Communique

Regional Forum

Communique June 2023

On the 20th and 21st June 2023, Q Shelter brought together 43 delegates from 19 regions across the state to share practices, celebrate the unique nature of regions and to discuss potential solutions that could improve the delivery of housing within our service system. We are pleased to welcome new regional representation, with representatives from Mt Isa, Gympie, and Gladstone in attendance.

Delegates included representatives from:

- Regional Housing and Homelessness Networks
- The Housing Older Women's Movement (HOW Movement)
- Service Integration Coordinators
- Housing peak partners.

A full list of attendees is attached.

The state-wide network of Regional Representatives is an embedded part of a structured approach to regional engagement. Q Shelter has supported place-based approaches to addressing homelessness and housing need since 1991.

Key activities undertaken during the forum include briefings on progress on key reforms, policy development, input to program design, learning exchanges and showcases as well as the dialogue with Queensland Government.

The Communique document is intended to support our ongoing engagement with the State on key matters of concern with a focus on practical solutions. Q Shelter and the participating peak organisations will also use the information generated to develop policy and investment statements as forward input to Government.

We hope it will provide evidence and support for decision-making about future investment and policy development. We look forward to working with you to progress these suggestions and also toprovide updates to participants and the sector.

It should be noted that the themes were selected from pre-engagement with participants. The methodology during the forum involved themed tables and opportunities for rotation across themes to provide input and advice. A plenary session checked summary statements on each theme with participants.

One social housing system needs to reopened for discussion. It has been in place for 15 years now and we need a critical review that involves the sector.

Housing Supply

Housing supply does not meet housing needs all across QLD. The pressure on the sector is intense and is further compounded by lengthy State Government processes and approvals around HIF, QuickStarts and other contracts. Further, there is a lack of data available to our sector around where the need is, what housing currently exists and where future housing is being considered. It is going to take many different tweaks and innovations, in many different aspects of the housing picture to meet the need, including:

- Responding to the housing crisis with two strategies, the *long term solution* and *the now proposition* and the now proposition need to be treated in a disaster/emergency response way.

- A national definition of Affordable Housing that is attached to the households' income.
- Regulation of Airbnb, and/or incentivise Airbnb landlords to convert to the private market
- State Government commit to condensing processes and more transparency of process.
- Stock Transfers to CHPs to better to tap into CRA funding and leverage assets to increase housing supply
- Great Australian Dream - Everyone wants a back yard - but we need liveable communities, joint efforts between sector and all levels of government to shift community mindset around density.
- Building housing that is energy efficient, flexible design to use beyond the properties initial use, solar etc – initiatives that will save money in the long run.
- Mandatory Local Housing Active Plans mandatory for all LGAs
- We must have Inclusionary Planning - not just inclusionary zoning.
- Improved regional partnerships, better together - CHPs coming together, banks, builders developer, well networked business, sharing the load within the region to come up with ideas and plans.

Tenancy sustainment

The challenges include:

- Tenancy sustainment issues are impacting people who can no longer afford the escalation in rents. Additional support is required to reduce rental costs or increase subsidies to support households.
- Where tenancy sustainment-funded services are available they are underfunded and under-resourced and are limited to their time scope i.e. clients may need longer-term support that exceeds contractual periods. Evidence does not support arbitrary time periods but rather robust ongoing assessment to address needs for the duration of those needs.
- Services are often approached too late, when a tenancy has brokern down. Earlier intervention is required to ensure more tenancies are sustained
- Where tenants have significant vulnerability, issues are best identified at the housing application and allocation stage leading to improved design of ongoing support as part of establishing the tenancy.
- The focus on transition and crisis are not helpful.

Potential Solutions:

- 'Help to Rent' education skills expanded with additional support
- Funding a Housing First approach.
- More brokerage to fund common issues causing tenancies to fail
- All funded housing and homelessness services should include tenancy sustainment funding
- Housing application process needs to capture potential tenancy complexities to inform support planning and service integration
- Reduce tenancy/tenancy manager ratio for more intensive focus – more tenancies are complex needs a more intensive approach is needed
- Develop Communities of Practice – for CHPs and SHS funded services on tenancy sustainment

- Early intervention is important when housing the most complex clients– consider a tenancy sustainment plan for all new tenancies
- Care Co-ordination should be utilised more including the housing providers for public and community housing.

Organisational viability and workforce

The challenges include:

- The sector needs skilled workers but the funding does not incentivise a qualified workforce.
- Staff that are provided with intensive training and leave after 6 months to apply these newly found skills in other human service fields.
- Mental Health Sector is paying better than our sector staff are migrating to this sector and also the health sector more broadly.
- Staff are expected to be specialised in all areas of human services and do not get remunerated properly. "Our sector is not just housing specialists anymore the skills are far broader".
- Inequity of funding contracts.
- Rural and regional accommodation is an issue impact staffing
- Organisations don't know exactly what their funding is, what indexation will be applied and cannot plan for their workforce retention.
- There is no funding to provide staff with external supervision.
- Under current contractual arrangements the viability of some services and programs is at significant risk.
- Lack of funded training

Potential solutions:
- A wage review is required. Funding is not matching the complexity of the work undertaken.
- Funding allocations need to address the cost-of-service delivery including wages and insurance which is a rising cost.
- The sector needs longer contracts to support staff retention and attraction
- Contracts need to have the cost-of-living increases built in.
- Contracts need to provide stability and equity for the workforce. At present there is much uncertainty and staff have trouble accessing loans.
- Sector induction for board members is required as is additional governance training.
- Successful models based on prevention and ongoing support to sustainably end homelessness are critical. This is a massive issue impacting retention as staff are becoming disheartened and leave.
- When new funding is provided, staff resourcing should also be provided otherwise the burden falls on current staff who are already behind capacity.
- The certificate 4 I social housing was an excellent resource for skilling staff and we would like to see this funded again.

Future of Specialist Homeless Services

The challenges:

- demand for homelessness services and housing is far exceeding supply and the capacity of services to respond
- services need to choose who they can support properly, as there are extensive skills and services required to successfully deliver support and support is often needed for domains beyond just homelessness matters. Access and links into other support services are increasingly difficult because of extensive demand across the human services system.

Potential solutions:

- SHS program design needs a significant 'rethink' so we can focus our collective effort on long-term outcomes for people moving out of homelessness into sustainable homes.
- Providing housing first and working consistently and persistently with people to make a long-term sustainable difference is necessary.
- The churn of people moving between services and back into homelessness needs to be acknowledged and we need to make a commitment to long-term focused programs.
- There is a demand for outreach services, funded service collaboration, homelessness hubs, new shelter/foyer/common ground outcomes has been requested by regions everywhere.

There are examples and evidence of better long-term results:

- Mt Isa and Gladstone are stretching existing programs focus on residential life skills programs that are making a huge difference to long-term outcomes.
- We need regionally specific and outcome-focused contracts to give services the flexibility they need to ensure the right type of service is being delivered in each location, and cost to deliver this service is well understood and fully funded.
- "We are the experts and we are asking to help design the delivery of homelessness services, region by region. We should receive, contracts that pay our experts at respectful levels, provide certainty to services with long-term contracts and allows organisations to develop and sustain the staff they have."

Private rental market

"There is a need to establish a better relationship between the housing and homelessness sector and the private rental market. Given social housing stock is only circa 4% of the overall market, most rental propretries are still under the management of real estate agents and property managers acting on behalf of investors and owners. A relationship that is anything other than constructive with the real estate industry, is zero-sum game."

There are strong examples of CHP partnerships with real estate agents across the state, and instances of forums being held that bring together housing and homelessness services and real estate agencies to discuss tenancy management approaches, training and development opportunities, and working more closely together to understand community needs.

Some CHPs have developed non-for-profit real estate businesses, and the fees are reinvested into community housing services.

The Department Housing has several rental programs, products and services that are available to support vulnerable Queenslanders. There is a view these need to be better promoted and could also be delivered in partnership with the NGOs across the state, to better utilise their reach, skill set and local knowledge.

Possible solutions:

- More education and awareness building with wider community on the size of the housing problem and rental market challenges. "Working together" campaign to help house vulnerable people
- Consider contracting out Rent Connect programs to NGOs
- State Government purchasing more NRAS properties before they expire
- Expand head leasing programs through CHPs
- Education programs for real estate agents re trauma-informed practice

- Revisit options for protecting tenants from unreasonable rent increases, including re-considering a rental cap framework that is linked to CPI.

<u>Dignity services</u>

The term 'Dignity' seems to be misrepresented across the sector by those who are not trained and educated appropriately to deal with those presenting for immediate or longer-term support. The standard of Dignity is not the bare minimum of what support should be provided but rather one's quality of life and the strength of their well-being. Emergency Relief and Dignity support go hand in hand. The expectation of Dignity really should be defined especially alongside Emergency Relief as a means to create a standard across the sector and those providing relief support.

- Dignity services are expanding in response to demand. Some are well connected to formal services, while others are isolated from other pathways of assistance.
- Dignity services are important but they work best when people operating the services are able to respond in flexible ways to any presenting need. We need skilled staff who can assess, connect link people. Formal services could learn from safe place dignity responses to be a better soft entry point, meeting immediate needs while supporting people's pathway to sustainable outcomes.
- More funded services need to work in this flexible way so they are not just moving people on to dignity services without a pathway of support.
- Need to work with people through soft entry points to improve engagement and safety.
- Need to improve models of ER to be more holistic and less judgmental.
- Normal Services linked to dignity offerings are important so people's needs are understood and responded to.
- Emergency Relief and Dignity support go hand in hand.
- Flexibility in funding contracts to allow a rapid wrap-around response that has an impact on the recipient. Underpinned by key assessment work and strategy to maximize outcome.
- Funding contracts and obligations need greater consideration to place-based to maximize outcomes and reach for those in need.

Attendee: Delegates

Regional Representatives	
Name	**Region**
Adam Klaproth	Central Queensland
Sally Watson	Cairns
Jasmine Lind	Logan
Natalie Musumeci	Townsville
Mandy Thompson	Townsville
India Durnsford	Mackay
Jason Field	Central Queensland
Amanda Dalton	Toowoomba
Liz Parker	Brisbane
Michelle Coats	Gladstone
Hannah Scott	Fraser Coast
Tracey McNee	Sunshine Coast
Matthew Kenny	South Burnett
Philip Smith	Brisbane
Patricia Goldfinch	Far North Qld
Stephen Hawkins	Moreton Bay
Shane Frost	Moreton Bay
Alvin Hava	Mount Isa
Liz Brown	Cairns
Rebecca Hinton	Logan
Yvonne Harris	Mackay
Fiona Oates	Cairns
Darce Foley	Sunshine Coast
Anita Laksa	Far North Qld
Leon Zahmel	Far North Qld
Marije Sandmann	Redlands
Breanne Tukavkin	Redlands
Daniel Taber-kennedy	Brisbane
Ryan O'Leary	Gold Coast
David Lonne	Ipswich
Narelle Duroux	Fraser Coast
Kylie Hutchinson	Toowoomba
Linda Hahn Convenor	Housing Older Womens Movement
Cheryl Schmidt	Housing Peak Partner - CSIA
Wendy Tucker	South West Qld

Annemaree Callander	Housing Peak Partner - CHIA Qld
Judith Hemingway	Housing Peak Partner - CSIA
Breeze Thodsen	Mount Isa
Tania Edwards	Mount Isa
Stephen Simpson	Housing Peak Partner - Homelessness Qld
Peter McGlashan	Gympie
Tracy Adams	Housing Older Womens Movement
Michael Parish	Brisbane

Attendee: Department representatives (attended on day 2)

Regional Representatives	
Name	**Region**
Mark Wall	General Manager, Strategy, Policy and Programs
Chantal Raine	General Manager, Service Delivery
Liza Windle	Executive Director, Action Plans Implementation
Madonna Cuthbert	A/Executive Director, Programs
Karl Frank	Executive Director, Regulatory Services
Sharon Kenyon	Executive Director, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing
Angela Stevens	A/Executive Director, Service Delivery
Kirstine Harvie	A/General Manager, Strategic Policy and Legislation
James O'Brien	A/Executive Director, Critical Response Team
Maree Uhlmann	A/Regional Director, Southwest Region
Katherine Saffioti	Regional Director, Brisbane Region
Jennifer Weldon	A/Regional Director, Central Queensland North Coast Region
Tania Sheppard	Regional Director, Northern Region
Kelly Mangan	Director, Queensland Housing Investment Growth Initiative
Melissa Hockey	Principal Policy Advisor, Homelessness Programs, Programs
Bonnie Hobson	Senior Program Office, Sector Engagement
Louisa Albert	Project Officer, Strategy, Policy and Programs
Stephen Hughes	A/Relationship Manager, Strategy, Policy and Programs
Victor Parascos	Principal Contract and Partnership Officer, CQNCR Region

Q Shelter hosts

Regional Representatives	
Name	**Region**
Fiona Caniglia	CEO
Jackson Hills	Manager, Policy and Strategic Engagement
Alana Kanafa	Manager, Community Housing Futures Program
Murray Benton	Sector Capacity Lead, Community Housing Futures Program
Floyd Stephens	Manager Capacity and Integration
Liz Kemp	Projects Lead – Sector Capacity
Sally Faux	Project Officer
Helen Gearing	Media & Communications Manager
David Hill	Membership and Communications Coordinator
Jodie Cowie	Project Support Officer – Service Integration
Jessica Pragnell	Project Support – Engagement
Emma Irvine-Collins	Project Officer