

HOUSING, HOMELESSNESS & MENTAL HEALTH WORKSHOPS

PERTH



A NATIONAL INITIATIVE BY



Australian Government

National Mental Health Commission

ABOUT THE WORKSHOPS

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

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

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

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

OUR FEEDBACK

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

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ATTENDEES

POLICY & PROGRAM SUCCESS FACTORS

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

- Strong working relationships between Housing services and Mental Health support, resulting in care coordination across agencies
- Delivering both housing and psychosocial support programs and services from one organisation
- Mental health agencies working with consumers to develop a plan
- Service cooperation through local knowledge, especially around discharge programs
- Peer workers to assist people to maintain tenancies
- Services that can be called before the crisis or when the first breach occurs, especially where eviction looks likely
- Transitional accommodation programs

HOW TO INCREASE HOUSING SUPPLY?

- Increased allocation of houses to be community managed through NGO services who work more closely with the tenants and provide extra support to decrease evictions
- Better flexibility in local government for housing regulations
- Community housing organisations partnering with private sector investment to increase housing capacity and availability
- Housing cooperatives for dual diagnosis issues
- Specialist private property management service to support landlords accepting people with mental illness
- Education on innovative housing options such as shipping containers, smaller dwellings and tiny homes
- Increased efficiency in improving vacated houses, so people can move in faster
- Mental health first aid training to landlords, real estate agents, agencies and suppliers
- Incentives for private landlords to provide rentals specifically for mental illness consumers
- Assisting tenants with living skills and education to support them to keep their tenancies
- Government incentives for homes that have guests with mental illness as boarders
- Social investment bonds and funding models linked to social impact
- Superannuation funds for large scale investment in housing



HOW TO PROVIDE MORE HOUSING CHOICE?

- Choice based letting rather than arbitrary allocation from wait lists
- Early intervention support services so that the right option is provided for long term outcomes
- More flexibility about employment options and work availability to support people with a mental illness to have the income needed to afford housing
- Ensuring that staff are adequately trained and qualified to support clients with a variety of different needs and accommodation requirements
- Identify gaps across housing services to ensure a full range of housing options
- Opportunities for clinical and consumer input to determine appropriate housing opportunities
- More community engagement to ask consumers and carers what is needed and wanted
- Supports linked to person rather than house to remove stigma and give choices
- A lead agency allocated to oversee clients transitioning to independent living in the community, as this relies on working in partnership with consumers, government and NGO services

WHAT DATA SHOULD BE COLLECTED?

- Clarifying the data group that needs to be monitored in relation to homelessness
- Cost benefit analysis data for reduction in inpatient admissions for homeless vs those in supported accommodation
- Measure breaches in tenancy and evictions and their relationship to mental illness
- Research into the numbers of ATSI people with a mental illness living in remote, regional and urban communities
- Expert data collection in rural areas where homelessness and tenancy issues have not been divulged through Census
- HONOS outcomes
- True cost of maintaining a house for someone with mental illness

SUGGESTED FOCUS AREAS

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

- Need for **step-up / step down** facilities in regional areas
- Greater **devolution of State housing stock** to Mental Health services that are managing tenancies
- Greater **service collaboration and integration**
- **Wrap around services** to suit the individual needs of the person based on clinical, biopsychosocial and behavioural interventions, considering available funds (tiered level of supports)
- **Cross government mapping of data** to enable effective cost benefit decisions (hypothesis that more money in housing with appropriate supports saves money in other areas such as hospitalisation)
- Research into what global **collaboration models** work best in urban and rural areas - then put these models to the services to see which would be best practice in different areas and let the services see the research
- Research into **CALD and Indigenous mental health issues** and trauma - the real cultural difficulties and how this relates to housing - what is in place to assist - where are the gaps and possible solutions
- Increase of **social housing stock** with percentage allocated to people with a diagnosis of mental illness, to reduce competing with others
- Research the **true cost of maintaining a tenancy**, eg. liaison with service providers, family, case conferencing - the cost to landlords, housing agencies and the cost to individuals and the tenant's family