

Sector Communique

Regional Forum August 2022

1. Background to Q Shelter's Regional Representatives' Network

There are regional networks across Queensland that work locally to address housing need and homelessness. Representatives from these networks come together as part of the Q Shelter Regional Representatives Network. This Network has existed for more than 30 years and is a forum for:

- Sharing best practice
- Developing regional solutions
- Exchanging information between Q Shelter, the regions and Government as part of influencing policy and investment, and in building capacity across regions and sectors to achieve positive outcomes.

In recent times, the Regional Representatives Network has welcomed additional stakeholders, most notably the Service Integration Initiative (SII) Coordinators.

2. Report from August 2022

This communique is developed collaboratively with the Regional Representatives and is intended to assist in communicating information and actions emerging from the Forum, back to regional stakeholders.

2.1 Attendances

In August 2022, Q Shelter welcomed 35 Representatives from 16 regions across Queensland. Representatives included:

- Regional representatives from housing and homelessness networks across the state
- Service Integration Initiative (SII) coordinators
- Representatives from the Housing Older Women Movement (HOW M), Brisbane City Council, South Burnett Regional Council and the Red Cross.

A full list of Representatives and regions represented is attached to this communique (**attachment 1**).

2.2 Regional priority actions

Representatives began the first day discussing priority actions being progressed by each regional network. Representatives shared learnings from their own network's experience and how they are collaborating to progress this work. Q Shelter is working with Regions to identify priority actions for each network and will collate this to provide a state-wide overview. A better understanding of regional priorities will further enable a learning exchange.

Regional priority actions centred around some consistent themes including:

- Increasing housing supply
- Responding to the high demand for homelessness services
- Improving regional collaboration including through the involvement of diverse stakeholders and community leaders
- Innovations in local/regional responses in the context of growing demand
- Expanding the reach of regional networks.

Other themes included:

- Housing people existing institutions
- Service consistency
- Culturally appropriate and safe service delivery
- Tenancy sustainment
- The provision of dignity services and their integration with other service offering
- The increasing cost of service delivery.

2.3 Dialogue with the Department of Communities, Housing and the Digital Economy

A unique feature of the Regional Representatives Forum is the dialogue directly with the Queensland Department for Communities, Housing and Digital Economy (DCHDE). Each year, the Department makes key staff available to provide a key update, participate in a feedback session, and respond to questions from the sector. This year, the session was attended by the Associate Director General, General Managers, Regional Directors, and Executive Directors from across policy and service delivery areas. The Regional Representatives prepare a communique as a basis for this dialogue with the Department.

The Associate Director General, Mary-Anne Curtis presented an update from DCHDE with a focus on the delivery of the Queensland Housing Strategy and associated action plans. The Department's presentation is attached.

Q Shelter presented the communique to DCHDE on behalf of the Sector and prioritised four key themes:

- Tenancy sustainment
- Housing supply
- Access to, and sharing of data
- Workforce challenges.

A copy of this communique and questions fielded during the discussion is attached (**attachment 2**).

2.4 Showcase presentations

Several guest speakers provided showcase presentations at the forum:

1. **Anglicare Central Queensland** presented their Human Rights informed housing allocation tool, talking about how it helps staff to make better, and more informed choices.
2. **Protea Place**, a women's centre in Toowoomba spoke about their unique initiative providing dignity and support for women who are homeless or under significant stress. They are an independent initiative delivering services funded exclusively by the local community, with a small portion of non-recurrent grants.
3. **South Burnett Regional Council** provided an overview of their experience with homelessness and housing stress, and how council is working with local CHPs on developing some new housing stock with innovative approaches to land-supply. They discussed bringing the community and business leaders together at a housing and homelessness forum later this year, which would hopefully turn into a regional action plan to drive key activities in the region.
4. **Brisbane City Council** discussed the profile of homelessness in the Brisbane LGA, and the current council-implemented actions to address these challenges, including public space liaison officers, Homeless Connect, Community Housing Partnership Program, Red Cross Night Cafe, Essentials Contacts Guide, Housing Supports Grant and other materials. They also presented details on BCC's Pathways out of Homelessness Grant which has recently been recommitted to by Council for a further \$3m over the next three years. They will be developing a measurement and evaluation framework to track this program's success.
5. **Gold Coast Homelessness Network** updated Representatives on their work, introducing Gold Coast Zero and delivering Service Integration on the coast. It was great to see how far their committed and long-standing network have come. They also provided an update on the opportunities and learnings from the athletes' village arrangements and homelessness response in the lead up to the Gold Coast Commonwealth Games.

6. The **Townsville network** delivered de-escalation training in their region, identifying the need for this training and sharing the opportunity and cost across a number of organisations. This is a great example of working together to achieve affordable, face-to-face training in regions.

A copy of these presentations can be found on the [Regional Forum wrap up](#).

2.5 Workforce capability and training

A common theme throughout the Forum was workforce capability, development and retention. The ability to hire and train staff effectively was a key point of discussion.

Q Shelter presented questionnaire results showing high priority training topics identified in a state-wide survey. Regional networks and Service Integration Coordinators are working to finalise training priorities for each region as a basis for Q Shelter working across the State to support learning events.

2.6 Policy Development & Strategic Engagement

Q Shelter also updated the Representatives on initiatives advocating for policy and investment in solutions to housing need and homelessness.

Q Shelter develops policy recommendations through a combination of:

- Engagement with the sector through learning exchanges, the Regional Representatives Forum, engagement with regional networks, and through input from the Q Shelter CEO and Leaders' Forum.
- Researching evidence of proven solutions to housing need and homelessness.

This session showcased a new report called *Go for Gold: A social inclusion legacy from Brisbane 2032*. This report builds on Q Shelter's annual policy statement and outlines a comprehensive suite of solutions to prevent displacement and achieve integrated homelessness, housing and economic participation solutions. There are specific recommendations on housing supply, responses to homelessness, economic participation, governance and evaluation.

The report is being actively presented to local, state and federal governments. You can read the full report at the following link ([Click here](#)), and Representatives were encouraged to reach out to Q Shelter if they wanted further information or discuss how they can use this report or any of the other policy material in their advocacy efforts at the local level. Q Shelter's [annual policy statement](#) is available at this link.

2.7 Peaks' Partnership Networking Event

This is now an annual event encouraging informal networking across sectors and interests. This year the event was sold-out with attendees from across Government Departments, the private sector and community sectors. It was a valuable opportunity to celebrate the Sector's hard work and make new connections. It was well-attended by stakeholders from across the State.

Q Shelter took the opportunity to launch three new pieces of works while also launching our new brand, website and learning management system. The three new pieces of work were:

- A tenancy sustainment resource for broader human services
- The Gold Star Project investigating shared equity products for older women (in partnership with Zonta)
- A video showcasing community housing providers who deliver not-for-profit real estate services.

A presentation can be reviewed inclusive of links to the Gold Star Project Report and Video. Please reach out to Q Shelter (via the details below) to obtain a copy if you are interested.

3. Continuous improvements

Q Shelter seeks feedback from all attendees about how to improve these Regional Forums. We are striving to work with and across regions to ensure state-wide influence over policy and investment that makes a measurable difference to housing growth and a reduction in homelessness. The overall feedback about the forum was very positive:

Contribute a word you would use to describe the August 2022 regional forum to your sector colleagues?



Q Shelter is also incorporating several improvements from the last Forum including:

- More time for dialogue with the Department
- Slightly longer sessions in some instances to ensure complex topics have the time they need
- More inter-regional discussion on key topics
- Additional regional participation and other audiences.

Q Shelter is seeking to strengthen the connection between regional networks and regional representatives and we encourage regular contact and engagement with representatives who attend the Forum to ensure they have regional support for the key issues they raise and for the solutions they are seeking to progress.

4. More information and contact

There is a Regional Representatives Page on the Q Shelter Website that includes:

- Full documentation from this Forum
- Regional contacts for Housing and Homelessness Networks
- Contacts for Q Shelter Regional Representatives and Service Integration Coordinators.

You can contact the Policy and Strategic Engagement Manager, Jackson Hills at Q Shelter for more information on the Regional Representatives Network or on the regional forums more generally at Jackson.Hills@qshelter.asn.au or 07 3831 5900.

From the Q Shelter Team.

**Attachment 1:
Attendance List, Regional Forum (August 2022)**

Regional Representatives		
Name	Region	
Liz Brown	Cairns Housing and Homelessness Network	
Sally Watson	Cairns Housing and Homelessness Network	
Peta Anderson	Townsville Homelessness and Housing Network	
India Durnsford	Whitsunday Isaac Mackay Housing & Homelessness Action Network	
Adam Klaproth	Rockhampton Housing and Homelessness Network	
Anita Laksa	Far North Housing and Homeless Network	
Leon Zahmel	Far North Housing and Homeless Network	
Hannah Scott	Fraser Coast Housing and Homelessness Forum	
Darce Foley	Sunshine Coast Homelessness and Housing Network	
Liz Masterson	Moreton Bay Housing and Homelessness Network	
Elizabeth Parker	Brisbane	
Belinda Gray	Gold Coast Homelessness Network	
Aimee Prouse	Bayside Housing Network	
Jasmine Lind	Logan Homelessness and Housing Network	
Nerissa Wade	Ipswich Homelessness and Housing Network	
Amanda Dalton	Toowoomba Homelessness Network	
Helen McGrath	Toowoomba Homelessness Network	
Ruth Moran	South-West Queensland Network	
Sandra Washington	South-West Queensland Network	
Matthew Kenny	South Burnett	
Linda Hahn	Housing Older Women Movement	
Jennifer Petersen	Housing Older Women Movement	
Regional Care Coordinators		
Name	Region	Auspice
Fiona Oates	Cairns	Q Shelter
Emily Mussap	Townsville	Q Shelter
Yvonne Harris	Mackay	Q Shelter
Ryan O'Leary	Gold Coast	Gold Coast Homelessness Network with QCOSS
Tracey McNee	Sunshine Coast	IFYS
Shane Frost	Moreton Bay	Encircle
Rebecca Hinton	Logan	Q Shelter
Bree Tukavkin	Redlands	Q Shelter
Phil Smith	Brisbane	Q Shelter
Daniel Taber-Kennedy	Brisbane	Q Shelter
Forum Guest		
Name	Organisation	

Robyn Morgan	Anglicare Central Queensland
Kirstie Schumacher	South Burnett Regional Council
Natalie Musumeci	Red Cross
Q Shelter Attendees	
Name	Organisation
Fiona Caniglia	Q Shelter
Jackson Hills	Q Shelter
Floyd Stephens	Q Shelter
Michelle Saftich	Q Shelter
Liz Kemp	Q Shelter
Sally Faux	Q Shelter
Helen Gearing	Q Shelter
Emma Irvine-Collins	Q Shelter
Jodie Cowie	Q Shelter
Anthony Keast	Q Shelter

Apology: Stephen Simpson from the Council of Homeless Persons.

Communique

Regional Forum

Communique August 2022

Q Shelter is pleased to support regional networks of housing and homelessness services across the State. Each network elects their own Q Shelter Representative, who acts as the link between Q Shelter and their regions. Q Shelter hosts these biannual meetings to share good practice, understand regional issues and solutions and to engage the regional delegates and care coordinators with key representatives from Government. The Q Shelter Regional Representatives Network continues Q Shelter's long history of supporting place-based approaches to addressing homelessness and housing need. Regional delegates have been part of Q Shelter's structure from more than 30 years.

At this event, Q Shelter welcomed 35 delegates from 16 regions across Queensland Delegates included:

- Regional representatives from housing and homelessness networks across the state
- Service Integration coordinators
- Representatives from the Housing Older Women Movement (HOW M), Brisbane City Council, South Burnett Regional Council and the Red Cross.

A full list of attendees at the meeting is attached. South Burnett has been added to the network.

Delegates took part in an online survey and telephone interview prior to the meeting to confirm and validate issues and priorities, identify new and emerging challenges and opportunities, and document key questions to be directed to the Department of Housing, Communities, and Digital Economy (DCHDE).

Delegates prioritised issues and brought forward solution statements for discussion and consideration by the DCHDE. Four priority issues are attached to this Communique.

Tenancy sustainment

Further support for tenancy sustainment is needed across the state. Tenancy sustainment principles must include support for the duration of need, with appropriate flexibility for providing early intervention and ongoing access that can be scaled-up and intensified based on needs. These supports also need to be delivered by outreach services so that tenancy sustainment is provided to all tenancies in the private, affordable, and social housing systems.

Tenancy sustainment services need to be accessed through all social services organisations, with strong housing conversations happening across the board, such as in health services, legal centres and neighbourhood centres.

Part of service delivery models needs to include helping people to develop skills in sustaining their own tenancies and to advocate for themselves.

Housing Supply

Increasing housing supply needs to be facilitated with regional plans that incorporate contributions from governments, the community sector, and local businesses. These should consider and incorporate local land banks and other regional actions and resources.

Increasing housing supply also relies on strengthening the framework for local community housing providers (CHPs) to support growth and minimise risk. There is feedback that Queensland needs to revisit the role of stock transfers to enable greater debt-financing that underpins growth.

There is acknowledgement that community housing providers contribute to regional areas and economies in a range of ways. These connections are leveraged to support growth and the delivery of housing solutions.

Doing more with the resources we have is an important way to addressing the housing crisis. Greater use of stock transfers and collaborating with private business to progress social impact projects may open up new innovative responses.

Housing supply also needs to address the lack of housing across the spectrum, from crisis accommodation through to private affordable options.

In addition to increasing supply, housing affordability also needs to be addressed through legislative reforms that tackle rapid rental increases and provide security of tenure.

Planning system reforms are also an opportunity to ensure ongoing affordable housing supply in growth areas. There is support for policy and legislation to achieve these reforms.

The contraction of Queensland's private rental market is impacting exits opportunities from crisis accommodation while also impacting housing provider portfolios. Work is required to raise awareness among real estate providers and property owners to understand the role they can play in supporting security of tenure and improved supply. Opportunities for institutional investing in private rental supply with security of tenure are important to progress.

Housing growth projects are impacted by the increasing cost of delivering community housing. Issues with rising costs include:

- Indexation and stagnant funding levels
- Rising maintenance costs and difficulty sourcing trades and materials
- Rising insurance costs.

It is important to note that increasing costs impact growth but also significantly impact viability for some providers. There is a genuine risk that some providers may fail if the cost of operations is not addressed soon.

Workforce

Investment is needed in our workforce, including training and development that supports people to be effectively in the delivery of services. Providing quality face-to-face training in regions is key to upskilling this workforce on a range of training topics.

Investing in our workforce needs to address high turnover, staff burn out, insufficient remuneration and the availability of qualified staff, which is particularly difficult in regional areas. An additional issue for regional organisations is worker accommodation. Regions are reporting that recruits are not able to find suitable accommodation and a workforce housing strategy is needed.

Ensuring staff have the time to connect with others, discuss issues, be inspired at conferences and forums are important development opportunities. These occasions are important for developing staff who understand their role and the service system they operate in.

Workforce training needs to include the Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy, to ensure staff are experienced in the delivery of human services. The interface with Housing Service Centres is vital to ending homelessness and people at the front-line of these service delivery organisations need to understand and be able to assess people's needs holistically. They have a vital role in working proactively with other social service organisations.

It is important to use the knowledge of frontline service workers across the system to inform policy, program and practice changes. Their insights are important and being connected to reform processes and opportunities to influence improvements can help to increase job satisfaction and retention.

Data

Important data is held by all providers of housing and homelessness services. This data could be better utilised to inform allocations, link support services and improve our service system.

The current methods for sharing information, delivering reports and meet funding obligations are repetitive and labour intensive. Better use of technology to share information, reduce duplication and capture service demand is supported.

Sharing accurate, real-time data can support service collaboration across aligned social service organisations and appropriate government agencies.

There is encouragement to accelerate work to achieve greater integration across State agencies and address the causes of homelessness linked to the role and services of other Government departments.

Additional discussion points

There is an increasing demand for housing and homelessness services across the state and this is having a significant impact across all service providers.

The sector needs to consider initiatives that support people to live with dignity while new housing supply comes online. Neighbourhood centres, homelessness hubs and other services are responding and there are citizen-led examples as well. These types of responses need to be located within the broader system to understand their relationship to other assistance to end homelessness and achieve a sustainable housing result. It would be constructive to design a service system model that locates their role appropriately and ensures they are a gateway and opportunity for people to have their immediate needs met while also commencing a process of planning and achieve a pathway out of homelessness.

It is important for state agencies to continue working with housing providers to avoid 'at all costs' inadvertently causing homelessness.

Specific cohorts need better investment in housing models that work. This is particularly important for young people who are priced out of the housing market.

Structured Questions

Housing supply

1. How can the Department ensure that older women are enabled to go on the social housing register of need and not be turned away?
2. How can we work together to address affordability in the private rental market?
3. What possible levers can be used at a State and Federal level to have fewer empty houses in Queensland? Is a strategy being progressed to engage with owners of empty properties to encourage them to be available to people who need homes?
4. What innovations can be made in the short-medium term to respond to the housing crisis while new stock is being developed?
5. Is stock management and title transfer for CHPs being considered?
6. How much of the Housing Investment Fund has been allocated to housing projects and who makes decisions about HIF funding?

Support and tenancy sustainment

1. What can be done and what is the department doing to address hoarding and squalor particularly for under 65s?
2. What support exist for larger families who are increasingly finding it difficult to find accommodation?
3. Given the profile of community needs is changing, what is in the pipeline to increase support funding?
4. How can we collectively increase holistic support or hubs like Protea Place where there is a focus on dignity services and support?

Data and planning

1. How can information sharing be improved between Departments and service providers so we are best prepared at a local level to address the needs that people have?
2. When people apply for housing and put their first preference as their hometown and then change their preference, is there a way to still capture the need for housing in their hometown rather than a place where they don't really want to live?
3. Is there consideration for investment in regions to allow them to drive feasibility and strategic planning to better understand needs, gaps, opportunities and a better utilisation of existing programs, services and assets?

Funding and procurement

1. What is the process / timeframe regarding 2023 funding agreements which will expire then?
2. Can we understand the steps involved in Government procurement of services and programs and how decisions are made to have closed rather than open tenders?
3. Can there be more consultation with the sector regarding changes to programs and services? Can more information be provided when changes to programs and services are made?

Capability building

1. Has the Department considered funding and providing training in communications that covers compassionate and non-violent communication?
2. Is there scope to include HSC managers in this forum as they are important influencers in our region?