



Queensland
Government
Department of **Housing**

DISCUSSION PAPER

Realigning transitional housing in one social housing system

Department of Housing
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1. Purpose of paper

The principal purpose of this paper is to identify key policy and operational changes required to ensure the ongoing effective functioning of transitional housing within one social housing system.

This paper proposes a new framework for transitional housing aligned to one social housing system with the aim of delivering timely and responsive assistance to clients. The paper identifies critical integration requirements for existing transitional housing programs, predominantly the Community Rent Scheme (CRS) and the shared facility accommodation within Community-managed Housing - Studio Units (CMSU) formerly called the Boarding House Program.¹

Stakeholder feedback on the arrangements and implementation issues identified in this discussion paper is sought. To assist in preparing feedback, a response sheet has been attached at the back of the paper. Following receipt of stakeholder feedback, the department will seek government approval of the proposed new program arrangements for transitional housing. The department proposes that staged implementation of new arrangements for transitional housing will commence from July 2008.

2. The need for review

2.1 General context

In response to increasing demand for housing assistance and changes to the Queensland housing market, the Department of Housing is significantly changing the way assistance is provided to Queenslanders in housing need. The one social housing system is a fairer and more transparent way to ensure social housing assistance is allocated where it is needed most, for the time that it is needed.

Community and local government-managed housing is an integral part of social housing delivery in Queensland. The department's vision for community and local government-managed housing in Queensland is that by 2011, a robust and deliberately planned network of funded organisations will operate in a coordinated way as part of one social housing system. This network will help deliver viable, sustainable, quality services which are easily accessed by clients most in need of assistance and which respond well to the needs of those clients and the communities that they live in.²

Key one social housing system features include:

- delivering housing products and services in a client-focused, integrated manner
- providing long-term housing to people with the highest need for this type of assistance, for as long as they need it
- connecting clients to support services as needed

¹ There are six programs which either exclusively provide housing assistance on a transitional basis or which have housing stock with shared facilities (kitchen/bathroom/communal living) which is used on a transitional basis by tenants or providers. The following programs have portfolios that include transitional housing and/or housing with shared facilities: Community Rent Scheme (CRS), Community managed Housing - Studio Units (CMSU), Same House Different Landlord (SHDL), Long-term Community Housing Program, Affordable Housing and Crisis Accommodation Program (CAP)

² Department of Housing, *One Social Housing System: A new direction for community and local government-managed housing in the Smart State*, p.3

- ongoing review of the eligibility of applicants waiting for long-term social housing assistance
- ongoing review of the eligibility of existing social housing tenants to continue receiving assistance
- introducing a need-based assessment tool in 2008/2009
- developing pathways from social housing into private rental and home ownership markets.

The staged implementation of one social housing system requires the review of all housing programs and the implementation of revised program arrangements where necessary to ensure the department and community and local government housing providers can work together to deliver the desired outcomes of one social housing system.

The focus to date has been on long-term social housing, bringing together public housing, long-term community housing and affordable housing as complementary services for our clients. It is now time to consider the role of transitional housing and how it can be best aligned with other key housing components to achieve positive client outcomes and the optimal use of available housing resources.

This involves considering which existing aspects of transitional housing complement the one social housing system and which aspects require change. In reviewing and realigning transitional housing, those aspects of its current operation which work well and provide good outcomes for clients will be retained.

The realignment will also consider the housing environment within which transitional housing operates. The housing environment has undergone significant changes since transitional housing programs were first established. These changes include:

- increases in the duration of transitional housing tenancies as wait times for long-term social housing options have increased. This has resulted in delays in people moving into transitional housing from crisis accommodation and other entry points as well as out of transitional housing into long-term housing
- significant increases in private rental costs
- loss of low-cost private housing.

There will continue to be a need for transitional housing responses to assist eligible clients with high housing needs who:

- are waiting for long-term social housing to be allocated
- are in housing transition for a variety of reasons³; or
- require a period of transitional housing assistance in order to successfully move into private accommodation in the future.

³ An example of a client/household in transition is a refugee or refugee household granted a Temporary Protection Visa while awaiting a determination on whether permanent residency status will be granted.

3. Existing transitional housing arrangements

3.1 Overview of funding programs

Transitional housing represents approximately 4% of the existing social housing portfolio.⁴ There are six funding programs through which time-limited housing assistance is explicitly provided or where properties containing some shared facilities are typically used by clients for short to medium periods of time. Of these six programs, Community Rent Scheme (CRS) and Community-managed Housing - Studio Units (CMSU) are the principal mechanisms through which transitional housing assistance is provided.

Community Rent Scheme (CRS) – CRS is Queensland’s largest provider of transitional housing responses. It was established in 1991 to provide an immediate, short to medium-term housing solution to people experiencing severe housing need while waiting for a public housing allocation. The existing program specifications for CRS state that the purpose of the CRS program is to:

*provide short to medium-term accommodation to Eligible Persons, which is used as a transition to long-term social housing or other secure housing options.*⁵

At the time CRS was established, public housing allocations were made on a wait-turn basis and there was no policy governing priority access to public housing. The department now operates a Specific Needs Policy which would apply to many CRS clients.

The CRS program provides community organisations with rent and operating subsidies to provide rental housing at affordable levels. CRS provides funding for 23 organisations operating 28 services across Queensland. CRS providers receive recurrent funding to assist in the costs associated with housing management (including salaries for tenancy and property management, office rental and administration) and property management (including subsidies towards property rentals, maintenance, repairs and vacancies).

To assist in targeting program resources, the CRS program specifications identify target groups who face particular barriers in accessing the private rental market. Groups prioritised for CRS transitional housing assistance include:

- people exiting from crisis housing
- young people (25 years and under)
- singles and large families
- people escaping domestic violence
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- victims of crime and natural disasters.

An additional aspect of the CRS in recent years has been a small expansion of the program to respond to specific whole-of-Government or intra-agency initiatives designed to meet the needs of highly specific target groups. Examples of these initiatives include the Drug Court Residential Program and the Indigenous Alcohol Diversion Program.

⁴ As at 31 January 2008. Figure excludes all CAP units of accommodation and self contained units funded under Community-managed Housing - Studio Units, Long Term Community Housing Program and Affordable Housing (Brisbane Housing Company)

⁵ Community Rent Scheme Program Specifications, approved May 2006, p.2

Clients access CRS providers through multiple referral points including departmental area offices, crisis and supported accommodation agencies, homelessness hubs, and self referral to CRS organisations. Government and community agencies such as Homeless Persons Information Queensland, hospitals, Tenant Advice and Advocacy Services, Lifeline, police and community centres are also potential referral points. In 2006-07, a total of 2977 households were assisted. Of these, 1,124 new households were assisted in that year.⁶

Need-based assessments of clients are a feature of the CRS program. They assist providers to manage waitlists for housing assistance and, in the case of some providers, to develop formal case plans for tenants which assist in the delivery of intensive tenancy management. Most CRS service providers undertake intensive tenancy management, such as activities to assist tenants to maintain a transitional housing tenancy and sustain long-term tenancies in social or private housing markets. Intensive tenancy management was identified in the 2004 evaluation of the CRS as one of the important factors in achieving successful client outcomes.

The average length of tenancy within CRS has increased over the last three years from 61 weeks to 69 weeks.⁷ In 2006-07 the duration of tenancy for 76% of clients was two years or less. Tenants primarily exited CRS tenancy to either public housing (27%) or private rental options (29%).⁸

CRS service providers manage a diverse range of properties (detached houses, townhouses, or units) head leased from the private rental market. In addition, there are 233 departmentally-owned properties.⁹ Following discussions with community housing providers, it is proposed to review current maintenance arrangements in more detail and consider a two-tiered approach to support the maintenance needs of both smaller and growth providers. In 2006-07 CRS providers managed 2,020 properties and demonstrated a capacity to operate effectively within local private rental markets and undertake property management.¹⁰

Community-managed Housing - Studio Units (CMSU) – This program was first established in 1991 as the Boarding House Program and renamed in 2007 to more appropriately reflect the type of accommodation provided through the program. The existing program specifications for CMSU state that its purpose is to:

*provide boarding house accommodation for Eligible Persons.*¹¹

The program provides capital funds for the acquisition, construction and furnishing of properties for use as boarding house style accommodation. The properties are leased to and managed by not-for-profit organisations which use revenue from rent payments to cover costs associated with tenancy and property management. There are 14 providers operating throughout Queensland.

CMSU primarily targets low income single people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and are socially marginalised. The most common referral source for CMSU is crisis accommodation providers (38%) followed by self-referrals/referrals from friends (28%) and community organisations (23%). In 2006-07, 624 households were assisted.¹²

⁶ CRS Service Provider Reports 2006-07

⁷ CRS Service Provider Reports 2004-05, 2005-06 and 2006-07

⁸ As at 31 December 2007

⁹ As at 31 January 2008

¹⁰ CRS Service Provider Reports 2006-07

¹¹ Boarding House Program Specifications, approved 31 May 2006, p.2

¹² CMSU Organisations Quarterly Reports 2006-07

Need-based assessments and the use of intensive tenancy management practices are not consistently applied across all CMSU providers. Some providers use a proportion of management fees (derived from tenant rental revenue) to fund tenancy management services.

CMSU provides short, medium and long-term accommodation. The Duration of Need Policy applies to all CMSU tenancies. The duration of tenancies varies across CMSU tenants with almost one quarter (22%) having resided with the same CMSU provider for over four years and 19% having resided for less than three months.¹³ There is some evidence that duration of tenancy is considerably shorter in accommodation containing some shared facilities; it is not unusual for tenants to move from traditional boarding house style accommodation to self-contained options as vacancies occur within the provider's portfolio.

As at 31 January 2008, CMSU provided 374 units of accommodation with attached shared facilities and 638 self contained units.¹⁴ There has and will continue to be a rapid growth in the number of units available under CMSU. Its portfolio size is expected to increase from 457 in 2004 to 1,450 units by June 2011.¹⁵ A proportion of newly-acquired units will contain shared facilities. All properties are owned by the department and leased to providers at a nominal rent.

In addition to CRS and CMSU there are four other programs which are either explicitly transitional in purpose or which have properties incorporating shared facilities and which are well suited to provide transitional housing responses. These programs are:

Crisis Accommodation Program (CAP) – CAP was established in 1984 to provide accommodation to persons who are homeless, at risk of homelessness, in crisis or in need of transitional support in their move towards independent living. The program's target groups include families, young people, singles, people escaping family violence and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

There are 111 CAP providers¹⁶, including community organisations, local governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Councils, managing 141 CAP services throughout Queensland. These providers manage 1,223 rental units which are either owned by the department or have been head leased through the private rental market. This figure includes a diverse range of properties from self-contained detached houses and townhouses, units, and duplexes through to shelters offering short, medium and long-term accommodation with on-site staff providing personalised support to tenants. Of the 1,223 rental units, 203 contain shared facilities.¹⁷

Thirty-two of the CAP rental units are part of the Transitional Housing Initiative, which was established to purchase or construct properties to provide transitional housing responses to meet increasing levels of homelessness in Queensland.

Same House Different Landlord (SHDL) – The program was established in 2002 to provide public housing properties to not-for-profit community housing organisations for lease to tenants in need of crisis and transitional accommodation. The purpose of SHDL is to enable tenants and their property lease to transition to public housing after a period of assistance by the SHDL provider without physically relocating to another dwelling.

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ As at 31 January 2008

¹⁵ Figure based on growth projections at December 2007.

¹⁶ Data as at 31 January 2008.

¹⁷ As at 31 January 2008. Figures may be revised as data is updated. A rental unit equates to a tenancy agreement. Therefore, in a shared facilities property rental units generally equate to the number of bedrooms. A detached house used to accommodate one family will equate to one rental unit. The figure of 1,223 does not include non-CAP funded accommodation provided by SAAP services

There are 33 SHDL providers throughout Queensland. During 2006-07, these providers managed 90 properties and assisted 106 households.¹⁸ SHDL providers use rental revenue to underwrite the costs associated with tenancy and property management. There is no recurrent funding attached to SHDL; however, the majority of SHDL providers are funded recurrently under the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP).

Affordable Housing – Affordable Housing providers are defined in Section 4 A of the *Housing Regulation 2003* as:

a registered provider whose assistance agreement with the chief executive requires the provider to ensure that the provider's rent policy supports the application of the benchmark affordable rents schedule¹⁹

Affordable Housing seeks to increase the supply of affordable housing options to people experiencing housing affordability issues in the private rental market by offering accommodation at below market rent. At present, the Brisbane Housing Company (BHC) is the only Affordable Housing provider in Queensland with tenancies under management.

Of the 575 units of accommodation that BHC owns, 116 incorporate shared facilities.²⁰

Long Term Community Housing Program (LTCHP) – The Long Term Community Housing Program was established in 1984. It provides community organisations and local governments with capital funds to provide long-term housing in rural and regional areas of the State where there is little or no public housing stock or to provide housing assistance to marginalised households, such as young people, people with intellectual and physical disabilities/mental illness, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and older persons.

There are 294 services funded under LTCHP. These services manage 3,024 units of accommodation. As at 31 January 2008, 78 of the units of accommodation incorporated shared facilities.²¹

3.2 Program requirements

Irrespective of specific targeting by providers, CRS, CMSU, LTCHP and affordable housing applicants are required to meet the common eligibility criteria for social housing assistance and to have completed an Application for Housing Assistance Form. Applicants for CRS, LTCHP and affordable housing are registered on the department's housing register. Allocations to recently acquired CMSU accommodation come from the department's housing register as well as from CMSU provider waitlists.

Under CAP specifications there is no common eligibility criteria or requirement to utilise the common application form. An eligible person to receive CAP housing assistance is defined in the program specifications as:

persons who are homeless, at risk of homelessness, in crisis or in need of transitional support in the move towards independent living²²

In relation to SHDL it is currently the case that in order to be eligible a person does have to meet CRS requirements, which include being on the department's housing register.

¹⁸ Community Housing Monthly Statistics report, Department of Housing

¹⁹ Section 4 A , *Housing Regulation 2003*

²⁰ As at January 2008

²¹ As at 31 January 2008. Figures may be revised as data is updated

²² Crisis Accommodation Assistance Program, program specifications approved January 2007

It is proposed that new transitional housing arrangements will apply to CRS, CMSU shared facilities and SHDL. Self-contained accommodation in CMSU may be used as either transitional or long-term accommodation, depending on each client's assessed need.

The extension of new transitional arrangements to include shared facility stock managed by providers funded under LTCHP or affordable housing will require further analysis, including consideration of any intra-agency agreements attached to the properties.²³

From 1 February 2007, providers receiving funds under either LTCHP or Affordable Housing were required to transition all applicants on LTCHP or Affordable Housing waitlists to the department's housing register. From 1 August 2007, Brisbane Housing Company and providers funded under LTCHP commenced making allocations from the housing register in accordance with the Allocations Policy. Wherever practicable, policies and procedures for organisations managing properties funded under multiple streams should be consistent to minimise service and client disruption.

The Departments of Housing and Communities are currently undertaking a review of SAAP/CAP program arrangements. Following completion of the review, future arrangements for tenancy management for CAP properties will be explored.

Rent Start, which provides time-limited rental subsidies to properties head leased through the rental market, is not considered within the scope of proposed changes for transitional housing. This is because Rent Start is in a pilot phase of operation and applicants eligible for Rent Start assistance are unlikely to be assessed as requiring long-term social housing. Consequently, applicants will generally not be assigned to a high need category once a uniform needs assessment system is implemented. Rent Start may however be considered an option for tenants exiting from transitional housing.

4. Future arrangements for transitional housing

The implementation of one social housing system presents a timely opportunity to consider how existing transitional housing providers can continue to improve the quality and scope of services to clients as well as achieving administrative and service delivery efficiencies. In addition, it is anticipated that there will be some growth in the size of the transitional housing portfolio, necessitating action to ensure that this growth is managed in a viable and sustainable manner.

For example, the department is planning for an increase in units of accommodation (both shared facilities and self-contained) under CMSU from 673 in 2006-07 to 1,450 by 2010-2011.²⁴ In addition, the Commonwealth Government recently announced funding for an additional 600 properties nationwide over the next five years to assist in addressing homelessness. There is potential for this initiative to result in increased dwellings available for transitional housing responses.²⁵

The department's intention in reshaping transitional housing is to design and deliver a housing response which is capable of delivering good outcomes for clients and is responsive to the changing housing environment in which it will operate.

²³ For example some shared facility dwellings may receive funding support packages from Disability Services Queensland which stipulate target groups and duration of tenancy

²⁴ Estimated increase only. Growth contingent on additional funding being made available through normal budgetary processes

²⁵ *Homelessness: A New Approach*, Commonwealth Government, 27 January 2008

Accordingly, the objectives in reshaping transitional housing include:

- repositioning transitional housing to ensure its effective functioning as part of one social housing system, including complementing the revised arrangements for LTCHP and Affordable Housing introduced on 1 August 2007
- retaining and enhancing existing program and provider strengths and capabilities
- enhancing tenancy management approaches to the provision of housing assistance to optimise client outcomes, including the movement into appropriate and sustainable long-term social housing or the private rental market
- enhancing integration with other key housing responses that provide crisis and long-term social housing
- improving efficiency and effective use of available transitional housing resources.

For clients this will mean:

- minimising the time spent in crisis shelters and achieving more rapid movement into housing within communities
- matching housing responses to assessed client need
- providing assistance only for the time it is needed in recognition of the limited supply of transitional housing.

For program changes to be delivered consistently, efficiently and effectively, by June 2011 the following future performance outcomes for transitional housing providers are proposed:

- Compliance with departmental funding arrangements including assistance agreements and program specifications.
- Accreditation against National Community Housing Standards by 1 February 2010.²⁶
- Viability and sustainability as shown by good governance and sound financial management.
- Sufficiency of scale to be viable and robust.
- High visibility within their region of operation and ready accessibility to those in need of transitional housing assistance.
- Well-connected and integrated within one social housing system.

It is proposed that the new arrangements will include changes to the following five key components of transitional housing:

1. Purpose and intent – a consistent purpose and intent for all transitional housing responses.
2. Targeting – removing specific target sub-sets and instead targeting transitional housing assistance to clients who are homeless or at risk of homelessness with high housing need. Targeting should be consistent with categories of need likely to be implemented as part of a common need assessment system.

²⁶ A requirement for certain providers, including CRS and CMSU, under the *Housing Regulation 2003*, section 8A and transitional provision 68

3. Integration with other key housing components – establishing negotiated pathways into, across and out of crisis, transitional and long-term housing to promote seamless service to clients and optimise efficiency and effectiveness across one social housing system.
4. Tenancy management – retaining and enhancing existing successful tenancy management practices. New practices such as individual tenancy plans will be introduced.
5. Resourcing arrangements - revising funding arrangements consistent with the Queensland Government Framework for Investment in Human Services implemented on 1 January 2008.

Section 4.1 outlines in greater detail the changes proposed to each of these components. Appendix One provides a comparison of the key existing arrangements for transitional housing and the changes proposed.

4.1 Moving to new arrangements for transitional housing

Implementing the revised arrangements for transitional housing will be an incremental process. Implementation is expected to commence from July 2008. Full implementation of the new arrangements is expected to occur by June 2011. Three year funding agreements are intended to commence on 1 July 2008. They will specify that funding will be contingent on providers implementing new service arrangements.

The following sections of this paper outline proposed new arrangements with respect to the five key components of transitional housing referred to above. A number of critical implementation tasks have also been outlined to prompt feedback on each of the components. Appendix 1 sets out in further detail the implementation of proposed arrangements over a three year period commencing on 1 July 2008.

4.1.1 Component one: transitional housing purpose and objectives

Proposed arrangements

It is proposed that a uniform purpose and set of objectives be established and outlined in the Program Specifications for transitional housing. This will contribute to housing applicants being assessed, matched with and referred to the most suitable housing response for their identified needs. Specifically, it is proposed that the purpose of transitional housing be:

To assist eligible households with identified high and immediate housing needs to progress to longer-term living arrangements in the private or social housing sectors. Transitional housing will provide housing assistance for a fixed period of time based on identified client need

What this means in practice is that transitional housing will provide:

- an interim housing option for people with high and immediate need who do not require long-term social housing assistance but who require a housing response delivered within an intensive tenancy management framework
- an interim housing option for people with high and immediate need who are assessed as requiring longer-term social housing but for whom long-term social housing is unavailable at the time of assessment
- opportunities for people with high housing needs to stabilise their circumstances prior to moving into long-term social and private housing options

- opportunities for people to acquire tenancy skills which will assist them to access and sustain long-term social and private housing options
- assistance to tenants to access the private rental market
- information on housing assistance options.

To achieve these objectives, transitional housing providers will need to develop relationships with other key housing services to ensure that pathways into, across and out of social housing are simple and clear for clients, housing providers and key referring agencies.

Proposed tasks to achieve implementation

- Confirm which existing programs and accommodation types providing transitional housing responses should be considered part of the future transitional housing response. It is proposed that CRS, SHDL and the shared facilities accommodation managed by CMSU form the future transitional housing response. Including shared facilities shared facilities accommodation that LTCHP and affordable housing providers manage will be considered following further analysis.
- Revise assistance agreements and program specifications to reflect the new purpose and objectives of transitional housing.
- identify and implement any revisions to monitoring and data collection systems to enable reliable reporting of outcomes at a provider and program level.

4.1.2 Component two: targeting

Proposed arrangements

Under proposed new arrangements, existing target subsets identified in program specifications will be removed. Transitional housing assistance will be directed towards applicants who are homeless or at risk of homelessness with assessed high housing need.

This means that transitional housing will respond to clients with immediate housing needs who are either unable to immediately access long-term social housing or who require a period of assistance to enable them to transition to longer-term social or private housing options. All applicants will be required to meet eligibility criteria, be registered on the housing register and develop an agreed tenancy management plan with their transitional housing provider.

Until common need assessments are implemented, it is proposed that transitional housing providers continue to prioritise clients from the target subsets outlined in program specifications for transitional housing programs if clients are assessed as having high housing needs and are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Specific target subsets will no longer be required after a common need assessment system is implemented as this will automatically capture information about and prioritise the housing needs of these specific target groups using appropriate need categories.

Transitional housing will need to retain its existing capacity to respond to specific client groups when it is part of a whole-of-Government initiative targeting inter-agency priority groups (e.g. the Drug Court Initiative). In such cases, separate program arrangements (including assistance agreements, program specifications and allocation policies) may be required for the initiative.

In addition, it is recognised that some transitional housing providers (primarily funded under CRS and CMSU) have developed local arrangements/protocols between agencies to ensure appropriate allocations. In some instances these arrangements are governed by specific Memoranda of Understanding or referral agreements.

For example, a SAAP/CAP service may have nomination rights with respect to a number of units of accommodation within a transitional housing providers' property portfolio and may refer eligible applicants as an exit pathway for clients of the SAAP/CAP service. In these circumstances, the SAAP/CAP service assumes responsibility for providing personalised support such as counselling to sustain the transitional housing response. It is proposed that these arrangements be retained to enable direct referral from homelessness services and ensure transitional housing providers have a continued capacity to respond rapidly to homelessness. These arrangements will be subject to the common need assessment and eligibility procedures being applied to all clients to ensure fairness and transparency in the tenant selection and allocation process.

It is recognised that there may be special circumstances in which particular clients may warrant longer-term assistance from transitional housing providers. These circumstances would extend to hard to house households, such as households with large families or households with a person with a disability, where the household is unable to secure an appropriate property directly from the private rental market or through long-term social housing.

Long-term social housing providers' capacity to meet these clients' need from within their existing property portfolio is low. In addition, the department would be reluctant to acquire such properties from a strategic asset perspective. Transitional housing providers could be approached to source and head lease a suitable property. In this event, arrangements would be required to ensure that approved transitional housing stock levels were maintained. This response would build on transitional housing providers' capacity to provide quick access and flexible solutions to clients requiring highly specific property solutions.

Some clients assessed as requiring long-term social housing and housed on an interim basis in a dwelling containing shared facilities may choose to remain in the dwelling rather than be relocated to a self-contained dwelling. The Duration of Need Policy would apply to these clients who are eligible for long-term social housing and whose long-term housing needs are best met from within the transitional housing portfolio.

It is also proposed that transitional housing be the preferred social housing response for young people unless special circumstances exist. Special circumstances could include high need young people with a disability or young parents. For these clients, long-term social housing may be the most appropriate form of housing assistance.

Proposed tasks to achieve implementation

- Align targeting with proposed new purpose and intent of transitional housing and categories of need to be implemented under the uniform needs assessment system
- Monitor impacts on providers resulting from any potential changes to the typical client base of transitional housing providers.

4.1.3 Component three: integration with other key housing components

The existing multiple referral pathways into transitional housing are a positive feature of transitional housing responses, allowing for flexible and, if required, rapid responses to clients who are homeless. They allow access by clients who may be reluctant or unable to directly approach departmental area offices or other government agencies for housing assistance. However, the presence of numerous referral pathways can be complex and

confusing for clients and referring agencies. They may require applicants to register on a number of waitlists and be assessed on multiple occasions.

Proposed arrangements

The establishment of simple and clear pathways into, across and out of crisis, transitional and longer-term social housing is a key element of the new arrangements for transitional housing that will benefit clients, social housing providers and key referring agencies.

In line with the department's five year direction statement, *One Social Housing System: A new direction for community and local government-managed housing in the Smart State*, a number of transitional housing providers will be formally recognised as approved entry points for applicants. These providers will operate the common client intake and need assessment process with the department.²⁷ The department is committed to the principle of clients undergoing a single assessment process to determine the level and priority of their need for housing assistance and to identify the most appropriate housing response to meet their housing need.

The key activities associated with proposed changes follow.

Referral, access, and waitlist management

Some departmental area offices are already referring applicants from the housing register to transitional housing providers. It is proposed that formal processes be implemented governing referral, access and housing register management which will encourage productive local collaboration across and between social housing providers.

It is envisaged that applicants will be considered for transitional housing assistance through the following three referral/access pathways:

1. Transitional housing provider advises of a vacancy: a provider advises the local departmental area office of an existing or upcoming vacancy and is referred a list of applicants from the combined waitlist. As with existing applicant referral processes operating for long-term community housing and affordable housing providers, departmental staff would undertake pre-allocation checks to ensure that referred applicants are eligible for transitional housing assistance.
2. Rapid or direct referral of applicants by area offices and homelessness services: area offices and nominated homelessness services directly refer applicants to transitional housing providers to ensure rapid responses to clients who are homeless (e.g. through boarding house closures). This will retain nominated homelessness services' capacity to directly refer applicants to transitional housing providers. For some clients, this may mean they apply for housing assistance and are listed on the housing register at the time that transitional housing assistance is allocated.
3. Bulk referral of applicants: consideration will be given to area offices generating bulk referral lists from the housing register as presently occurs for Brisbane Housing Company. This would particularly apply where transitional housing providers are seeking to fill a newly constructed or acquired property. This process recognises the higher turnover of tenancies in transitional housing properties, the larger number of properties/units of accommodation managed by some providers and the impact on providers' budgets of delays in vacancies being filled.

²⁷ *One Social Housing System: a new direction for community and local government-managed housing in the Smart State* p. 3

To streamline client service delivery, it is proposed that the commencement of formalised applicant referral processes for transitional housing be aligned with the implementation of the department's client intake and assessment process.

It is anticipated that new applicant referral processes will require enhanced coordination and communication between transitional housing providers and area offices.

Clients who are housed in transitional housing while awaiting an appropriate long-term social housing allocation will remain registered on the housing register in the priority segment established by their housing need assessment. Applicants will not be reassessed as having a lower category of need on the basis of having been housed in transitional housing.

Assessment/allocation

Prior to the introduction of a common client intake and assessment process as part of one social housing system later this year, there will be a transitional period where providers maintain their own intake and allocation processes and assist applicants to register on the housing register before closing their waitlists.

Area offices and defined agencies will undertake need based assessments. This recognises the considerable skills and expertise transitional housing providers and defined homelessness agencies have developed in conducting need based assessments and, for some referring agencies, the relationship they have established with applicants.

Defined agencies may use alternative need assessment tool/s to those which the department is currently developing. In this event, they will be expected to demonstrate comparability and consistency in methodology in order to ensure fairness and transparency in decision making.

Tenant selection and housing allocations will remain the responsibility of transitional housing providers.

Proposed tasks for implementation

- Implement amendments to the *Housing Regulation 2003* and assistance agreements to formalise the introduction of new applicant referral and allocation procedures.
- Establish processes to transition applicants on remaining provider waitlists to the housing register.
- Develop referral policies and procedures for transitional housing. For example, a specific Allocations Policy and associated procedures will be required as has been developed for long-term community housing and affordable housing providers.
- Ensure that future applicant referral and assessment processes retain flexibility, provider expertise and capacity for rapid responses to homelessness while ensuring comparability with arrangements to be implemented under the common need assessment system.
- Provide training and information required by transitional housing providers, key referring agencies and area office staff to support the introduction of revised applicant referral processes.
- Develop and implement system and information requirements and changes to operationalise new applicant referral processes.

4.1.4 Component four: tenancy management

Proposed arrangements

The proposed arrangements with respect to tenancy management are aimed at retaining and enhancing successful intensive tenancy management practices and portfolio strengths and capabilities.

It is proposed to formalise and expand existing tenancy management within transitional housing approaches by implementing mandatory individual tenancy plans (ITPs) for all transitional housing tenants. Transitional housing providers will negotiate ITPs with tenant households at the beginning of the tenancy and will articulate key elements of service delivery, including tenancy management.

It is anticipated that ITPs will incorporate client information collected through the referral and need assessment processes outlined in Section 4.1.3 of this paper. Supplementary information may be required depending on the level of client detail provided through referral and intake processes.

Individual tenancy plans will also identify whether there are additional personalised support needs for clients which are not within the scope and capacity of the transitional housing provider and what arrangements will be negotiated with external agencies to ensure these personalised support needs are addressed.

A key part of the ITP process will involve identifying and proactively managing exit pathways for transitional housing tenants. Specific activities to better manage pathways out of transitional housing include:

- making the time-limited nature of transitional housing assistance explicit in program specifications and by transitional housing providers to tenants at the time of allocation and through ITPs
- requiring providers to review ITPs annually. As a minimum, the reviews will include an assessment of tenants' continuing need and ongoing eligibility for transitional housing
- identifying exit pathways to long-term social or private housing options explicitly in ITPs and as part of the review process. For example, relocation to Rent Start properties may be an appropriate exit pathway for some transitional housing clients
- establishing clear linkages with long-term social housing providers and private housing options (including products the department is developing) to optimise client outcomes.

The proposed arrangements will also make provision for tenant transfers within a provider's portfolio and between transitional housing providers to better meet tenants' needs.

Proposed tasks for implementation

- Develop and implement mandatory ITPs which articulate key elements of service delivery by providers. ITPs should ensure regular review of transitional housing clients' ongoing eligibility and housing need and identify appropriate exit pathways.
- Ensure formalised client referral and assessment processes provide sufficient information to meaningfully contribute to the development of ITPs.
- Implement new processes to support the review of ITPs.
- Develop and implement policies, procedures and systems requirements to address issues arising out of the review of ITPs (e.g. change to client's eligibility or assessed housing need).

4.1.5 Component five: resourcing arrangements

Proposed arrangements

There will be a continuation of triennial funding from 1 July 2008 for transitional housing providers receiving recurrent funds who are willing to work to the proposed implementation schedule of new arrangements. Funding will be contingent on providers signing new assistance agreements which incorporate revised arrangements for transitional housing. To ensure ongoing funding, providers will need to meet agreed performance measures.

The realignment of transitional housing presents a timely opportunity to consider whether the existing resourcing arrangements are efficient and effective and whether revisions are required to successfully implement changes to program arrangements.

Accordingly, it is proposed that a review of the existing funding principles and methodology is undertaken to quantify existing issues, consider options for addressing them and respond to new program arrangements. No commitment is being made now to additional funds being made available for transitional housing responses. Any revised funding arrangements must be consistent with the Queensland Government Framework for Investment in Human Services which was implemented on 1 January 2008.

The review will give consideration to:

- the impact of increasing rental costs on transitional providers who privately head lease properties
- the establishment of a reasonable benchmark for management fees charged by CMSU providers and the eligible costs which can be offset by these fees
- the costs associated with implementing new tenancy management arrangements including mandatory ITPs
- the costs of training and ongoing skills development for providers
- the possible benefits and savings to be accrued to providers through other agencies (particularly departmental area offices) undertaking applicant referral processes (e.g. applications, pre-allocation checks, and waitlist management).

Proposed tasks to achieve implementation

- Develop new resourcing arrangements which allow for implementing new program specifications.

5. Next steps

The scope and scale of change required to realign transitional housing is significant. The department is seeking input from stakeholders and appreciates the time and effort this involves. A response sheet is attached which seeks your feedback on key issues relating to the implementation of proposed arrangements.

Preceding the response sheet is Appendix Two, which provides a brief outline of a proposed implementation process over three years commencing 1 July 2008.

Following analysis of stakeholder feedback on this discussion paper, further refinement of proposed arrangements for transitional housing may be required prior to seeking final government approval.

Appendix one

Overview of proposed changes to program arrangements

Component	Key elements of change	Elements which remain
Purpose and intent	<p>Uniform purpose and intent introduced across all agreed transitional housing programs.</p> <p>Revision of assistance agreements and program specifications to reflect common purpose and intent.</p>	
Targeting	<p>Removal of target subsets, instead targeting assistance to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness with high housing need.</p> <p>Implementation of common need assessment tools will prioritise needs of target groups currently identified in program specifications so specific target groups will no longer be required.</p>	<p>Capacity to respond to whole-of-Government or intra-agency specific initiatives.</p> <p>Flexibility to provide long-term social housing for eligible applicants in transitional housing stock particularly suited to their housing need.</p> <p>Capacity for providers to maintain local arrangements and protocols with agencies to ensure appropriate allocations.</p>
Integration with other housing components	<p>All transitional housing applicants are listed on the housing register.</p> <p>Providers close waitlists and transition applicants to the housing register.</p> <p>Vacancies in transitional housing are filled through providers notifying vacancies to area offices, direct referrals from homelessness services and bulk referrals (where a large number of vacancies are anticipated).</p> <p>Area offices, defined agencies and transitional housing providers undertake need</p>	<p>Capacity for rapid responses to homelessness retained.</p> <p>Principle of need assessments by transitional housing providers and</p>

	<p>assessments.</p> <p>Amendments made to the <i>Housing Regulation 2003</i> and assistance agreements to authorise the introduction of a new allocations policy.</p>	<p>defined agencies retained in recognition of expertise in this area.</p> <p>Tenant selection and allocation remain the responsibility of transitional housing providers.</p>
Tenancy management	<p>Enhancement of tenancy management focus including the introduction of mandatory individual tenancy plans (ITPs) for all transitional housing tenants. ITPs to be based on need assessments, include review periods and identify exit options.</p>	<p>Retention of tenancy management focus.</p> <p>Continued capacity for transitional housing providers to establish effective networks with the private rental sector.</p>
Resourcing arrangements	<p>Development and implementation of revised resourcing arrangements. Arrangements will address issues with existing resourcing models and the costs of implementing new program arrangements.</p>	<p>Three-year funding agreements for providers receiving recurrent funding. Funding contingent on providers signing up to new program arrangements and achieving agreed service provider performance measures by June 2011.</p>

Appendix two

Proposed implementation schedule May 2008 - June 2011

May 2008 - June 2008

Principal activity	Key milestone	Indicative timeframe for implementation
1. Preparation for introduction of Allocations Policy and applicant referral and assessment processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New allocations policy and procedures for transitional housing developed based on long-term and affordable housing policies and procedures 	May 2008
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Housing Regulation 2003</i> amended and new assistance agreements prepared, authorising the Allocations Policy, new purpose, objectives and targeting 	May/June 2008
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information to providers on <i>Housing Regulation 2003</i> amendments and new assistance agreements 	June 2008

Year 1: July 2008 - June 2009

Principal Activity	Key Milestones	Indicative Timeframe for Implementation
1. Introduction of allocations policy and applicant referral and assessment processes	Transitional stage – July - November	1 July 2008
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New assistance agreements commence, including new program specifications and incorporating revised program components 	1 July 2008
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transitioning of waitlisted applicants to housing register, including advice to existing waitlisted applicants, forwarding new applications to local area office, closing waitlists on 2 November and ceasing allocating from waitlists on 2 November 2008 	1 July 2008
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training sessions on new allocations policy and applicant referral procedures for transitional housing providers, departmental area office staff and key referring agencies 	September/ October 2008
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement systems and information and reporting changes required to support new referral processes 	31 October 2008

	<p>Commencement of Allocations Policy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transitional housing providers required to apply allocations policy and applicant referral processes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Notifying area offices of vacancies b. Accepting rapid/direct referrals c. Receiving bulk referrals from area offices • Transitional housing providers commence receiving and using revised applicant need assessments 	<p>3 November 2008</p> <p>3 November 2008</p> <p>3 November 2008</p>
2. Development and implementation of revised resourcing arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of resourcing models including an examination of existing issues and the likely impact of revised program arrangements • Develop revised resourcing arrangements that address existing issues with funding models following consultation with transitional housing providers • Information and training sessions on revised resourcing arrangements for transitional housing providers • Implementation of revised resourcing arrangements 	<p>July 2008</p> <p>September 2008</p> <p>March 2009</p> <p>1 July 2009</p>

Year 2: July 2009 - June 2010

Principal activity	Associated tasks	Indicative timeframe for implementation
1. Development of defined transitional housing providers as entry points for OSHS including operating common need assessment system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirm the role, function and resourcing requirements for providers operating as entry points • Implement a process to determine the number and location of entry points • Information and training for organisations undertaking intake and assessment procedures • Implement intake and assessment procedures by non-government organisations 	<p>June/July 2009</p> <p>December 2009</p> <p>April to June 2010</p> <p>1 July 2010</p>

2. Development and implementation of individual tenancy plans (ITPs)	• Consultation with providers over the agreed features of ITPs	July 2009
	• Development of policies, procedures and systems required to address any issues e.g. changes to client eligibility/need identified in ITP reviews	September 2009
	• Information sessions on implementing ITPs	November/ December 2009
	• ITPs implemented	1 January 2010

Year 3: 2010 - 2011

Principal activity	Associated tasks	Timeframe
1. Design an evaluation process to examine the impact of changed transitional housing arrangements	• Consultation with transitional housing providers on critical features of the evaluation	September 2010
	• Identification of relevant sources of data	November 2010
	• Development and approval of evaluation project plan and Terms of Reference	March 2011
	• Preparation of request for offer (if external evaluation)	May 2011
	• Evaluation conducted	2011-2012
2. Ongoing consolidation of new arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development and introduction of changes required to maximise procedural effectiveness and system efficiency • Ongoing analysis of information collection and reporting procedures 	

Realigning transitional housing to one social housing system

Discussion paper response sheet

Stakeholders are invited to complete this response sheet to provide input into the design of new transitional housing arrangements. If preferred, separate responses can be prepared. Feedback and responses are to be forwarded to:

Policy and Implementation Branch
Community and Public Housing
Department of Housing
Fax (07) 3225 1266
Email communityhousing@housing.qld.gov.au
Post GPO Box 690
BRISBANE QLD 4001

Feedback can also be provided online by visiting the department's website at www.housing.qld.gov.au

Feedback is required by **28 May 2008**

Common purpose and intent

Do you have comments on the proposed introduction of a uniform purpose and objectives for transitional housing? The proposed purpose is:

To assist eligible households with identified high and immediate housing needs to progress to longer-term living arrangements in the private or social housing sectors. Transitional housing will provide housing assistance for a fixed period of time based on identified client need.

Additional comments

Targeting

Do you have comments on the proposed removal of specific target sub-sets and, instead, targeting assistance to applicants who are homeless or at risk of homelessness with assessed high housing need?

Additional comments

Integration with other key housing components

Are there comments you wish to make regarding the proposed processes for achieving integration of transitional housing with other key housing components? These processes will primarily involve referral, assessment and allocation of assistance to applicants.

Additional comments

Tenancy management

Are there comments you wish to make regarding the key proposals around tenancy management, including the development and implementation of mandatory individual tenancy plans (ITPs)?

Additional comments

Resourcing arrangements

Do you have comments about the resourcing arrangements required for the new program components to be implemented?

Additional comments

Implementation of new arrangements

Do you have comments on the proposed implementation schedule?

Thank you for your participation.