



Queensland Government
Department of **Housing**

Report

Community Housing Planning Group

14 - 15 April 2008

**Presented to
Natalie MacDonald
Director-General
Queensland Department of Housing**

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Day 1 – Monday 14 April 2008 – Information and Briefing

Introduction and Welcome

The Community Housing Planning Group (CHPG) met 14 -15 April 2008. The agenda for the meeting and list of delegates is provided as **Attachment 1**.

General Manager's Report and Highlights

Jennifer Clark, General Manager, Community and Public Housing identified a number of key initiatives. A copy of the presentation slides are at **Attachment 2**:

National Housing Policy:

- COAG has identified housing as a key area of its 2008 work agenda and a Housing Working Group has been established to deliver five new initiatives.
- A review of the National Community Housing Standards is underway aimed at identifying any necessary changes to the National Standards to reflect what is 'good practice' in 2008. A consultation kit is available from the Department of Housing website www.housing.qld.gov.au from late April 2008:

Strategic Policy Initiatives:

- Client Intake and Assessment Process – Information sessions for area office staff and Community Housing providers will be held in April and May 2008. Implementation of CIAP will take place in late 2008 and will include a review of need for all applicants on the waitlist.
- Rural Housing Service Centres (RHSC) – A proposed model for a RHSC will be submitted to the Minister in the near future. If approved, a pilot RHSC will commence in 2008.
- Eligibility for housing assistance – In November 2007, 4,246 public housing tenants were advised that they were no longer eligible for housing assistance following assessment of their income and property ownership. Of these, 391 households have terminated their tenancy, 2,391 have requested a review and been found eligible to remain, 45 have been found ineligible after a review and 1,579 have yet to respond and will be required to vacate in May 2008.
- Allocations from the combined wait-list – In the period 1 August 2007 to 31 March 2008 there have been 273 vacancies notified. Of these, 183 properties were allocated and 90 remain vacant. Of the 90, 53 are hard to let and 40 of these are located in areas where there is no waitlist. The department is working on procedures to manage hard to let properties.
- Consolidation and amalgamation – Two new housing companies were established in late 2007: Sunshine Coast Housing Company and BRIC Housing.

Program reviews:

- A number of reviews are in progress to ensure that existing housing programs are aligned to, and fit with one social housing system. Areas of review relate to:
 - Transitional Housing
 - Community Housing Resourcing Framework
 - CAP – SAAP program management arrangements
 - Tenant Participation
 - TAAS(Q) Program

Service delivery projects:

- Community Managed Housing-Studio Unit Program (CMSU) - amendment to the *Housing Regulation 2003* formalised the name change from Boarding House Program. here will be rapid growth in the number of units of accommodation in the next 12 – 18 month from 673 to 1133.
- Spinal Cord Initiative Response – 10 clients have been assisted this year to leave the Princess Alexandra Hospital Spinal Cord Unit.
- Responsive Maintenance – arrangements for department owned stock across the CAP, CRS and Long Term programs are being aligned under one social housing system to ensure consistency with other department programs.
- Water Management – the department has established a Water Management Program to implement water saving strategies in line with the Queensland Water Commission initiatives and Residential Tenancies Authority regulation changes.

Client Intake and Assessment Process (CIAP)

Presented by Kaylene Moore, Manager, CIAP Project, Housing Policy and Strategy. The presentation slides for this session are at **Attachment 3**.

Key messages include:

- CIAP is an integral element of one social housing system and allows the department to determine high need and low need applicants. Higher need applicants will be assisted before lower need applicants and department staff will work closely with high need applicants to ensure they are provided with the most form appropriate assistance.
- Implementation of CIAP will take place in the latter half of 2008.
- The CIAP project team is organising a series of workshops for area office staff and providers that will be held in April and May 2008.

Private Market Assistance - RentConnect

Presented by Nicole Randall, Manager, Policy and Product Development, Private Housing Support and Kellie Lampard, Principal Housing Analyst. The presentation slides for this session are at **Attachment 4**.

Key messages include:

- This initiative aims to address barriers often experienced by low income and disadvantaged people in accessing the private rental market.
- Rent Connect has two main features:
 - Advisory service to assist Queenslanders to secure a tenancy in the private rental market through the provision of information and practical advice.
 - Loan (repayable) to assist with the establishment costs of commencing a tenancy.
- RentConnect will be trialled in Rockhampton and Caboolture area offices in late 2008.

Redesigning the Community Housing Resourcing Framework

Presented by Rebecca Foote, Manager, Policy and Implementation Branch and Penelope Dane, Principal Housing Analyst. The presentation slides for this session are at **Attachment 5**.

Key messages include:

- The discussion paper, '*A new Resourcing Framework to support Community Housing Participation in One Social Housing System*' was released in November 2007.
- Twenty-four stakeholders responded including Peaks, Regional Housing Councils, TAAS(Q) and groups of providers from South East Queensland.
- Objectives to move forward in strengthening social housing include:
 - Improved integration and communication
 - Effective communication
 - Facilitating access to relevant training and professional development
 - A focus on innovation and continuous quality improvement
 - Increasing capability of housing providers to become major providers of social housing

Proposals for the four elements of the existing resourcing framework based on the overarching objectives:

- **Regional Housing Councils → Housing Area Networks**
Key features of the proposed Housing Area Networks include:
 - Information exchange
 - Input to regional planning processes
 - Feedback to the department on emerging issues and trends
 - Linkage between providers and the state-wide group

- **Community Housing Planning Group → Queensland Social Housing Forum**
Proposed features of the Queensland Social Housing Forum include:
 - Stakeholder input to the department's strategic policy and planning processes
 - Communication and collaboration between the department and social housing sector
 - Responding to issues and recommendations on priorities across the social housing system
- **Training and Skills Development → Training and Professional Development Strategy**
Proposed features of a Training and Professional Development Strategy include:
 - Increased access to training and professional development for workers in the not-for-profit sector
 - Enhanced organisational capacity through a strengthened workforce
 - Skill retention within the not-for-profit sector
- **Community Housing Resource Worker Program → Not-for-profit Housing Business Development and Innovation Units**
Proposed features of Not-for-profit Housing Business Development and Innovation Units include:
 - Located within the department with potential for future transition to a not-for-profit organisation
 - Central Business Development and Innovation Unit to compliment work on the National Agenda, develop tools and products to support growth providers and provide support to the Greater Brisbane Region.
 - Regional Development Units to assist social housing providers develop into major providers and align regions with existing Client Service Regions

Review of Program Management Arrangements for Supported Accommodation Assistance Program and Crisis Accommodation Program

Presented by Wilf Williams, KPMG Consultants. The presentation slides for this session are at **Attachment 6**.

Key messages include:

- The purpose of the review is to identify optimal program management arrangements for CAP and SAAP.
- A number of regional forums were held across the State including Cairns, Townsville, Brisbane, Gold Coast and Rockhampton. Teleconferencing arrangements were made for rural and remote areas.
- There are opportunities for improvement across the structures and processes of the existing model to improve and benefit service providers and clients.

Responding to Homelessness

Presented by Christopher Banks, Principal Project Officer, Housing Policy and Strategy.

Responding to Homelessness Evaluation has three phases:

- Phase 1 – Mid-term review of the Queensland Government's Coordinated Response to Homelessness was completed last year by the University of Queensland Social Research Centre. The mid-term review focused on services in Townsville and Brisbane and examined the processes and mechanisms supporting the initiative and the roll-out and implementation of programs.
- Phase 2 – Individual Program Evaluation – each department responsible for delivering Responding to Homelessness programs is conducting evaluations of the programs they are responsible for. Phase 2 evaluations will be completed by August 2008 to effectively feed into Phase 3.
- Phase 3 – Strategic Impact Evaluation – will focus on the combined, cumulative effect of the initiative. Phase 3 will be informed by Phase 2 findings but will also involve extensive evaluation activities in its own right to identify what has worked and why. An external consultant will be contracted to complete the evaluation which will take place between June 2008 and March 2009.

Indigenous Issues

Presented by Jonathon Leitch, Manager, Housing Demand.

- The Community Housing and Infrastructure Program used by the Australian Government to fund Indigenous Community Housing organisations will cease on 30 June 2008. The department of Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs has shown a renewed interest in resolving the future of these organisations.
- Housing Policy and Strategy with the department is reactivating the development of a plan to transition Indigenous Community Housing Organisation's into the State's jurisdiction.
- This is likely to involve up to 90 organisations with approximately 2200 assets. Governance, Property Condition Appraisals and Tenant Surveys have been carried out to assess the governance arrangements, condition of stock and household demographics.
- This will be complex work as each organisation is unique in terms of governance structure, liquidity, size, ownership of assets and tenancy management practices. Some may choose to transfer assets to public housing, while others may wish to continue as community based providers. Some may choose to stay outside the social housing system.
- Any moves to bring these organisations into the One Social Housing System will be consistent with current public or community housing policy and practice.

National Affordable Housing Agreements

Presented by Alan Shaw, Manager, Housing Supply, Housing Policy and Strategy. The presentation slides for this session are at **Attachment 7**.

Key messages include:

- Council of Australian Government's (COAG) housing initiatives were announced in December 2007:
 - **National Affordability Fund** - \$500 million funding to assist up to 50,000 new home buyers and an expected saving of up to \$10,000 per block of land to be passed on to new buyers.
 - **National Rental Affordability Scheme** – aims to increase supply of affordable rental properties with an additional 50,000 properties by 2011-12 through financial incentives for investors.
 - **Use of Surplus Land** – possible release of Commonwealth, State and Territory land for housing development.
 - **National Housing Supply Council** – comprising representatives from a range of expert bodies, the council will improve the evidence base for housing policy development and provide research, forecasting and advice about the adequacy and supply of housing.
 - **A Place to Call Home** – provision of 600 new dwellings nationally for the homeless.
- National Affordable Housing Agreement
 - replacement of the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement from 1 January 2009.
 - Indigenous housing to be funded through a separate National Partnership project.
- National Regulatory Framework
 - Housing Ministers agreed the framework in 2005 for National Action on Affordable Housing. The framework provides a system for legislative and administrative controls and was endorsed in March 2008.
 - For implementation in Queensland a range of amendments to the *Housing Act 2003* are required focused primarily on creating a new registration category and prescribed requirements for not for profit growth providers.
 - Implementation will form a significant component of work for the department over the next three years.

Day Two – Tuesday 15 April 2008 – Discussion and Feedback

Day two of the CHPG meeting was chaired by Penny Gillespie, General Manager, Housing Policy and Strategy.

Director General - Natalie MacDonald

The Director-General addressed the group on the key priorities of the Department of Housing at present and into the future. Key messages included:

- The department will continue to add to social housing stock and offer support to those Queenslanders on low incomes.
- The department will continue to build and refine links so that the social housing products are targeted and promoted to help those in need access assistance. The next 12 – 18 months will continue to focus on the system and how it can work better for the clients we are helping. To be effective, the department needs feedback from stakeholders on what is working well and what is not. There is recognition within the department that rural issues may need to be managed differently to urban issues.
- Commonwealth State Housing Program – the Federal Minister for Housing announced 143 houses over four-years for the A Place to Call Home initiative.
- One Social Housing System reforms will continue to be implemented and the next 12 – 18 months will focus on ensuring linkages and transitions between crisis, transitional and long term social housing.
- Indigenous Community Housing Organisations (ICHO) – A large amount of ICHO stock is badly deteriorated in many regions. The department is keen to work through with the Australian Government to address this.
- Direct communication between the department and housing organisations is important to the department. The Director-General encouraged organisations to contact the department directly about issues.

Questions to the Director General from delegates:

- Has the department given consideration to decentralisation?

Response: There are costs and benefits of any model. Closer relationships between area offices and the providers in the regions is important. The department will look at what functions are needed and then consider the best delivery model.

Round-up by Regional Council delegates

Delegates were offered the opportunity to provide feedback on issues in their region, impacts on provision and successes since the last meeting. Key messages include:

Far North Queensland Regional Community Housing Council - Wynn Hopkins

- Services are available to people who are at risk of losing their tenancies. This initiative is proving successful.
- Community Housing Resource Worker is working on a submission for purchase of a vacant dwelling.
- Terry Wallace has moved to a position within the Department of Housing.
- Cairns Homelessness Service Hub opened in 2008. The department provides brokerage funding.

Wide Bay Burnett Regional Community Housing Council - Brett Hanna

- Many providers in the region have formed close relationships and are sharing information, policies and procedures through the accreditation process.
- Community Rent Scheme – increasing rental costs in the region are having an impact on the viability of this program. There is evidence of increased turn-over of head-leased properties as lessors request vacant possession of properties utilised under the program.
- Consolidation – Discussions have taken place within the region about the benefits of becoming a company. Some organisations in the region are exploring consolidation further.

TAAS(Q) network - Lorraine Bakon

- The current housing situation in Queensland is placing a stress on TAAS(Q) services. Much of the work being undertaken involves early intervention and assisting clients to sustain existing tenancies.
- Some groups such as Indigenous people, single parents, large families and those with limited English ability are becoming increasingly marginalised in the private rental market.
- Increased levels of assistance by TAAS(Q) services are being directed to clients from CALD communities and a clear need is emerging for settlement assistance for some groups.

North West Queensland Regional Community Housing Council - Carol Carn

- The introduction of alcohol plans has seen the migration of Indigenous people from Western Australia and Northern Territory to Mt Isa. There is little data to support this observation as this group is not applying for housing. This issue is being monitored.

- There is general housing stress in the region owing to an inadequate standard of housing with limited options for private rental. There are no disability modified properties in the region and some areas do not have Real Estate Agents so there are no vacancy listings. Vacancies are being filled by word of mouth.
- There is no private rental market in Winton so the Regional Council is considering land release in this area.
- Mt Isa is experiencing problems securing properties for Government employees.

Brisbane Central Regional Community Housing Council - Lee Burton

- Five large CRS providers are experiencing pressure to operate in the current private rental market. As CRS is integral to social housing provision in South East Queensland, this is a concern to the regional council.
- The North-to-South tunnel construction in Brisbane is impacting on the supply of private boarding house accommodation and private rental housing. The impacts of major infrastructure projects on housing availability and supply, needs to be considered.

Central Queensland Regional Community Housing Council - Lyn Anderson

- There has been an increase in homelessness in the region. Crisis accommodation is at a premium impacting considerably on single men in the community. Caravan parks are proving to be an unviable option in the region as many are either expensive or will not take long term tenants.
- The issue of remoteness relates to access to services not just geographical location.

North Queensland Regional Community Housing Council - Elvine Whitbread

- Access points – the Regional Community Housing Council is working on a model to remove this role from court houses as they are considered a barrier to good outcomes for applicants.
- Seven housing organisations have an extra housing worker for the next 12 months.
- Two new mines have opened in the region that may impact on the market. As a result, private rents in Charters Towers have risen.

South East Queensland (North) Regional Community Housing Council - Janet Forder

- The Sunshine Coast Housing Company is almost there. There has been a discussion with the Area Office about transitional housing and how support can be provided by SAAP providers.

- The DOH recently purchased a motel to use as Community Managed Housing – Studio Units. A local newspaper is writing adverse articles about this project, although feedback to the editorial has been supportive. The Regional Community Housing Council is considering a strategy to promote these units within the region.
- Single people are struggling to find private rental accommodation as it is becoming increasingly unaffordable. The housing sector in the region is aiming to get good information to this group.
- Crisis services are working hard in an environment of high demand for their services. Many have had to turn people away.

Mackay-Whitsunday Regional Community Housing Council - Lorraine Wirth

- Recent flooding in the region has seen a high demand for crisis accommodation. Thirty-one requests for accommodation have been received in the past two-weeks.
- An influx of contractors to undertake essential works has increased demand for accommodation in the region. The Department of Housing is utilising a local motel to relieve the flooding response.
- High migration rates in Mackay are having an impact on the housing market in the area.
- The Whitsunday Housing Company has now received registration status.

Representative for South East Queensland South - Gavin Coman

- The Gold Coast is experiencing high demand for social housing as the population increases in the region. Approximately 200 people per week are moving to the area.

Darling Downs Regional Community Housing Council - Mal Dinham

- There are limited independent living units for seniors in the region. Some elderly people may own property of low value but this restricts them from applying for housing through the department.
- There is an issue from the community of Bell about younger people going into independent living units for seniors. The department will investigate this further and assist the organisation where possible.
- With the amalgamation of councils to form Roma Regional Council there is a concern that counsellors with experience in the housing area will be lost.

Peak Organisations for Rural & Remote Community Housing (PORRCH) - Neil Polglase

- Some organisations in the region have been given insufficient information from the area office to make allocations. Organisations are often required to follow-up for key information such as income details.
- There are 22 vacancies in the region with no applicants listing for these areas. This emphasises the need for a policy to manage hard to let properties.

Good-Bye to Gavin!

April's Planning Group meeting marked the last meeting for Gavin Conman. Gavin has represented the South East Queensland South region since the inaugural Planning Group meeting in November 2001. The Planning Group thanked Gavin for his contribution to this forum during the past seven years and wished him all the best for the future.

Group Discussion

Delegates were asked to work in three groups and consider a range of questions on four of the projects presented on the first day of the meeting. The guidance questions and transcript of feedback received is at **Attachment 8**.

Review of Community Housing Resourcing Framework

Delegates were asked to provide feedback on the following aspects of the department's proposal for Community Housing resourcing arrangements in the future:

Are the proposed objectives for strengthening social housing correct?

- There was broad agreement with the proposed objectives. A suggestion was made by two groups that access to training and development be included in the objectives.
- It was also suggested that a definition of terms would be useful and that effective communication and collaboration could be included.

Queensland Social Housing Forum

- There was broad support for the proposed membership but also a need to include national and AHURI representation. It was proposed that the chair should be external to Community and Public Housing and a review of the terms of reference were also strongly supported.
- Delegates indicated that a Queensland Social Housing Forum (QSHF) should play a key role in strengthening relationships within the sector, recognise regional diversity and disseminate information about State and national developments.
- There was support for a caucus for non-department delegates to bond representatives, allow for brain storming of ideas and identify opportunities the meeting may present.

- There was a shared view that the administrative and coordination activities associated with the QSHF need to be better managed. A more transparent agenda setting process and timely distribution of the agenda, discussion paper and presentation slides were cited as important to the success of the meeting.

Housing Area Networks

- There was broad support for the move from Community Housing Regional Councils to Housing Area Networks (HAN) as this was seen to be aligned with the current regional model.
- It was thought that membership may vary from region to region and include different groups with broader representation across the housing sector.

Training and Skills Development Strategy

Recommendations from delegates on this element of the resourcing framework included:

- Consideration to accessing Department of Community Services training opportunities.
- Linking to Housing Area Networks and accredited training programs.
- Training is required for front line workers such as dealing with difficult clients.
- Specific training is required for staff performing different roles.

Not-For-Profit Social Housing Business Development and Innovation Units

Feedback on the proposed transition to this model included:

- Units should report to central office in Brisbane not area offices.
- Face-to-face contact with providers is important to success as is regional knowledge.
- Two-way strategic planning is important to be responsive to community needs.

Private Market Assistance (RentConnect)

The group discussing this initiative identified that the client groups mostly likely to benefit include:

- Existing applicants on the department's waiting list for housing, clients with no or limited rental history and/or experiencing discrimination, people exiting SAAP and clients wanting to exit (or as a alternative to entering) social housing.

Key relationships required to ensure effective service provision include:

- TAAS(Q), private lessors, real estate agents, support services, CRS and CMSU providers.

Client Intake and Assessment Process

Group discussion focused on the presentation given on Day 1.

- There is an onus on the client to provide extensive evidence, this may discourage some applicants with low literacy levels or disadvantage those people who require assistance.
- There is a need for non-government entry points, as perception in the community is that the department will be the only entry point.
- The existing department application form does not capture sufficient data for SAAP i.e. needs related data.

Affordable Housing and Homelessness

It was thought that the role of the non-government sector in delivering affordable housing would be in the form of tenancy management functions and for growth organisations as a property developer. The opportunities for collaborating with private industry include the use of superannuation funds for investment and the formation of a consortium of large providers to represent a larger economy of scale for private investment.

Homelessness – how can services best be matched to client needs? Feedback included:

- Offer better support to clients before they become homeless.
- Increase supply of housing, particularly in Indigenous communities.
- Establish transitional housing (shared) for young people – head tenant model may work well.
- Assist persons experiencing domestic violence to remain in the home (perpetrator removed)

Meeting Closed

Jennifer Clark, General Manager, Community and Public Housing closed the meeting by thanking delegates for their participation and requesting feedback on the meeting content and revised format. Feedback was positive, although some delegates commented that the first day was too intensive to fully understand the range of issues and impacts at a regional level.

No agenda items have been carried over or agreed for the next meeting in October 2008.