

SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION

Mental health service providers

Date of consultation:	1 September 2017
Group consulted with:	Mental health service providers
Number of attendees:	5
Name of organisations:	ACT Health, Richmond Fellowship, Women with Disabilities ACT, Mental Health Community Coalition ACT

Key themes arising from the consultation

- There is a gap between crisis accommodation and stable long-term housing – there needs to be more medium-term and transitional accommodation for people with mental health conditions.
- Provide appropriate housing responses for people with cyclical mental health conditions.
- Early intervention is needed for people who have mild disability/mental health conditions or who don't have severe and complex needs. For this group of people, accommodation is one of those things that becomes a risk early on but when they are supported they do well.
- Strengthen OneLink to be a one-stop shop that works well – providing advice and support on a wide variety of housing options, a portal for disability/mental health shared accommodation vacancies, with weekend and after-hours services.
- Mental health clients already have a number of support plans. There is a need to ensure that people don't have too many plans. Instead, there needs to be an overarching plan where information is shared so that everyone is working towards the same goals.
- Extend a shared equity model to low income households outside of those receiving public housing. Use a commune/shared living affordable rental model as a way for people to save up a deposit.
- General support for the idea of tenure in the Housing ACT portfolio rather than to a particular property. However, reservations were expressed about forcing people to move – especially people with mental health conditions when they may have memory issues and removing them from their physical/geographical location would be very disruptive. There was agreement that grandfathering provisions might be needed and education about any change was crucial.

Key quotes

- “There needs to be more options available for people who are well enough to move out of supported housing. This needs to be backed up with an assurance that people can go back if they have a wobble in their recovery.”
- “There is a gap in services for people who don’t have severe mental health issues, those who just have issues with doing the basics like washing and cleaning.”
- “Landlords react to risk or their perception of risk – so de-risk it!”
- “Changes need to be made to the zoning around suburban shops. Look at the areas around shops to increase the density, at the moment the products in those areas are more upmarket than affordable.”
- “In a growing city we have to re-think the way we have done things in the past.”
- “Strengthen the rules around insulation and aspect, many buildings in Canberra have not been developed for the climate, are not energy efficient and there are few builders that build better quality homes.”
- “Affordability needs to include things that are not just the rent or mortgage, but also the water and energy costs.”

What is working well?

- CatholicCare LINC model for people with mild intellectual disability has worked really well.
- The Public Housing Renewal Program is producing more appropriate housing, using the salt and pepper approach into the community will provide benefits.
- Public housing has done well in helping people get public housing accommodation, but the population is increasing and there is a lack of suitable accommodation (e.g. 2 bedroom properties).
- Public housing properties have been good for physical accessibility but not the private sector.
- Community co-ops work well and they are tenant run – people have gained a lot from being in secure tenure, especially single mums.

What could be improved?

- More follow up-outreach support.
- More support for older single women who might have mild mental health conditions or mild disability.
- Support needs to be 24/7 especially on weekends and late at night.
- ‘Personal support plans’ could be a good idea if they are centrally coordinated and could fill the gap left by the HASI/HARI programs.
- A government guarantee to private rental landlords to help alleviate the reluctance from landlords and property managers to rent to people who have had mental health admissions

Feedback on OneLink

- There needs to be more advice given about the housing options available.
- Expanding OneLink to provide a service for non-NDIS funded clients to explore housing options, such as for children leaving care, older women and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people – trying to navigate services and planning and organising things can be really challenging.
- Opening hours should be increased (to the weekends and after hours support) – because crisis often occurs on the weekends and Friday afternoons.
- Create a database for disability and supported accommodation vacancies (possibly as part of OneLink), with a matching service as well to help people in shared accommodation arrangements. Use the OneLink vacancy database as a portal that a service provider could access to go online and offer vacancies as well.

New ideas

- Not-for-profit real estate agency to lease affordable rentals to low income people
- Investigate the Defence Housing model.
- Funding for a support service which could call back and check in on people. This would address the needs of people who require a lower level of support. Since the NDIS the real gap is at the lower end of the spectrum for people who have mental health conditions which mean they struggle but do not qualify for NDIS support.
- Develop an app that provides information about housing options and services in the ACT, kept up to date.
- Investigate a Women's Housing Trust model: a shared equity model which requires a certain percentage of houses developed be set aside for women/older women. The rest of the units are funded through a co-op model. This model allows separate title.
- Small-scale shared accommodation – maximum of 3 or 4 people, with support on site for people to manage conflicts.
- Tiny house community has potential for further investigation. Salt and pepper principles to extend to the type of people that live in a tiny house development.
- Incorporate green building requirements into a housing policy – make more energy efficient and climate-appropriate developments.
- Changes zoning around shopping/group centres to enable more affordable accommodation.
- A tenant linking service. There are far more people looking for accessible properties than there are properties on the market.