



Directions paper

Strengthening social housing

***A strategy to build capacity of not-for-profit
housing providers in Queensland***

2008 - 2011

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1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose

This paper outlines the department's intent and new strategy to support the continued development and strengthening of not-for-profit housing providers operating as part of Queensland's one social housing system.

The strategy has been developed following a review of the existing Community Housing Resourcing Framework, and incorporates a number of new mechanisms designed to build the capacity of not-for-profit housing providers in Queensland.

1.2 Context

The Department of Housing funds 456¹ community organisations and local governments to deliver a range of housing services. The types of products and services funded by the department and delivered by funded service providers fall into four main categories:

- crisis housing
- transitional housing
- long-term housing assistance and
- housing-related services.

Through these programs, community organisations and local governments offer housing services to homeless people, people in housing crisis, people with specialised housing needs, and people living in rural and remote parts of the State. This housing assistance complements the products and services that are provided directly by the department, such as public housing.

To better integrate and coordinate the way in which products and services are delivered by the department and funded organisations, the department is progressively implementing one social housing system.

Funded providers form an integral part of one social housing system, and in the document *A new direction for community and local government-managed housing in the Smart State 2006-2011*, the department has outlined its vision for providers and how it intends to assist the not-for-profit sector to achieve this vision.

The department's vision is that by 2011 there will be:

*"a robust and deliberately planned network of funded organisations [operating] in a coordinated way as part of one social housing system, delivering viable, sustainable, quality services which are easily accessed by clients who most are in need of assistance and which respond well to the needs of those clients and the communities that they live in."*²

¹ Source: Performance Management and Compliance, 13 May 2008.

² A new direction for Community and Local Government Managed Housing in the Smart State 2006-2011

The strategy outlined in this directions paper supports the department's commitment to achieving this vision by identifying core measures through which the department and funded providers can continue to build provider capacity into the future.

Timely implementation of this strategy is critical given the emerging policy and funding framework for a National Affordable Housing Agreement, which may result in increased housing supply being delivered through funded not-for-profit housing providers capable of operating at significantly increased scale.

The mechanisms described in this paper will assist with repositioning community housing organisations in Queensland to operate at much greater scale and develop capacity to maximise opportunities for new affordable housing investment in this State.

1.3 Background

The Community Housing Resourcing Framework has been in operation since 2002 and was developed to enhance organisational capacity and build a sustainable community-based housing service delivery system. The current framework was intended to provide resources for both housing providers and providers of housing-related services, and consists of the following components:

- Community Housing Planning Group
- Skills development sector-wide conference³
- Regional Community Housing Councils
- Community Housing Resource Worker program
- Information and Communication Infrastructure – Community Housing on Line

In November 2007, the department released a discussion paper entitled *A new resourcing framework to support community housing participation in one social housing system*. The discussion paper was distributed to targeted stakeholder groups and made widely available on the department's internet site. A total of 24 responses were received from a broad range of stakeholders.

The consultation process produced a range of stakeholder views on the proposals outlined in the department's discussion paper. In general terms, the key issues arising through the process can be summarised as follows:

- A widely held view by respondents that a new resourcing framework focused at supporting individual not-for-profit providers transition to one social housing system is too narrow, particularly with the increased focus on housing policy at a national level
- A common view suggesting that the objectives of revised arrangements were unclear and should be clearly defined before resourcing measures can be accurately scoped
- Strong feedback that the current resourcing framework does not adequately support the TAAS(Q) program and that alternative resourcing arrangements should be considered for housing-related services

³ It was originally planned that the state-wide conference would be held every second year, although no conferences have been held since the inaugural conference in 2002.

- Support for the continuation of Regional Housing Councils and the inclusion of a training and skills development strategy
- Concern at the proposal to relocate existing Community Housing Resource Worker positions to departmental area offices
- a view that the Community Housing Planning Group was not an effective mechanism for achieving broad community input into the department' strategic policy and planning processes.

Responses received through the consultation process have provided a valuable range of perspectives that have informed the refinement of the department's draft proposals outlined in the discussion paper. A report summarising the general themes identified in the stakeholder feedback can be found at Appendix A.

2. Strengthening social housing objectives

This strategy describes the department's future mechanisms for strengthening not-for-profit housing in Queensland. It is underpinned by a set of objectives which will guide the ongoing development and implementation of the identified delivery mechanisms.

The strategy is intended to complement the Queensland Compact, a partnership agreement being developed between the Queensland Government and not-for-profit community services providers. It is a statement of intent to provide guidance on how the government and community services providers engage with each other.

The objectives of this strategy are to:

- support improved integration and coordination of service delivery across the social housing system to improve outcomes for clients
- achieve effective communication and collaboration between the organisations that are part of the social housing system
- facilitate access to relevant training and professional development opportunities for employees and governing bodies within the social housing system
- encourage innovation and continuous quality improvement by not-for-profit housing providers achieving high quality client services
- increase the capability of not-for-profit housing providers to become major providers of social housing.

It is intended that this strategy will build on the existing strengths within the multi-provider social housing system and will retain sufficient flexibility to be responsive to developments and opportunities that may arise in the future.

Capacity building mechanisms for housing-related services have not been specifically identified within this strategy. Stakeholder responses to the review suggest the current resourcing arrangements have not worked well for Tenancy Advice and Advocacy Service Queensland (TAAS[Q]) services.

Submissions from TAAS(Q) workers, their auspice organisations and housing peaks, recommended the 'training, support and sector development' needs for these services are distinctly different to those of housing provider organisations and therefore alternative resourcing strategies are required. No direct responses on the discussion paper were received from other housing-related services, namely Home Assist Secure or Home and Community Care (Home Modification Services) providers.

In response to consultation feedback, this strategy has been designed to focus primarily on providers of direct housing assistance. An independent evaluation of the TAAS(Q) program will commence shortly, and will further explore future training and support needs with TAAS(Q) services through this process. In addition the department is undertaking an internal review of the Home Assist Secure program, which will also consider future training and support needs for these organisations.

Following completion of the TAAS(Q) evaluation and the Home Assist Secure review, the department will conduct further discussions with all housing-related services including Home Modification Services to identify the level and type of support that will best enhance service delivery.

To achieve the objectives of this strategy, a set of mechanisms have been developed which are discussed in further detail in the following sections of this paper.

The mechanisms are:

- Housing Area Networks, to replace Regional Community Housing Councils
- Queensland Social Housing Forum to replace the Community Housing Planning Group
- a triennial Queensland Housing Convention, in conjunction with the new Queensland Social Housing Forum
- the creation of new training and professional development opportunities for not-for-profit housing system employees and governing bodies; and
- establishment of three Regional Not-for-Profit Housing Business Development and Innovation Units.

A conceptual diagram indicating how the mechanisms are intended to achieve the outcomes of this strategy and how they link to the department's overarching strategic direction is detailed in Appendix B.

A strengthening social housing reference group will be established, comprising departmental and not-for-profit housing provider representatives to provide advice and assistance in transitioning to the new arrangements.

3. Housing Area Networks

3.1 Overview

Regional Community Housing Councils were established as formal mechanisms to focus on viability, community capacity building and resourcing of local and regional community housing organisations. Councils are supported through the Community Housing Resource Worker program, whereby Resource Workers provide secretariat support to Councils.

There are 11 Regional Community Housing Councils across Queensland and their operation varies significantly from region to region. Outside of South East Queensland, Regional Community Housing Council boundaries generally align to area office boundaries, however in South East Queensland there are three councils covering 10 area office regions.

Stakeholder consultation indicates broad agreement that linkages between Regional Community Housing Councils, regional service planning and service delivery are not working well. Responses also suggested that in rural and regional Queensland, Regional Community Housing Councils have a recognised role in broader regional planning processes but not a clear role in the department's planning mechanisms.

The department will work with not-for-profit housing providers to build on the existing strengths of Regional Community Housing Councils and establish Housing Area Networks that will support improved regional integration and coordination across the one social housing system.

The objectives of housing area networks are to:

- strengthen the linkages between area offices and not-for-profit housing providers to establish and maintain an integrated and coordinated service delivery network that produces quality outcomes for clients
- articulate training and professional development needs for employees in the social housing system to strengthen the workforce and enhance organisational performance.

3.2 Housing Area Networks – How they will operate

Housing Area Networks will be developed with an increased focus on coordinated and integrated operations and activities. It is intended that the networks will be a forum through which not-for-profit housing providers can engage with the department and with each other about core issues related to improving outcomes for clients through service delivery and planning.

Housing area networks will consider key issues that are likely to impact on service delivery and social housing within their area, including:

- implementing one social housing system at the area level
- planning social housing service delivery

- improving coordination amongst not-for-profit providers and the department
- identifying and responding to emerging local issues or trends.

Housing Area Networks are also expected to perform a valuable role in providing advice to the department on common training needs across the social housing system, and may also undertake or manage special projects that will strengthen the service delivery system within the area. The department may make available special purpose funding where networks can identify projects with demonstrable benefits to improving service delivery across an area.

The department will support the operation of housing area networks including establishing appropriate secretariat support arrangements.

3.2.1 Membership

Membership will be open to all social housing providers within the region. Members will have responsibility for nominating a Chair for their network and for selecting a representative to attend the State-wide forum.

Core members of the network will be identified for each region, and will include funded providers and the department's Area Manager. Housing Area Networks will have the opportunity to invite other organisations to participate where they have a direct interest in social housing in the area, or have a role in supporting clients.

3.2.2 Terms of Reference

A standard Terms of Reference will be established to outline the key functions of Housing Area Networks, and will be developed in consultation with the Strengthening Social Housing Reference Group. Terms of Reference will outline:

- purpose
- role of the network
- membership
- operation
- role of the network Chair
- role of the State-wide group representative
- secretariat support.

Once established, there will be capacity for networks to expand their role where a local need is identified, however there will still remain an expectation that networks undertake the key functions as described in the Terms of Reference.

3.2.3 Network boundaries

Generally it is anticipated that Housing Area Network boundaries will align with departmental area office boundaries, however some flexibility is needed. For example, no network is proposed in the Torres Strait, two networks are expected in South West Queensland, consistent with current arrangements, and in the greater Brisbane region, it may be desirable to integrate a number of area office regions into a single network.

Housing Area Networks within South East Queensland will be encouraged to align with area office boundaries or across neighbouring Area Offices where there is a commonality of interests or providers operating across those boundaries.

3.3 Implementation and transition arrangements

It is envisaged that transition to Housing Area Networks will progressively occur throughout 2008/2009, with the new structure fully operational by mid 2009. During this time, the department will consult stakeholders to identify the core Terms of Reference including membership within each area and enable transfer of the secretariat function from Community Housing Resource Workers to the department.

4. Queensland Social Housing Forum

4.1 Overview

The Community Housing Planning Group is the formal planning and advisory mechanism between the department and providers of community and local government-managed housing. The group was originally focused on contributing to and implementing the Community Housing Plan which is now superseded by the Community Housing Direction Statement.

The Planning Group comprises delegates from Regional Community Housing Councils, peak organisations, representatives from the Home Assist Secure program and Tenant Advice and Advocacy Services Queensland in addition to the Local Government Association of Queensland.

Feedback from consultation respondents suggested that the current planning group provides little community input into strategic policy development, instead focusing on information sharing as its primary activity.

The department considers a State-wide housing stakeholder group as an essential mechanism to facilitate engagement and contribution by social housing stakeholders in its strategic policy development and planning processes and to improve communication and collaboration between the department and not-for-profit housing providers. To achieve this, the department will establish the Queensland Social Housing Forum to replace the existing Community Housing Planning Group.

4.2 Queensland Social Housing Forum – How it will operate

The Queensland Social Housing Forum will be developed jointly by the department in consultation with key stakeholders. Terms of Reference will be documented detailing the purpose, functions and membership including the role and responsibilities for the chair and secretariat.

To allow equitable participation by departmental and community-based representatives, an external chairperson will be sought and will perform a key role in working with both the department and community stakeholders to identify issues for consideration by the forum. Secretariat support for the forum will continue to be provided by the Department of Housing.

Forum membership will be sought from the following groups and organisations:

- representatives of Housing Area Networks
- Tenants' Union of Queensland
- Queensland Shelter
- Local Government Association of Queensland
- Queensland Community Housing Standard and Accreditations Council
- Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute – Queensland Research Centre.

It is not planned that the forum includes specific program or client group representation. Peak organisations will be invited to represent their constituents and share a broad range of client and provider perspectives.

To address issues of over-representation at the forum, particularly from South East Queensland where up to 10 representatives could attend⁴, it is proposed that a process to consolidate representation is undertaken. A maximum number of representatives for South East Queensland will be identified through the Terms of Reference and networks will be responsible for working collaboratively to determine appropriate methods for seeking nominations for representatives.

The Forum will meet twice yearly and will also perform a central role with the Department of Housing in staging a triennial Queensland Housing Convention aimed at linking social housing stakeholders with the broader housing system, academics and other interested parties to discuss and debate the broad range of housing issues facing Queenslanders.

4.3 Implementation and transition arrangements

The new arrangements for the Queensland Social Housing Forum cannot fully commence until Housing Area Networks have been established and representatives nominated. Until then, existing delegate arrangements will continue.

It is anticipated that the Community Housing Planning Group would transition to the Queensland Social Housing Forum during 2008/2009. Meetings scheduled for the year would include some transitional planning, including developing and ratifying the Terms of Reference for the forum.

⁴ Area Offices in South East Queensland: Brisbane Central, Brisbane North, Brisbane South, Brisbane South-West, Bayside, Logan, Gold Coast, Ipswich, Caboolture, Sunshine Coast.

5. Training and professional development

5.1 Overview

Training and professional development initiatives for not-for-profit housing providers have been provided in an ad-hoc manner since the development of the Social Housing Skills Development Strategy in 2001/2002. Since this time, the department has largely offered training and professional development opportunities to providers on a program basis.

The Department of Housing articulated its commitment to training and professional development across the social housing system in the *Integrated Learning and Development Framework 2007 – 2010*. The framework specifies that the department will make available accredited training with a focus on increasing workforce capability and meeting the national workforce competencies for social housing.

Feedback from consultation respondents indicates a view there is minimal coordination of training provision occurring across the social housing system. This supports that there is value in a mixed training model, incorporating both accredited and non-accredited training, to cover the breadth of training needs of not-for-profit housing providers. An additional need was identified for training and skills development to generate employment opportunities and career paths for attracting and retaining a skilled workforce.

In response to the issues identified, the department will work closely with Housing Area Networks to develop and implement social housing training and professional development opportunities to:

- increase access to training and professional development for not-for-profit housing employees and governing bodies
- identify and respond to common training and development needs of departmental staff and not-for-profit housing providers
- strengthen the social housing workforce to improve/enhance organisational capacity
- retain skills within the social housing system to achieve high quality client services.

This approach is intended to allow not-for-profit providers to articulate training needs at the area level and access both accredited and non-accredited training as required. Employers will retain responsibility for ensuring the training and development needs within their organisation are met.

5.2 Training and professional development – How it will operate

Housing Area Networks will be invited to advise the department on common training needs to maximise opportunities for shared training between Department of Housing staff and staff of not-for-profit housing organisations. This will include both accredited and non-accredited training, including access to specific departmental training relating to service delivery arrangements as part of the one social housing system.

Shared training between not-for-profit housing providers and departmental staff will assist with establishing consistent knowledge of operating systems and procedures across the social housing system. It will also achieve better economy and value for money for the social housing system as a whole, where training and development budgets can be maximised through single purchasing arrangements for whole areas or multiple areas across the State.

5.3 Implementation

The *Integrated Learning and Development Action Plan* commits the department to coordinating operational training priorities for not-for-profit housing providers.

In 2008, the department will conduct a training needs survey of not-for-profit housing providers to identify the accredited training required, or sought by staff, in the social housing system.

Based on the outcomes of the survey and further advice on training needs by Housing Area Networks as they become operational, a coordinated social housing training plan will be developed with a particular emphasis on increasing access to appropriate training in rural, regional and remote areas. The plan will be updated on an annual basis following evaluation by Housing Area Networks of participation levels and effectiveness of training initiatives for the area, in addition to advice on future training priorities.

6. Not-for-profit Housing Business Development and Innovation Units

6.1 Overview

Under present arrangements, recurrent funding is provided to community-based organisations to employ Community Housing Resource Workers to provide resourcing and support to not-for-profit housing organisations. With this funding, resource workers assist organisations to achieve high quality and viable service provision, and integration and coordination within the regional service system.

In the discussion paper released in November 2007, the department proposed changes to the Resource Worker program. These changes would result in a redesigned role for Resource Workers with an emphasis on encouraging organisations to participate in the one social housing system, and assisting those providers aspiring to become major providers of social housing in their region. The changes proposed also included several options for new program management arrangements including the department's preferred option for relocation of Resource Worker positions to Department of Housing area offices.

Since the release of the discussion paper in 2007, there have been considerable developments in national housing policy which have seen a new Australian Government demonstrate an increased focus on housing affordability and for not-for-profit organisations and local governments to perform a significantly expanded role in housing provision into the future.

The anticipated scale of investment in the not-for-profit housing system over the coming years will require a shift in the activities of those housing providers that aspire to operate at a significantly increased scale. It is now critical that well targeted capacity building occurs to facilitate a small number of not-for-profit organisations as major providers of social housing across Queensland in the future.

In response, the department will work with not-for-profit housing providers to establish Not-for-profit Housing Business Development and Innovation Units within the department to replace the existing Community Housing Resource Worker program.

The units will have a specific focus on increasing the capability of not-for-profit housing providers to become major providers of social housing across Queensland, and in encouraging innovation and continuous quality improvement by providers. A key feature of this approach is the creation of small, regionally-based work teams, which contrasts to the current approach under the Resource Worker program of single and often isolated workers.

The units will be located in Southern, Central and Northern Queensland and will initially be established within the department. Pending review, consideration may be given at a later stage to transitioning some functionality of the Business Development and Innovation Units to a non-government organisation. It is anticipated that this could occur within three years of establishment, once the units are fully operational in each region and subject to the identification of a suitable host organisation.

6.2 Not-for-profit Housing Business Development and Innovation Units – How they will operate

Not-for-profit Housing Business Development and Innovation units will be progressively implemented in each of the three identified regions throughout 2008-2009, commencing with the establishment of a coordinating unit located in Southern Queensland. This unit will be located within the department's Community and Public Housing service area in Brisbane. Central and Northern Queensland units will be established in key locations of high housing need, following establishment of the coordinating unit. A map of the proposed regional boundaries can be found at Appendix C.

The southern coordinating unit will be responsible for:

- direct capability development support to providers in southern Queensland who are undergoing organisational consolidation activities and/or aspiring to achieve significant growth over the next two to five years, including assistance and advice on the community housing standards and accreditation process
- development of resources and tools specifically to assist consolidation and capacity building by not-for-profit housing providers who are aspiring to achieve significant growth
- development, coordination and evaluation of a State-wide work program articulating the desired outcomes and outputs of all three Business Development and Innovation Units
- contributing to capacity building initiatives progressing as part of the National Sector Development Plan within the Framework for National Action on Affordable Housing.

It is anticipated that the central and northern units will focus on capability development support to providers within the region who are undergoing organisational consolidation and/or aspiring to achieve significant growth over the next two to five years. Additional roles that may be performed by the each of the units include:

- assistance to housing area networks
- development and implementation of regional training and professional development opportunities for providers across the region.

6.3 Implementation and transition

Implementation of the Business Development and Innovation Units will commence from 1 July 2008, with establishment of the southern coordinating unit.

The Major Projects Unit within Community and Public Housing is presently undertaking a range of like-functions focused on building the capacity of not-for-profit organisations engaged in organisational consolidation processes. As such, the unit provides an existing platform upon which to build an expanded range of functions in line with this Strategy.

The Community Housing Standards and Accreditation Unit will continue to conduct accreditation evaluations and offer quality improvement advice to organisations engaged in the accreditation system.

The National Community Standards and accreditation are seen as a key capacity building tool for many organisations aspiring to grow into major providers of social housing in Queensland. Under new departmental administrative arrangements, the Standards and Accreditation Unit will be relocated from Performance Management and Compliance to work alongside the Business Development and Innovation Units within Community and Public Housing.

Project costs associated with establishing the Business Development and Innovation Units will be sourced from within existing departmental budget allocations, including the existing budgets of the Community Housing Resource Worker program, the Major Projects Unit and the Standards and Accreditation Unit.

As transition to the Business Development and Innovation Units represents a significant change to existing arrangements, a clear transition period is required involving a staged wind up of the Community Housing Resource Worker program and progressive implementation of the new units.

The Community Housing Resource Worker program is funded to 30 June 2008. It is envisaged that all Business Development and Innovation Units will be operational after a minimum 12-month period.

To minimise gaps in service delivery as a result of transition to the new arrangements, Resource Worker auspice employer organisations will be offered further funding for a specified period. The extended arrangements for the resource worker positions will align with the progressive implementation of the Business Development and Innovation Units as outlined below.

While it is envisaged that the Southern unit would service South West Queensland, the department recognises the considerable challenges in resourcing this region given the size and remoteness of the area and the location of housing services, many of which are provided by local governments.

It is anticipated that a Rural Housing Service Centre pilot will commence in 2008 with Roma identified as the possible location. If successful, the centre could provide a suitable base from which to locate an outreach position linked to the southern unit. This would allow the business development function to be more closely located to providers in the region.

To provide adequate opportunity to explore this option further, the department will extend current resource worker funding arrangements for the two South West Queensland resource worker positions until 30 June 2009.

Southern Queensland – extension to SEQ based resource worker positions to 31 December 2008. Extension to SWQ resource worker positions to 30 June 2009.

Central Queensland – extension to central region resource worker positions to 31 March 2009.

Northern Queensland – extension to northern region resource worker positions to 30 June 2009.

7. Next steps

The mechanisms outlined in this paper represent a significant shift from the way that resources are currently provided to support not-for-profit organisations.

Implementation will be undertaken over a 12 to 18 month period, commencing with the establishment of the Southern Not-for-profit Housing Business Development and Innovation Unit from 1 July 2008.

A detailed plan for implementing the mechanisms will be developed and made available to identified stakeholders, including a communication strategy and key milestones for the project.

Community Housing Resource Worker program auspice organisations will be fully briefed on the implementation process to enable transition and wind-up processes to be undertaken effectively.

A project reference group will be established as a priority to engage key community stakeholders in the ongoing design and implementation of each of the mechanisms.

Further consultation will be undertaken to identify appropriate training and support needs for housing-related services. This will occur following completion of the TAAS(Q) evaluation and Home Assist Secure review. Consideration will also be given to whether housing-related services will be resourced within this strategy, or whether distinct resourcing and support mechanisms are required.

A new resourcing framework to support community housing participation in one social housing system

Stakeholder feedback report

May 2008

Introduction

In November 2007, a discussion paper titled 'A new resourcing framework to support community housing participation in one social housing system' was released for feedback. The discussion paper was posted on the department's internet site and sent to a targeted group of stakeholders, including:

- Community Housing Planning Group delegates
- Chairs - Regional Community Housing Councils
- Queensland Shelter and Tenants' Union Queensland as peak organisations
- organisations that receive grant funds to employ Community Housing Resource Workers, and
- Community Housing Resource Workers.

A total of 24 responses were received that represent broad stakeholder participation. This report provides a summary of participants' feedback from the consultation process. A list of respondents is detailed in Attachment 'A'.

Table 1: Type and number of stakeholder responses

Responses	Stakeholder
2	funded peak organisations (Shelter and Tenants' Union)
8	Regional Housing Councils
3	Community Housing Resource Worker auspices
4	South-East Queensland provider groups
4	Tenant Advocacy and Advice Services
3	other – Client Services, Shelter branch and one anonymous

The feedback generated has provided important information on the views and aspirations of stakeholders in relation to community housing resourcing arrangements. The department values this feedback. The information has assisted in the development of new resourcing strategies aimed at ensuring community housing continues to develop as a strong and well-governed housing option as part of one social housing system.

Overall comment – context, objectives and role of community housing sector

Several respondents provided feedback on the context of the discussion paper and the overall review. A common theme was the need for a review or evaluation of the current arrangements to understand its achievements and issues before informed comment on the proposed model could be made.

Queensland Shelter's response was representative of comments by other respondents. It recommended that the framework should:

- reflect a clear understanding of the appropriate roles of government and the community sector
- acknowledge that community organisations are independent entities that may seek funding and partnerships beyond the department.

Queensland Shelter proposed some key objectives for the new framework:

- improve viability of community housing organisations
- support implementation of one social housing system
- support non-government organisation's participation in the expansion of social and affordable housing
- improve the quality of housing management and services in the community housing sector
- facilitate community sector input into the department's policies and programs.

A large number of respondents were of the view that including the Community Housing Resource Worker program into a government department will lessen the willingness of organisations to participate.

A number of respondents commented on the need for a future resourcing framework to be flexible and responsive to a rapidly changing policy environment.

Framework Component 1 – Regional Housing Councils

This component explores the relationship and links between new Regional Housing Councils and existing regional planning and service delivery mechanisms. Regional Housing Councils were established to focus on issues of viability, community capacity building and resourcing of local and regional community housing organisations.

Theme	Summary of feedback
Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was broad agreement that linkages between Regional Housing Councils, regional service planning and service delivery do not work well. There were mixed views whether Regional Housing Councils could perform a broader role in planning, some supportive, some not. • In regional and rural areas, Regional Housing Councils have a recognised role in the broader regional planning framework but not a clear role in the department’s planning mechanisms. There was general agreement that this was vital and needs to be formally recognised and linked with the department’s planning mechanisms with timely feedback to councils. • Some respondents were doubtful that Regional Housing Councils could effectively link with department planning mechanisms and suggested regional input should focus on service implementation and strategic policy rather than include the wider role of planning.
South east Queensland (SEQ)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SEQ respondents reported that the regional housing structure is cumbersome and resource intensive. It was identified that there are some valued sub-regional networks that could be resourced leading to a larger representative SEQ Council. • There was agreement that the networks in SEQ are considered more complex than in rural areas. These networks operate for groups responding to, for example, young people, people with a disability, and homelessness. Responses indicated that it is a busy context to find the space for a Regional Housing Council.

Theme	Summary of feedback
Linkages and communication with CHRW forums and State-wide body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The majority of responses reported good communication between the department, Community Housing Planning Group, Regional Housing Councils, Community Housing Resource Workers (CHRW) and providers. • There was general agreement that Regional Housing Councils should meet after the CHRW and departmental forums and prior to a meeting of the State-wide advisory group (presently the Community Housing Planning Group).
Council role, attendance, agenda and timing of meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was support for a core role by the Regional Housing Councils to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - support and oversight of Community Housing Resource Workers - identify and coordinate training - encourage service viability and community capacity building - have a broader focus to include affordable housing - provide input to regional and state-wide housing policy issues, and - coordinate local and regional housing responses. • Respondents identified that in some areas there is difficulty or failure to establish functioning Regional Housing Councils. • There was broad agreement that attendance should be voluntary and that co-opting people to councils is not helpful. Queensland Shelter stated that in the future, there is a need for a clear distinction between the role of government and the role of the community sector.

Theme	Summary of feedback
Funding for Regional Housing Councils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was agreement on the need for administrative support for the CHRWs and Regional Housing Councils. • There was agreement that funding to resource meetings would be valuable as this is currently met by participating organisations. Many submissions considered that the department should meet the full costs including transport and staff backfilling. • Other proposals included the availability of funding for specific projects.
Membership and possible expansion of membership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was general agreement that membership of councils could be extended to include tenant representatives. However, there was a mixed response to the inclusion of private sector representatives without clarification about who this may be. • Several respondents wanted to expand Indigenous membership. Others noted it may be difficult to engage providers with diverse funding sources. • There was some support for Department of Housing area managers becoming an equal member of Regional Housing Councils. • There was agreement that Regional Housing Councils could combine with other networks in their region that have a common membership to minimise duplication, travel and time imposts.
Structure required to allow councils to administer funds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Of the Regional Housing Councils that responded, none wanted to be an incorporated body. The reasons cited were onerous governance issues around financial accountability and management. There was support for the administration of funds by the community organisation auspicing the Community Housing Resource Worker.

Framework component 2 – State-wide Policy Development and Coordination Advisory Group

The Community Housing Planning Group (CHPG) is a formal planning and advisory mechanism between the department and providers of community and local government-managed housing. The CHPG comprises representatives from Regional Community Housing Councils, peak and State-wide bodies, Home Assist Secure, Tenant Advice and Advocacy Service (Qld) and the Local Government Association of Queensland.

Theme	Summary of Feedback
Function	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the administration of the Community Housing Planning Group (CHPG), in particular problems with engagement of members, lack of role clarity, late agendas not allowing time for delegates to confer with their constituency and slow feedback of minutes working against timely communication. • There was broad agreement that the current CHPG had a function of information sharing based on the department using the meeting as a forum to disseminate information. • Queensland Shelter suggested that a State-wide mechanism should consider a broad scope of social and affordable housing issues, rather than a focus on implementing one social housing system.

Theme	Summary of Feedback
Role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several submissions identified two distinct themes in determining the role of the state-wide body: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a group that focuses solely on the implementation of the one social housing system; or - a strategic policy forum that connects housing policy to whole-of-government policy. • There were differing views from Regional Housing Councils on the role of the CHPG. While some strongly supported the CHPG's regional planning role, other respondents commented that this group needs more effective links with state and regional planning networks, both in the department and across government. • Two respondents suggested that the secretariat function sit with Housing Policy and Strategy within the department, or with Queensland Shelter as the policy peak. There was broad support for the group to have its own secretariat and budget, the agenda to be generated by participants and for the group to provide advice to the Director-General and Minister. • Queensland Community Housing Coalition (QCHC) suggested that a new Strategic Policy Forum could be established. The new forum would engage wider stakeholders, connect housing policy to wider whole-of-government policy, provide advice on the State's engagement with national policy and identify opportunities and barriers to improving outcomes. QCHC also suggested the new forum should coordinate an Affordable Housing Conference every two years to share knowledge and align priorities.
Frequency and duration of meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most respondents agreed on six-monthly meetings scheduled in advance to coordinate with regional housing council meetings. Two respondents suggested a two-day meeting three times per year. A two to two-and-a half day meeting was also suggested, allowing a half day for participants to caucus without department representatives present.

Theme	Summary of Feedback
Links	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was broad agreement that good communication processes are essential to effective linkages with state-wide regional structures and implementation mechanisms. Respondents identified that links with the meeting schedules, regional housing councils, sub-regional groups and the Community Housing Resource Worker forums are critical to ensure improved regional and sector communication channels to facilitate input from housing organisations, workers and tenants. Web-based communication was recommended.
Naming the State-wide structure to reflect it's purpose and membership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuation of the Community Housing Planning Group name was not supported. The CHPG was not perceived to undertake planning activities and many respondents thought it would not do so under new arrangements. • Various names were suggested including a broad acceptance of the name used in the discussion paper – 'State-wide Policy Development and Coordination Advisory Group'. Other suggestions were: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 'Strategic Policy Forum' – lends itself to a wider group of stakeholders and a broad advisory role. - 'Social Housing Information Forum' rather than policy development or planning. Respondents who supported this name indicated that if the department is not going to take policy advice, it is better to acknowledge an information sharing role. - 'Social Housing Action Group' or 'Social Housing Planning Group'. - 'State-wide Social Housing Round-table', or - Housing Stakeholder Group – consultative focus on housing issues.

Theme	Summary of Feedback
Expanding membership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was diversity of opinion about membership. A common theme was that membership depends on the purpose of the group. While the discussion paper talks about 'delegates representing regional housing councils', respondents were clear that participants in the state-wide body should include representatives of Regional Housing Councils rather than delegates, noting that in the past some delegates pursued personal, rather than representative agendas. • Support was widely given for expanding membership to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Crisis Accommodation Program/Supported Accommodation Assistance Program - Residential Tenancies Authority - Affordable Housing Provider representatives - Indigenous Housing representatives • There were differing views on the inclusion of private housing. Some suggestions included REIQ, the Urban Development Institute of Australia and Property Owner's Association.

Framework Component 3 – Community Housing Resource Worker program (CHRW)

Community Housing Resource Workers assist eligible organisations to achieve a viable community housing service and system; high quality service provision; and integration and coordination of services.

Four options were set out in the discussion paper for CHRW program arrangements:

- a) CHRW positions would continue to be auspiced by community organisations;
- b) CHRW positions would be relocated to area offices;
- c) CHRW positions would be relocated to area offices in most cases, with the SEQ positions relocating to central office in Brisbane. The future location of resource worker positions situated in rural / regional areas would be influenced by considerations of proximity to area offices and the future location of Rural Housing Services Centres; or
- d) a program and worker management model based on the Local Area Coordinators program established by DSQ.

Theme	Summary of Feedback
Geographical boundaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was agreement that changes to CHRW and regional housing council boundaries need to be considered in relation to alignment with area offices and new regional local government boundaries. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - North West Queensland (NWQ) Area Office noted that its scope includes Diamantina Shire Council; however, this Council advises the South West Area Office of vacancies when they arise. It was suggested that inclusion of Diamantina and Barcoo Shires in the North West region should be investigated. - The North West Queensland Regional Housing Council submission states that the Local Council reform will amalgamate some councils in its region and this could be the case in other regions. These linkages need to be considered in the framework. • Some respondents, including the Far North Queensland Regional Housing Council raised issues relating to the resourcing of Indigenous housing organisations.

Theme	Summary of Feedback
Resourcing levels required for each region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A common theme related to the role and job specification of CHRW's. It was broadly agreed that the number of CHRW's required in a region was dependent on the scope of their role. Respondents identified a number of potential considerations including the future of the Crisis Accommodation and Supported Accommodation Assistance programs, Community-Managed Studio Unit and Community Rent Scheme reviews and homelessness and affordable housing initiatives. • SEQ respondents agreed that the CHRW program is under resourced in SEQ and that administrative support is required. There was agreement from these respondents that two CHRWs for the SEQ region are inadequate to resource the number of providers in the region. • Far North Queensland respondents expressed a need for two CHRWs in the region, with one focusing solely on Indigenous organisations. • South West Queensland identified the current resourcing of two positions needed to continue, given the geography and size of the region.
Role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong feedback from TAAS(Q) respondents that CHRWs do not adequately meet the needs of housing related services. • Queensland Shelter recommended a mix of regionally based generalist CHRWs and a state-wide unit with a greater level of specialisation to provide support to larger consolidated (growth) providers.

Theme	Summary of Feedback
<p>Program management arrangements (reference options above)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Option 'A'</u>, that CHRW positions would continue to be auspiced by community organisations and remain community based was supported by 15 respondents. Stakeholders cited the following reasons for supporting this option as a preferred model: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - offers a clearer distinction between resourcing and regulatory and program administration roles - CHRW credibility and working relationships are maximised with the role employed by community organisations or local government - proximity to local providers was deemed imperative - all auspices of CHRWs expressed a strong willingness in continuing to support the program. • <u>Option 'B'</u>, that CHRW positions would be relocated to departmental area offices and <u>Option 'C'</u>, that most CHRW positions be relocated to area offices with the exception of SEQ positions that would be managed at a central office and alternative arrangements for rural/regional areas depending on proximity to area offices, received limited support. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Potential conflict between community resourcing and Department of Housing compliance role. - Risk of CHRW role being lost in area office service delivery priorities. - Confidentiality issues for providers. - Practicality issues – meeting space, access to budget and resources, line management, flexibility of role, out of hours working and program arrangements were all cited as issues. - If CHRW roles are moved to a department managed model, as proposed under option 'B', the preference is for the positions to be managed at a central office, not part of area office operations. - Area managers commented that consideration be given to the CHRW location and management issues in light of service delivery reforms. • For <u>options 'B' and 'C'</u>, four stakeholders were supportive of a department based model. Not all respondents commented on this element of the review, in particular, some TAAS services considered the CHRW program irrelevant to their operations.

Theme	Summary of Feedback
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Option 'D'</u>, a program and worker management model was supported by three stakeholders. Reasons cited include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - independent budgets - neutral location and management arrangements support the perception that the role is separate from the department - flexibility of the position <p>allows for equal working relationship between CHRW and area mangers.</p>

Framework component 4 – Training and Skills Development Strategy

A training and skills development strategy includes accredited and non-accredited training as well as training associated with policy implementation. It does not include conference attendance and other information provision activities.

Theme	Summary of Feedback
<p>Scope and operation of the action plan and training skills development opportunities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Queensland Shelter noted that training and skills development for community housing providers is complex and currently ad-hoc with multiple training providers and minimal coordination. • There were mixed views about the capacity of Regional Housing Councils to identify and manage training. • There was agreement of the value in a mixed training model to cover the diversity of requirements. • There was agreement that options should be explored for joint training opportunities with department staff, particularly for property and tenancy management. • There was agreement on the role of training in creating employment opportunities and pathways for attracting and retaining workers.
<p>Funding</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong support for a coordinated approach to providing information about training, some department initiated training and the availability of funding for regional training assessments, as well as accredited and non-accredited training from multiple sources. Respondents strongly supported the availability of funding to cover travel, backfilling staff and travel expenses for smaller operations. • Queensland Community Housing Coalition noted that many organisations are applying for external funding to support skills development.

Theme	Summary of Feedback
Sourcing training opportunities	<p>There was broad support for accredited and non-accredited training.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The submission from a group of Growth Providers in SEQ recommended that the department should encourage Queensland universities to be more active in establishing post graduate courses in social housing and affordable housing. They believe that the establishment of courses within the state has significant policy development advantages, compared with supporting the Swinburne course based in Victoria. • There was agreement for greater availability of Social Housing Certificates III and IV in provincial areas where they are currently limited. • The Tenants' Union (TU) response supported the need for accredited training. The training cited was the Certificate IV Community Services Advocacy and modules in Community Education. The TU stated that accredited training and professional development will develop capacity within the organisation to provide quality services to tenants.
Traineeships, worker exchange and monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several respondents supported creating traineeships. Some suggested a resourced worker exchange and mentoring program to enhance skill development across all areas of the sector.
Mechanism for reporting training skills and development outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was agreement that there needs to be simple reporting and training evaluation mechanisms. • There was agreement that reporting should be efficient and not unduly onerous on organisations.

Housing related services – TAAS(Q) and HAS

A strong message from the Queensland Shelter, Tenants' Union and TAAS(Q) services was that current resourcing arrangements do not work for TAAS(Q) and HAS.

Submissions from TAAS(Q) and the peaks noted the relevance or 'fit' of the current arrangements and suggested that HAS and TAAS(Q) should have their own resourcing arrangements. Queensland Shelter recommended that 'training, support and sector development for housing-related services should be separately resourced outside the Community Housing Resourcing Framework'.

Appendix B: Concept Diagram



Appendix C: Not-for-Profit Housing Business Development and Innovation Unit Regional Boundaries

