

SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION

Women, children and family services & domestic and family violence services

Date of consultation:	4 August 2017
Group consulted with:	Women, children and family services & domestic and family violence services
Number of attendees:	17
Name of organisations:	YWCA Canberra, Karralika Programs, Belconnen Community Service, Northside Community Service, Doris Women's refuge, St Vincent de Paul, Canberra PCYC, Toora, Tuggeranong Child and Family Centre, Gungahlin Child and Family Centre, Anglicare ACT, Karinya House, ACTCOSS, Barnardos, Office of the Coordinator-General for Family Safety

Key themes arising from the consultation

- Strengthen collaboration between sectors, including government and community sectors – make it easier to share support and information between health, mental health, homelessness, justice, child and family, counselling, social work and other support services
- Improve whole of government and cross-sector understanding of trauma informed care.
- Early intervention, need to develop better communication channels to get support services involved early, including building capacity and engaging with the real estate sector more.
- We need to break the cycle of intergenerational dependence, especially on public housing, and empower and equip people to achieve their outcomes.
- Address the issue of underutilisation in public housing: offer incentives, review tenancies regularly, prompt at yearly inspections, choice-based letting, phase in renewable leases so that tenants can be re-allocated when circumstances change – but tenants should agree to the flexibility.
- Private rental subsidies are largely supported, delivered alongside support to help address underlying issues, e.g. debt and money management.
- Education to deal with the stigma of low income households being 'bad tenants' and incentives to 'de-risk' tenants for landlords offering guarantees for rent, bonds, maintenance.

- Education is the key priority to ensure people who want to access the affordable home purchase market know what pathways are available to them.
- Affordable products need to address the needs of different household compositions and the needs of people transitioning through different housing types.
- Make sure affordable products go to the right people.

Key quotes

Reducing homelessness:

- “Addressing homelessness is a lot more than providing a house; we need to understand what it means to provide a home with support to a person sleeping rough.”
- “Given the complexities of the client group, it’s no good jumping into unit costing, payments by outcomes model. It does not fit.”
- “Security of tenure and tenancy should not be linked to participation in support.”

Strengthening social housing:

- “The supported accommodation model is currently geared towards treading water before you can get into public housing, whereas we should be looking to creating other pathways, not just public housing.”
- “While the role of a housing manager has broadened over the last 10 years, and this is great, Housing ACT doesn’t need to be the whole answer; it should be more about getting a community organisation involved to support the person.”

Increasing affordable rental:

- “Look at using the Defence Housing model - this model could have private landlords give their property to Housing ACT for 10 years to be rented at an affordable level, and after that Housing ACT guarantees that the property will be returned in rented condition with new carpet and paint.”

Increasing affordable home ownership:

- “Owning a home is an aspiration for many, but so many people we see need somewhere for their family immediately.”
- “We need to be able to help people to help themselves and having access to information about people’s options and pathways to owning a home will help us do this.”

What is working well?

- Robust community sector with specialist skills
- Many examples of outcomes focused, holistic and connected service provision supported by government and community sector providers
- Some communal living models able to offer variable levels of support to specific cohorts, including young people and older women, e.g. Our Place, Betty Searle House.
- West Belconnen Mower shed is a good model. This could be expanded to vacuum cleaners too.

What could be improved?

- Improving funding agreements to better reflect outcomes that are difficult to measure, such as provision of emotional support – different ways of measuring success
- Funding for support services to provide early intervention through strengthening Housing First and outreach support
- More refuge accommodation and better utilisation of rooms between crisis, medium and long term properties
- Increasing supported accommodation models' capacity to provide support for independent living.
- Support should be provided separately from tenancy management, while tenancy management should also be supportive.
- Provide opportunities for sector staff to up skill to a relevant Diploma or BA degree
- More life skills programs
- Longer term crisis accommodation for people escaping domestic violence.
- More shared equity models, such as Project Independence.
- Extend night services to other central areas of Canberra: Woden and Gungahlin.

New ideas

- Tender for a service that has pre-set outcomes to be achieved, i.e. a certain amount of people who will exit into public housing, and others to be supported to exit into other pathways. Move the system away from social housing as the main exit.
- An Aboriginal Housing Organisation embedded within Housing ACT to offer a range of accommodation to singles, students, the elderly & people who are currently on the Housing waitlist
- Shared equity: look at non-financial ways to reduce risk for lenders by recognising positive rental histories as evidence of capacity to save

- Support for women on spousal visas where the relationship has broken down due to domestic violence.
- Innovative models to house women and children experiencing DV, such as Home Ground model or other ethical real estate models, tapping into Airbnb type housing programs backed up by case management support and philanthropic funding.
- Early intervention service to recognise early indicators in pre-teens (10-13) and their families including mental health, drug and alcohol use and family violence and wrap around supports.