

# SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION

## ACT Shelter

<b>Date of consultation:</b>	7 August 2017
<b>Group consulted with:</b>	ACT Shelter
<b>Number of attendees:</b>	19
<b>Name of organisations:</b>	CHC Affordable Housing, Uniting Church, Anglicare, St Vincent de Paul, Salvation Army, YWCA Canberra, Safe Shelter/All Saints Ainslie, SI Canberra, Older Women Lost in Housing (OWL's), Onelink/Woden Community Service, ACTCOSS, COTA ACT, ACT Health (Mental Health Program), ANU School of Demography

## Key themes arising from the consultation

- The housing system needs to be linked with health care, education and employment services to assist people build skills and confidence to live in their own home, a whole of community, whole of government response is required.
- There is a need for early intervention products that treat individuals as people, not cases. Some cohort groups may be reluctant to engage with formal services until their situation is at crisis – efforts need to be made to identify these groups and what approaches would work to facilitate early engagement.
- The role of government should be to provide supporting infrastructure to assist people to 'live their lives the best they can' rather than doing too much for people.
- Public housing policy needs to avoid encouraging inter-generational dependency.

## Key quotes

- "We should be increasing public housing stock – it is a community asset and the ACT should continue to have high levels of public housing. Alternatively, we could invest significantly in community housing. Either way, we need to maintain high levels of social housing."
- "To improve access to private rental, we need to train the community sector. They are largely excellent at writing a support letter for public housing, but there are limited skills in being able to direct people more towards private rental. We should host workshops on how to assist people into private rental."



- “It is still hard to afford private rental because it is such a massive jump from 25% of your income in public housing to full market rent, how do we bridge that gap? A time-limited subsidy to help people might be good.”
- “We need a social housing provision in legislation that allows service providers to better utilise their housing stock.”

## What is working well?

- Genuine commitment to consultation
- There are a lot of people at risk of homelessness who are being supported and are in stable accommodation – this is an achievement.
- Those who work with the homeless in the ACT do a good job.
- Partnerships between service providers, churches and the government are working well.
- There are a lot of amazing services out there doing a great job.

## What could be improved?

- Improve capacity of crisis accommodation to accommodate pets or temporary shelter for pets e.g. kennel accommodation, fostering system.
- Possibility of fixed term tenancies in public housing with an appropriate length for stability (e.g 10 years) – consider whether lifetime tenure is still an appropriate policy.
- Incorporate Tenancy Options Worker in OneLink to talk to people about getting into the private rental market, how to apply, following up and checking back with people who are applying to see how they are going. There could be more specialised support for people along with rental subsidies, helping them to apply for private rental, and checking in if they are not successful.
- Role modelling is fundamental to helping people out of the poverty trap – one good example is the Rent It Keep It model in NSW.
- More information and communication about the services which are available to help people.
- Onelink could be improved especially the capacity of staff answering Onelink calls. More/better triage of people calling is needed because the advice to sleep in their car/at campervan sites is not appropriate.

## New ideas

### For people transitioning out of homelessness:

- Suite of services to provide counselling and connections to new community, providing support through the experience of moving to new, independent accommodation.
- Access to living skills support e.g. cooking skills, property condition, cleaning, shopping.

### To address under-utilisation of public housing:

- Property sharing – encouraging households with unused bedrooms to share, reducing the rent accordingly, e.g. 20% of income instead of 25%.

- Knocking down larger houses in older suburbs and rebuilding multiple homes on the same block
- Meet relocation costs, subsidise professional organisers to help people prepare for downsizing,

#### Affordable rental:

- Mandated training for property management staff on how to engage with low income households as part of tenancy management.
- Support young people to save for deposit e.g. quarantined rental contribution for over 18s in h/hold.
- Provide rental references for groups who have never rented before e.g. older women.
- Crowd funding for subsidies for low income renters to encourage landlords to rent out dwellings not on the market at an affordable rate.