

# SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION

## Youth housing and homelessness support services and frontline youth workers

<b>Date of consultation:</b>	1 August 2017
<b>Group consulted with:</b>	Youth housing and homelessness support services and frontline youth workers
<b>Number of attendees:</b>	15
<b>Name of organisations:</b>	Woden Community Services, Youth Coalition of the ACT, St Vincent de Paul (Family and Youth Homelessness Service), Canberra Youth Residential Service, Oasis Youth Services, CatholicCare, Ted Noffs, Anglicare (Youth Engagement Service), CIT Student, Multicultural Youth Services, YMCA.

### Key themes arising from the consultation

- Early intervention, prevention and education support services are critical to a) alleviating homelessness b) empowering service users to break the cycle of homelessness and be enabled to sustain independent tenancies and c) addressing intergenerational issues.
- Communication and information sharing must improve. This includes between sector and government (about clients) and between government branches (about shared clients).
- In trying to help public housing tenants we should not disempower them. We need to support tenants to understand and appreciate that public housing is a good opportunity and they, in turn, need to follow through with their responsibilities.
- Improve education for young people on how to participate in the affordable home purchase market, such as understanding mortgages and debt facilities, interest (variable and fixed) and household budget management. Saving for a deposit is hard for young people and there could be programs implemented (school banking, interest-free loans, completely phase out stamp duty) to assist.
- Community living, shared space arrangements and tiny house developments are good ideas and should be further explored.

## Key quotes

### Reducing homelessness:

- “Reduce stigma about getting help with mental health support, education and parenting. If more people got help/support/information early in the life of their problem, there would be less need for intensive/long-term/ongoing support later on.”
- “Make OneLink more ‘friendly’ to youth therefore more accessible. Have a OneLink representative visit Woden Youth Centre or similar to build relationships with the young people, increase their understanding of what OneLink is and how they can help. This will improve effectiveness and build trust with a vulnerable cohort.”

### Strengthening social housing:

- “For long term public housing tenants that cannot transition into the private market – housing could consider delivering a model of continued support through support plans. This could be a tiered approach, where support starts out intensively and is pared back over time.”
- “Support services spend a lot of time writing support letters for Housing ACT. Staff do this even though they know that Housing already has the information or they have previously verbally provided it. Housing needs to start trusting the community organisations and their advice. They aren’t there to scam the government.”

### Increasing affordable rental:

- “The ACT could establish a private landlord register that would allow people to put their house on the market if they are willing to give a former public housing tenant a chance.”
- “The government could directly, or through a community service provider, go guarantor for people who are starting out in their rental agreement. This would help people to establish a private rental history and build the skills (with some support) that they need to sustain a private tenancy.”
- “Affordability isn’t the only issue – accommodation needs to be safe. Share housing is there, but there are lots of worrying unknowns for young people with share housing because they are so vulnerable. Young people shouldn’t have to sacrifice safety and security for affordability – but they often do.”

### Increasing affordable home ownership:

- “I could find 20 people today that would buy into a tiny house community immediately.”
- “There are heaps of options to explore but any one solution is just tinkering around the edges.”

## What is working well?

- Emergency Material and Financial Aid (EMFA)
- Early intervention and prevention support services including financial support, support to sustain and maintain tenancies, living skills, EMFA.
- OneLink is operating much better than FirstPoint (but needs improvement)
- The MDP (multidisciplinary panel) review undertaken recently was a good process and had some good outcomes.
- The Safer Families Grant is a good idea, needs to be expanded.
- The distribution of housing across the ACT works really well (salt and peppering approach).
- Housing ACT Rental Bond Loans.
- 'Our Place' effectively supports people 16 years and up.
- Young people who receive social housing assistance get a real benefit in terms of safety and security. It helps them access education and employment.
- It's a good thing that the ACT is a signatory to NRAS.
- Commonwealth Rent Assistance

## What could be improved?

- Revisit the effectiveness of the Central Access Point model for young people
- More money invested in early intervention and prevention because it works, builds resilience and empowers people with the resources and ability to succeed.
- Better parenting programs to assist parents to understand basic life skills
- Homelessness services accepting clients with pets
- More efficient maintenance and repairs so properties are not offline for too long
- Communication and information sharing – between government and sector AND within government branches
- Improve the timeliness of processing applications and appeals for priority needs allocations to effectively free up beds in the crisis sector.
- Reduce demand on hospitals and police for crisis support.
- Services for young people leaving care – transition planning once care orders cease (i.e. the child turns 18) built in from early on
- Implement another 'step' in the service provision journey to transition from full supported accommodation to partial support in a phase out approach.

## New ideas

- Private landlord register for people willing to rent to low income h/holds.
- Affordable rental for young people in group centres.



- Match people who want to rent out a room in their home (e.g. sub-letting) at a discounted rate in exchange for some help or support around the home.
- A fully accessible crisis shelter for 16-plus years, male and female.
- An 'Our Place' for youth who refuse to go to school, and a program for 22-25 year olds like 'Our Place'.
- Continue 'school banking' into high school.
- Interest free or low interest loans for low income first home buyers
- Completely phase out stamp duty for low income earners.
- Better use of empty spaces for crisis accommodation.
- Government-facilitated public forum days in public spaces that allow communal access to support services, other tenants and residents.
- Renewable leases are a good idea, but need mixture of different housing options in the same suburb so that when we do move people we're not uprooting them from community.