



Issue 1: February 2009

Welcome to the first issue of the Community Housing information bulletin for 2009.

Economic stimulus package to boost social housing

By now, all providers will be aware of the Australian Government's announcement this week of a \$42 billion Nation Building and Jobs Plan to support jobs and invest in future long-term economic growth.

It is estimated that Queensland will receive over \$1.2 billion of this funding to be spent on maintenance, upgrades and the construction of new social housing over the next three and half years. This is a major injection of funds into the social housing system, which will also help support the residential construction industry around the State to maintain and sustain jobs in the coming years. It is estimated that this funding will generate approximately 4,000 additional social housing properties for Queensland.

The timeframes for the plan's roll-out are likely to be very tight and will challenge a number of our existing working arrangements, policies and practices, for example, property density and standards, and referral and allocation arrangements.

It is hoped that registered providers can be involved in the delivery of the package in two ways. Firstly, a number of providers in Queensland have an established track record in developing and producing housing and have projects which, with funding, could quickly be commenced. Ideally these would be projects which have progressed through the development application process. Secondly, some registered providers with strong property management expertise may be able to take on management of additional social housing tenancies created as a result of this funding.

The hard work undertaken by providers and the department in aligning services to one social housing system over the past two years, means that Queensland is in a strong position to quickly and effectively implement this initiative. We will communicate with you on a regular basis on the social housing outcomes and employment achieved through this significant package.

Update on national housing initiatives

National Affordable Housing Agreement

The [National Affordable Housing Agreement](#), which came into effect on 1 January 2009, is a significant package for investment in housing that provides a framework for governments to work together to improve housing affordability, reduce homelessness and reduce Indigenous housing disadvantage. Announced by the Council of Australian Governments late last year, the agreement is complemented by three National Partnerships to address homelessness, social housing and remote Indigenous housing.

As part of the new agreement, governments have committed to undertake reforms in the housing sector, including:

- improving integration between the homelessness service system and mainstream services
- reducing concentrations of disadvantage that exist in some social housing estates
- improving access by Indigenous people to mainstream housing, including home ownership
- enhancing the capacity and growth of the not-for-profit housing sector, and
- planning reforms for greater efficiency in the supply of housing.

The agreement identifies the roles and responsibilities for each level of government and establishes a performance framework against which the key outcomes of the agreement will be measured.

Update on the National Rental Affordability Scheme

The [National Rental Affordability Scheme](#) is an Australian Government initiative to stimulate the supply of up to 50,000 new affordable rental dwellings across the country. The call for round two of applications to be submitted by developers closes on Friday 27 March 2009.

Housing Affordability Fund projects announced

The Australian Government's [Housing Affordability Fund](#) will invest up to \$512 million over five years to lower the cost of building new homes. The tender calling for applications closed on Wednesday 15 October 2008. The Australian Government has announced which projects will be asked to provide more information prior to a final decision being made.

Australian Government's White Paper on Homelessness released

On 29 November 2008, the Council of Australian Governments proposed a new approach to responding to homelessness in Australia through its [White Paper on Homelessness](#). Please refer to the link for more information.

A Place To Call Home

[A Place to Call Home](#) is a joint initiative by the Australian, State and Territory Governments to build 600 new homes for individuals and families experiencing homelessness. The Queensland and Australian Governments are each investing \$35.7 million in this program over five years.

New Southern Queensland team for the Business Development and Innovation Unit

Establishment of the not-for-profit Business Development and Innovation Unit is now well under way with the recent addition of the new Capacity Building and Regional Coordination team for Southern Queensland in late January. Members of the new team are:

Ms Kristine Abbott, Manager
Ms Rebecca Hall, Regional Business Development Officer
Ms Michelle Forbes-Mitchell, Regional Support Officer.

The Business Development and Innovation Unit aims to increase the capability of not-for-profit housing providers to become major providers of social and affordable housing within one social housing system, and to encourage innovation and continuous improvement by providers. The Southern Queensland team, based in Brisbane, is the first of three teams to commence and will be followed by teams in Central Queensland, based in Rockhampton, and Northern Queensland, based in Townsville, later in 2009.

The new teams will have a number of functions including:

- providing support to providers who are undergoing organisational consolidation activities and/or who are aspiring to achieve significant growth over the next two to five years
- convening the new Housing Area Networks and working with them to increase access to training and professional development for not-for-profit housing employees, volunteers and governing bodies; and to enhance organisational capacity, and
- identifying good practice and facilitating connections within the not-for-profit housing sector to enable providers to share information and examples of best practice.

The new teams will work with providers towards ensuring a quality-focussed, consolidated and viable not-for-profit social and affordable housing sector with a trained and skilled workforce. The Housing Area Networks will be used to help develop a not-for-profit community housing sector that maximises opportunities for innovation, continuous quality improvement and good practice.

As an initial point of contact and for further information on the Capacity Building and Regional Coordination Team and its functions, please contact CommunityHousing@housing.qld.gov.au

Realignment of transitional housing

The department is continuing to make progress on developing new service delivery arrangements for transitional housing that are aligned to one social housing system. The new arrangements are being developed for the Community Rent Scheme, Community-managed Housing – Studio Units and Same House Different Landlord programs.

The Transitional Housing Stakeholder group met, via teleconference, in December 2008 and reviewed the feedback generated through regional workshops held across the State in October and November 2008. A summary report is being finalised and will be available from the department's website in late March 2009.

The next stakeholder group meeting will be taking place in Brisbane, just before the Queensland Shelter State Conference in late February 2009. It is anticipated that the agenda will include:

- an update on Commonwealth and State housing initiatives including the National Affordable Housing Agreement and the White Paper on Homelessness, and
- discussion on a draft transitional housing Allocations Policy, and a framework for the regular review of transitional housing tenancies (including exit planning to assist clients to secure longer term housing options).

Throughout 2009, the department will continue to work with transitional housing providers and other key stakeholders to develop and implement the new service delivery arrangements.

The realignment of transitional housing will include a review of the funding methodology for all transitional housing programs in 2009-10. However, the department is aware that substantial increases in the rental market has placed more immediate financial pressure on some Community Rent Scheme providers. The Community Rent Scheme continues to play a valuable role in the provision of transitional housing, and departmental staff will work closely with providers who deliver this scheme to consider options for improving the viability of the program.

In the longer term, the realignment will assist with developing a more coordinated and sustainable transitional housing program, while maintaining a strong tenant focus. This may include working with providers to implement a range of strategies including developing a viable portfolio of properties from the private market as well as department-owned dwellings.

Verbal verification of applicant circumstances

The client intake and assessment process, which commenced in September 2008, requires that all applicants provide verification of their circumstances before they can be confirmed in the appropriate segment on the housing register and offered housing assistance. To help manage the large number of applicants who require their circumstances to be verified, the department is applying a verbal verification process until 31 March 2009.

During this period, the department will use verbal verification provided by government or government-funded agencies to confirm applicants' circumstances. In practice, this means that area office staff will telephone agencies and request verbal verification to avert the need for written confirmation. Before seeking this verbal verification, the department must obtain written authority from the applicant to do so.

The Department has established a team to assist Area Offices verify the circumstances of applicants in the very high need and high need segments of the housing register. The team started visiting area offices in January 2009.

The department appreciates the assistance from providers in implementing the client intake and assessment process and seeks your continued assistance in supporting applicants to apply for housing and verify their circumstances.

Further information on the client intake and assessment process is available in the [August 2008 Community Housing Information Bulletin](#).

Support to attend the Queensland Shelter Conference in February

Thanks to providers, Community Housing Resource Workers and housing interest groups for your response to the offer for social housing tenants to attend the Queensland Shelter Conference on 26 and 27 February 2009. The department is providing financial support to these tenants to assist with conference costs such as admission, transport, accommodation, incidentals and meals.

There is little time left, but we do have a few places remaining for community housing tenants from South West Queensland, Far North Queensland, North West Queensland, Gold Coast and greater Brisbane. The conference will provide an important opportunity for social housing tenants to learn, network and share their views.

Please ask interested tenants to express their interest as soon as possible by email to mary.slivka@housing.qld.gov.au or by fax, 3225 1266 to the attention of Mary Slivka. An expression of interest should include the tenant's contact details and indicate why they would like to attend and how they will share their knowledge with social housing tenants in their region.

For more information, please contact Mary on 3227 6650.

Program Performance Reporting reminder

Organisations are reminded of the department's following program reporting requirements. Please pay particular attention to the timeframes for each program delivered by your organisation. Should you have any questions regarding these reporting requirements, please contact Mr Chad Saunders, Project Officer, Reporting and Data Management on 3227 6115.

Program	Description	Date required from organisation
CRS	Community Rent Scheme	3rd business day of the month
Drug Court	Drug Court Residential Program	3rd business day of the month
HACC	Home Modification Services	3rd business day of the month
HAS	Home Assist Secure	3rd business day of the month
TAAS(Q)	Tenant Advice and Advocacy Service (Queensland)	3rd business day of the month
LTCH	Long Term Community Housing	21 st day following the end of the quarter
CMSU	Community-managed - Studio Units	21 st day following the end of the quarter

Brisbane City Council Affordable Housing Incentives

On 2 December 2008, the Brisbane City Council introduced an Affordable Housing Incentives Package, which provides a variety of financial and built form incentives to developers who:

- include affordable housing within their developments, and
- provide a mechanism to ensure affordability for a period of 15 years, usually through a covenant and associated management plan.

The intention of the package is to increase the supply of affordable housing for workers on low to moderate incomes, particularly in the inner city and other high growth areas.

To find out more about the Affordable Housing Incentive Package, please contact the Brisbane City Council on 3403 8888 or visit the Council's website: http://www.brisbane.qld.gov.au/BCC:BASE:917556839:pc=PC_5436

Queensland's community housing providers rated high in service to tenants

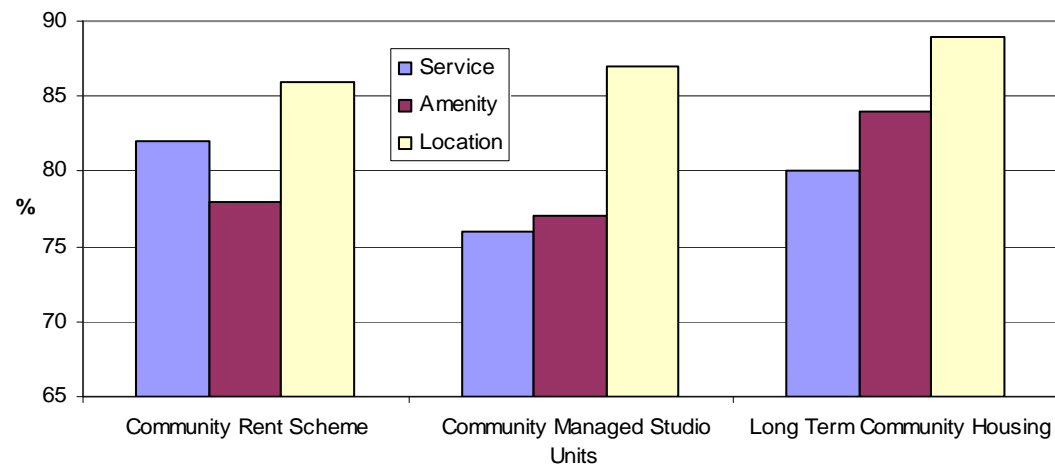
Results from the 2007 National Social Housing Survey showed that 75% of community housing tenants in Queensland were satisfied with their housing – a very good result. By comparison, Queensland's public housing tenants' satisfaction level is 83% - the highest in Australia. This high level of satisfaction is a very positive outcome across the social housing system in Queensland.

The survey also provided Key Performance Indicators of service, amenity (such as accessibility and security of the home) and whether the location of the home meets tenants needs.

Tenants rated their satisfaction with specific areas as follows:

- overall service - 79% satisfied
- amenity of home - 81% satisfied
- location of home - 87% satisfied

Results by provider type are as follows:



Community Rent Scheme

Treatment by staff and availability of clear information were strengths of Community Rent Scheme providers. Condition of the home and maintenance services present an opportunity to increase tenant satisfaction.

Community Managed Studio Units

Condition of the home, treatment by staff and availability of clear information were strengths of Community Managed Studio Unit providers. Tenancy management

Long Term Community Housing

Condition of the home, treatment by staff, availability of clear information and maintenance services were strengths of Long Term Community Housing providers. Tenants in rural areas were more likely to be satisfied with maintenance services than tenants in urban areas.

The results are encouraging and reflect the strong work of community housing providers.

If your organisation is interested in obtaining more detailed information about the survey results, contact your Service Officer on 1800 642902 or email CommunityHousing@housing.qld.gov.au.