit www.housinginstitute.org/CHP



Housing doesn't stand still

Certified Housing Professional (CHP) is the accreditation awarded to housing professionals who have demonstrated a commitment to their profession and continuing professional development.

CHP provides the mechanism for identifying highly skilled and ethical professionals. CHP will become the industry benchmark for competency and professionalism in social housing. Certification provides a clear and tangible signal to the community, government, industry and employers that Certified Housing Professionals are experienced, knowledgeable and committed to building the profession through their AHI membership.

To read more about CHP levels, conditions and benefits – visit www.housinginstitute.org/CHP

Look who's new at the AHI:

AHI member

- > **Name:** Mary Marshall
- > **Title:** CEO, Murchison Regional Aboriginal Corporation (MRAC)
- > **Joined AHI:** 2016
- > **Residence:** Geraldton, WA
- > **Years in housing:** 25

Current project or activity:

'Murchison Regional Aboriginal Corporation (MRAC) is the largest dedicated Aboriginal housing organisation in Western Australia. My current focus is on consolidating and building organisational capacity and capability to grow our housing portfolio. I commenced with MRAC post special administration and with a new board, great staff and community commitment and support, we have a solid base to move forward.'

What made you choose a housing career?

'I didn't. I took a three-week temp job in what was then the Victorian Ministry of Housing and stayed 21 years. I'm originally from Victoria, and worked in Tennant Creek, NT, for a few years. Then I moved to Western Australia in 2013 and I joined MRAC in October last year.'

'I really love housing. I've had a lot of opportunities in the government and not-for-profit sector to work across a broad range of areas and I've worked with some really amazing people. That would be an interview in itself — some of the amazing people I've worked with.'

What are you particularly proud of having accomplished?

'Professionally, I think any time you lead a team — or are part of a team — it's a team or an organisation-wide achievement. I am particularly proud of the Homelessness Assistance Service Standards accreditation system in Victoria, which I had carriage of. It was an initiative that had terrific staff, a really supportive organisation, great sector leadership and buy-in.'

'I also worked on the development of a Victorian Aboriginal housing accreditation model so organisations could transition to the Victorian regulatory system. This piece of work was really close to my heart as I have a strong interest in working with Aboriginal people and organisations.'

'I also participated on a working group led by the Commonwealth on a move to a national quality framework for homelessness assistance, family violence and housing support services.'



'I really enjoy working in the not-for-profit sector. In government, you can put a huge amount of effort in and the outcome on the ground is sometimes hard to see. However, in the not-for-profit sector, I have found you can put a lot of effort in and see the tangible difference it makes.'

What makes you motivated or inspired in your career?

'Seeing the outcomes on the ground and ongoing learning. I've been very lucky to work in organisations where I continually learn. Although I have fairly extensive housing experience, there is always something different or challenging to work on.'

'In my current role — and in the Northern Territory — I enjoy the challenge of working in different jurisdictions and responding to the challenges of managing remote housing, which in many instances demands a reframing in the management of tenancies, clients and asset management. I draw my inspiration from housing people, from developing and implementing sound policies and processes that structure the way we manage our housing business, and from working in a tenant/client rights and responsibilities framework.'

'MRAC has commenced work on establishing a tenant reference group so those tenants that would like to be involved have that opportunity. This will provide us with a good feedback loop and support the development of a tenant rights and responsibilities brochure. It's motivating to work in a continuous quality improvement environment, and this initiative will certainly keep us focused.'

What attributes make a great housing or advocacy worker?

Great workers need empathy and compassion and they need understanding but, at the same time, good workers need to be strong enough to take action when tenants



do not meet their responsibilities. Great workers support and empower their clients or tenants to make informed decisions, rather than make the decisions for them.'

'As boring as this sounds, it's also a matter of process! An absence of good process can lead to applicants and tenants being treated differently; potential, actual or perceived favouritism; and poor governance and financial management practices. Great workers understand process.'

What are the biggest challenges facing housing professionals today?

'Maintaining the focus politically on affordable and social housing is critical. Apart from the negative gearing debate, there appeared to be little discussion on affordable housing through the last election campaign. For target-specific organisations like MRAC, it will be challenging to maintain government's interest and support. There is a concern that governments could move closer to a 'bigger is better' approach in the community/affordable housing sector and target-specific housing organisations like MRAC may be swallowed up in the process. While there is an economic argument for economies of scale, housing is not about size but about people.'

'In the context of MRAC, my biggest challenges are staying connected to what's going on in the broader state and national context and managing an organisation that relies totally on rents received. This includes providing a high quality maintenance service for MRAC's more remote housing and embarking on the development of a five-year asset management strategy.'

What do you believe are the future directions for the housing profession?

'This is a really tough one to answer. I think — and I hope — it involves increased professionalism and recognition by the broader community of housing as a profession.'

What do you hope to achieve from your AHI membership?

'Keeping up-to-date and understanding what's going on nationally. WA's a great place to live and work but it's a long way from the east coast where the size of the community/affordable housing sector dwarfs us here. It's also about networking with other housing professionals. I recently attended an AHI breakfast in Perth. It was a great opportunity to hear and meet the Western Australia Minister for Housing; the Honourable Colin Holt, and meet other fellow housing workers.'



Ready for your next career move in the social housing industry?

With the recently launched Social Housing Job Board, we aim to create a powerful platform for the social community to be able to seek information about employment, career and volunteer opportunities in the Australasian social housing sector.

Looking for a dedicated social housing professional?

If you wish to advertise your vacancy on the AHI website, please send your job advertisement in PDF format to admin@housinginstitute.org

AHI job listing is currently a FREE service.

Job advertisements from AHI Corporate Members will also be featured in the AHI monthly newsletter, HousingPEOPLE.

<http://housinginstitute.org/housingjobs>



Australasian Housing Institute

Supporting housing professionals

MEMBERSHIP

Individual Membership

Membership of the Australasian Housing Institute is open to anyone working in the social housing sector, in either a paid or unpaid capacity, or who has an interest in the social housing sector.

As an AHI member you will have the opportunity to:

Be recognised as a housing professional:

- membership;
- Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Program;
- Professional Excellence in Housing Awards.

Make connections with your colleagues:

- conferences and practice networks;
- informal local member networks.

Receive direct financial benefits:

- considerable discounts on AHI events, seminars, conferences and publications.

Engage in social housing specific professional development:

- seminars;
- workshops;
- presentations.

Be informed:

- quarterly premier journal on social housing matters in Australia and New Zealand *HousingWORKS*
- monthly electronic newsletter *HousingPeople*.

Be connected to the broader social housing community locally, throughout Australasia and internationally!

Corporate Membership

One of the keys to achieving a skilled, knowledgeable and flexible workforce is to empower individuals with the skills, knowledge and attitudes needed to be confident in their ability to do their job well and to help them develop their career. By becoming an AHI Corporate Member, you signal that your organisation fosters the personal and professional development of staff by investing in them.

The AHI can play an important role in helping housing and human service businesses and organisations improve the productivity of their workforce and promote housing and human service work as a worthwhile career in an increasingly competitive labour market. The AHI has established Corporate Membership to assist in partnering with businesses and organisations that are committed to positive career development principles and objectives. Corporate Membership gives you access to the networks and resources of the AHI.

Corporate Membership is open to any non-government housing or human service business or organisation, with a commitment to supporting the career development of their employees. Corporate Membership is also open to local government organisations active in the housing sector.

AHI Corporate Members:



AHI Corporate Associates:



Membership enquiries can be made to the AHI's office.

PO Box 6100 MAWSON ACT 2607 – Phone: +61 2 6494 7566

Further information is available from the AHI's web site at www.housinginstitute.org

Opinion 1

John Blewonski

Chief Executive Officer, Vincent Care Victoria



Sustaining a Home — New Directions in Housing Support

As Australia's housing affordability crisis continues to escalate, the pressure on all tiers of government, housing and homelessness service providers intensifies in the pursuit of meaningful and sustainable policy and service responses. Of course, the ultimate pressure is experienced in our communities, and by people attempting to access appropriate housing and housing support. Delayed or inadequate service responses by a system stretched to its limit only serves to push people further to the margins. Homelessness has consequences which extend well beyond the absence of housing; 'de-citizenship' is a term long used in the sector which continues to resonate.

Aside from other precursors to an experience of homelessness, we are seeing more people forced out of their homes due to housing affordability and cost of living pressures. The median rent in Melbourne is now \$380 per week. Newstart Allowance and Rent Assistance is currently \$329 per week.

It just doesn't add up if you are receiving a fixed government benefit.

Like other Specialist Homelessness Services, at VincentCare we see the immediate and cumulative impact of homelessness for people every day. People are often forced into a range of terrible decisions. Sleeping rough or perhaps in an unknown Rooming House? A caravan park or a car for the night? Stay with a violent partner or a motel for two nights?

Governments are now acknowledging that they can no longer directly supply affordable housing to all those in the community that need it, and consequently the focus has turned to the private rental market.

A renewed focus on Early Intervention, Private Rental Brokerage and Rapid Rehousing Programs aim to ease the bottleneck within crisis,

transitional and social housing. Sustained investment with bipartisan support is now required to realise long-term benefits for vulnerable individuals, families and communities.

In response to government direction, Specialist Homelessness Services must also evolve. Larger providers are encouraged to directly supply more affordable housing and a range of specialist and mainstream services will support more and more people in private housing. As a consequence, it's reasonable to project that over time, providers will support proportionally fewer people in crisis, transitional and social housing.

This shift requires government and providers to consider a range of impacts, often the unintended consequences of reform or a change in policy. Critically, the safety net is smaller in private rental, and



Mural — Redfern, Sydney

vulnerable tenants will be exposed to decisions made by an industry geared to protect assets and income. Contesting a Notice to Vacate may delay the inevitable for vulnerable renters; however, determined owners and agents ultimately wield the upper hand. The risk here is two-fold. Aside from creating an episode (or an additional episode) of homelessness with the associated disruption and uncertainty, it will also increase people's exposure to traumatic events.¹ Additional barriers to overcome in the pursuit of a home, and potentially devastating to people's sense of safety and belonging.

At a systems level, incentives and regulation for the private rental market should be reviewed by government. We are beginning to realise the positive impact of improved regulation of Rooming Houses, which importantly shifts the power imbalance. What can be done to redress this imbalance for vulnerable private renters? Longitudinal support (in addition to stable housing) is evidenced by

local² and international³ research and experience, however in the current policy setting; this is only available via other sectors (for example, Individual Support Packages or the Home Care Packages Program), where housing security is assumed and ironically, is not the program's primary objective.

For providers, the importance of assessment has always been in focus. The duration people have experienced homelessness informs significant variations in health, independent living skills, personal identity, risks, social supports, exposure to trauma and abuse, confidence, trust and other intrapersonal capacities necessary to exit homelessness and rebuild independence. For providers to respond with the correct intensity and duration of support, a deep assessment of housing history, support needs and intrapersonal capacities is required. Exposure to the private rental market without adequate assessment and tailored support presents further risk for vulnerable renters.

With the private rental market earmarked to overcome the problem of housing supply, the future of housing support needs to change. There is no soft landing and rarely second chances here. Without rigorous government regulation for agents and owners, only increased flexibility and investment in housing support will complement private rental at the scale required.

Endnotes

1. Cash R, O'Donnell M, Varker T, Armstrong R, Di Censo L, Zanatta P, Murnane A, Brophy L and Phelps A 2014, *The Trauma and Homelessness Initiative*. Report prepared by the Australian Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health in collaboration with Sacred Heart Mission, Mind Australia, Inner South Community Health and VincentCare Victoria.
2. Johnson G, Kuehnle D, Parkinson S, Sesa S and Tseng Y 2014, *Resolving Long-term Homelessness: A randomized controlled trial examining the 36 month costs, benefits and social outcomes from the Journey to Social Inclusion Pilot program*.
3. Crane M, Joly L and Manthorpe J 2016 *Social Care Workforce Research Unit, The Policy Institute at King's College London*, <http://www.kcl.ac.uk/sspp/policy-institute/scwru/pubs/2016/reports/RebuildingLives2016Report.pdf>



ANGLICARESA
HOUSING

AnglicareSA Housing is more than just bricks and mortar – it's a home, with support to maintain your tenancy and become a part of the community.

AnglicareSA Housing provides a range of innovative housing choices to meet the needs of all tenants.

www.anglicaresa.com.au

ANGLICARESA

OUR MOB NEEDS YOU!

Are you passionate about making a difference to Aboriginal families and communities?

Then we'd like to hear from you.

Family & Community Services Aboriginal Housing Office (AHO) has launched Our Mob Needs You, a site dedicated to you, and anyone you know who'd like to work at the AHO.

Hear first hand what it's like to work at the AHO from some of our staff.

“

“Being able to assist Aboriginal families get into long-term accommodation and then linking them with the appropriate support services to assist in maintaining long-term tenancies is by far my greatest career highlight to date.” **Adam Murray**



“I've developed my career at the AHO because I'm determined to help achieve better outcomes for our mob. I believe that a better life starts with a sustainable place that you can call home.” **Hayley Inglis.**



”

We are changing the way we do things to better support our housing providers, clients and the Aboriginal community. We want enthusiastic and energetic people to register your interest in joining the AHO.

Interested in working for the AHO? Register your interest now at www.ourmobneedsyou.com.au and we'll update you on available vacancies.



Family & Community Services
Aboriginal Housing Office

Opinion 2

Dr Heather Holst

Deputy CEO and Director of Services, Launch Housing



The Obvious

A successful state wide program that assists public housing tenants keep their housing inexplicably had 37 per cent of its funding cut in 2012 despite having prevented thousands of people from being evicted from secure housing.

The Social Housing Advocacy Support Program (SHASP) funding cuts occurred in 2012 just weeks after the government of the day was advised SHASP was one of the main reasons Victoria was meeting national partnership agreement targets to reduce homelessness.

Sustaining housing for people at risk of homelessness would seem to be a straightforward and sensible focus of work for organisations in our sector. However, the resourcing of programs like SHASP is at best inadequate.

A report undertaken by the SHASP network managers in 2014¹ confirmed the program saved tenancies and state government revenue by preventing people from falling into homelessness. The SHASP evaluation concluded that programs

focussed on working with tenants to resolve issues that put their housing at risk should be expanded to tenants in community housing and private rental.

An earlier report in 2011 by the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI) conducted in collaboration with service providers also found evidence to support the need for homelessness agencies to deliver better outcomes for clients via a focus on sustaining housing.

The Keeping Housing phase is even more critical than the Getting Housing phase and is an area currently underemphasised in the Australian service system. It involves assisting a person or family to sustain their housing whether they have recently secured housing after homelessness, or are currently at risk of losing their home.²

While we are all naturally working to assist people who are in need of access to housing it is equally important to resource and support services that assist people to maintain tenancies and prevent increasing levels of homelessness. It is becoming increasingly necessary to shift our focus to preventing greater numbers of people entering homelessness as a result of losing their rental property.

SHASP has a proven track record of achieving positive outcomes for tenants in public housing by helping them avoid eviction. A data survey by the SHASP managers' network conducted from July to September in 2013 found:

- 60 per cent of clients sustained their tenancy due to SHASP support
- 18 per cent continued to be supported by the program on

issues related to maintaining tenancies

- Just three per cent of tenants were evicted or relinquished their tenancy in this period.

With public housing comprising around three per cent of total housing stock in Victoria compared to over 30 per cent in the private rental market we could be doing a lot more to prevent increasing homelessness levels resulting from tenancy disputes.

SHASP provides a valuable model that could easily be extended to supporting tenants in the private rental market and in community housing properties. Additional resourcing could also extend the support provided to public housing tenants that were reduced following the 2012 funding cuts.

The primary concern for homelessness agencies is the human cost of moving out of secure housing into homelessness but the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services can look to the economic argument for expanding SHASP. The cost of supporting an evicted tenant through homelessness services is estimated to be in excess of \$34,000 per annum while supporting a tenant to avoid eviction through the SHASP program is estimated to be less than \$2,000 per client.

In the first 12 months following the \$2.7 million cut to SHASP funding in 2012 public housing tenants rental arrears increased from \$12 to \$15.1 million. One of the key support services provided by SHASP to tenants is addressing financial issues to enable them to pay rental arrears and maintain their tenancy.

The Victorian Government has shown a willingness to address rising levels of homelessness. Reinstating SHASP



Lightning Yellow by Jan Grey, provided by Mandy Leveratt, St Kilda Community Housing from their most recent photography exhibition

funding and extending the program to include tenants at risk of eviction in the private and community housing rental sectors would make a significant impact on preventing greater levels of homelessness across the state.

Case Study: Mary

Mary, a single person living alone had a significant intellectual disability and physical health issues. Office of Housing staff had concerns about Mary's welfare, particularly her health.

Mary was socially isolated with complex and dysfunctional family relationships that included experiences of family violence. Mary's six cats and one dog lived with her predominantly inside the property. This arrangement had resulted in a deterioration of her property. Mary's property also required essential maintenance and modification to improve accessibility in her bathroom.

Mary was referred to her local SHASP provider. Multiple referrals and actions

were made including securing funding for an industrial clean of the property and modifications to the bathroom. Mary was also referred to a local education centre. Alternative homes were found for her cats. Case conferences were conducted with relevant agencies and a more appropriate property was offered to Mary.

Once a transfer to an elderly person's unit was arranged SHASP support worker coordinated the move and the set-up of Mary's new property.

For Mary the support from SHASP meant she was more able to independently manage and maintain her housing. She was better equipped to deal with her finances and payments. Mary felt more confident and at ease with her relationship with her daughter. She was linked to health services to improve her wellbeing.

Mary's tenancy was no longer at risk and she was back in control of her life and home.

Endnotes

1. Social Housing and Advocacy Managers Network (Victoria) 2014, *Support that Works*.
2. Gronda H, Ware V, Vitis L 2011, 'What makes a difference? Building a foundation for a nationally consistent outcome measures', Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute pp. 1-3 and pp.146-151.

Subscription/Order Form

Parity costs \$100 for a 12 month ten edition subscription.

I wish to subscribe to Parity

Name

Address

Organisation (if applicable)

Telephone Fax

Email

Organisations, institutions, employed: \$100 for 12 months

Students, unemployed, pensioners: \$50 for 12 months

Multiple copies of parity can be provided for an additional \$35 per copy if they are to be delivered to the same address. (for example, two copies for 12 months: \$135, three copies for 12 months: \$170 etc).

I would like..... additional copies to be sent \$.....

PAYMENT OPTIONS

Enclosed is a cheque/money order

Please charge my credit card (PLEASE PRINT):

Visa Mastercard Bankcard

Name on card

Expiry

Signature

Please invoice me

Send completed form and payment to: Council to Homeless Persons
2 Stanley Street Collingwood Victoria 3066 T 03) 8415 6200 F 03) 9416 0200
Email: parity@chp.org.au www.chp.org.au/services/parity-magazine

Cost of subscription: \$

Additional copies: \$

TOTAL: \$

