



Queensland Government response to the Independent review of the homelessness response in Queensland – Review Update June 2024

July 2024



Introduction

As part of its commitment towards ending homelessness, the Queensland Government has commissioned an independent review (the review) of Queensland's current response to homelessness.

The review commenced on 21 March 2024 to provide a comprehensive examination of the efficacy of current responses to homelessness, identification of systemic factors influencing homelessness, and development of innovative, evidence-based solutions to prevent and reduce homelessness across Queensland's diverse communities.

The review is due to be completed and a final report delivered to the Queensland Government by January 2025.

The first phase of the review has sought to gain a better understanding of the current state of the homelessness system and service responses to homelessness in Queensland. This first phase has now concluded with the initial review findings documented in a report titled: *Independent review of the homelessness response in Queensland – Review Update June 2024*.

The review update identifies three key areas for focus: system governance and performance; housing accessibility and supply; and service delivery and support and makes 13 recommendations for actions to be undertaken within the next three months. These actions are intended to make swift and impactful improvements as a precursor to longer-term reforms to the homelessness response.

The Queensland Government welcomes the recommendations and is committed to working constructively with the sector across each of the key focus areas to implement system improvements. Consultation and engagement with stakeholders will play a key role in ensuring effective outcomes are achieved. While all efforts will be geared toward completion within three months of government consideration, some actions may require additional time to ensure optimal outcomes can be delivered.

The Queensland Government recognises the valuable contribution of the housing and homelessness sector in responding to the needs of people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and looks forward to continuing to work closely with the sector to deliver on the review's interim recommendations as a foundation for future system reforms.

System governance and performance

Recommendation 1

Define the leadership and accountability role of DHLGPPW as the primary entity responsible for the homelessness response.

Response

The recommendation to define the leadership and accountability role of DHLGPPW as the primary entity for the homelessness response is **supported**.

DHLGPPW acknowledges the strong alignment between recommendations 1 and 2 and proposes a coordinated approach to both recommendations. Specifically, DHLGPPW will aim to define alignment between the activities of other Queensland Government agencies and funded organisations to achieve a coordinated approach.

Recommendation 2

Develop a DHLGPPW led governance body to drive an integrated response to homelessness, ensuring appropriate representation from across government, the sector, and individuals with lived and living experience.

Response

The recommendation to establish a DHLGPPW led governance body to drive an integrated response to homelessness is **supported**.

DHLGPPW will prepare a draft Ministerial Charter to establish a new homelessness response governance body, with representation across government, the non-government sector and individuals with lived and living experience of homelessness.

DHLGPPW will rationalise this new body within the existing homelessness governance environment and may resolve to integrate or conclude existing governance bodies where there would be points of duplication with the new body.

Recommendation 3

Establish a Data Working Group to inform the development of appropriate data collection, linking of existing datasets, and streamlining of reporting.

Response

The establishment of a Data Working Group to inform the development of appropriate data collection, linking of existing datasets, and streamlining of reporting is **supported**.

The Working Group will operate within a robust data governance framework that accounts for the various roles and responsibilities of data custodians, users and stakeholders including DHLGPPW, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), specialist homelessness services (SHS) and other service providers.

It is anticipated that a Data Working Group may also inform development of appropriate data management practices and design of future digital solutions.

Close linkages between the Homelessness Data Working Group and other data working groups within DHLGPPW will be established.

DHLGPPW will consider alignment with existing AIHW reporting obligations for specialist homelessness services as well as national reporting requirements including specific requirements contained in the National Agreement on Social Housing and Homelessness (NASHH) multilateral agreement and bilateral schedule and the new NASHH outcomes framework.

Recommendation 4

Establish expectations across the sector that lived experience and service users' voices are reflected in the leadership, design, and delivery of homelessness services.

Response

The recommendation to embed the voices of people with lived experience into the leadership, design and delivery of services is **supported**.

DHLGPPW will establish engagement and participation principles and supporting resources that can be utilised by the department and organisations delivering and designing homelessness services in order to ensure the voices of service users inform needs-based responses on the ground.

DHLGPPW will explore the establishment of consumer representative bodies locally within communities across Queensland and will look to translate the insights gathered into system-level improvements.

Recommendation 5

Immediately reduce unnecessary administrative burden associated with reporting by streamlining and simplifying reporting requirements. This may include removing the need for case studies as a standard part of compliance reporting and investigating the use of alternative identifiers, for example the Centrelink Reference Number (CRN) to determine eligibility.

Response

The recommendation to immediately reduce unnecessary administrative burden associated with reporting is **supported in principle**.

Removing the need for case studies as a component of compliance reporting will be considered by DHLGPPW, along with other opportunities to simplify and streamline reporting.

Case Studies represent one component of reporting and give some context to the wider data collection by providing a support provider's viewpoint on their support and practice.

Any decision to dispense with case studies will be considered following advice by the proposed Data Working Group.

Exploration of further options to more streamlined approaches to demonstrating eligibility for customers will also be undertaken.

The implementation of this recommendation will consider national reporting requirements including those outlined in the NASHH and bilateral schedule and the new NASHH outcomes framework.

Recommendation 6

Clarify the role of peak organisations to reduce confusion and risk of duplication and develop a sector-wide Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to formalise the relationship between government and peak organisations.

Response

The recommendation to develop a sector-wide Memorandum of Understanding to formalise the relationship between government and peak organisations is **supported in principle**.

There are multiple peak bodies active within the housing and homelessness system, with various roles in supporting sector coordination, service integration and system reform. Clarifying the role of peak organisations via an appropriate instrument will help to reduce confusion and risk of duplication. This will require the support and agreement of all sector partners, so is supported in principle.

Recommendation 7

Revise the current model of communication and engagement between government and the sector to improve the flow of information, ensure they are up to date on policy changes and maintain transparency regarding the use and sharing of data and information.

Response

The recommendation to revise the current model of communication and engagement between government and the sector to improve the flow of information, ensuring the sector is up to date on policy changes and that transparency regarding the use and sharing of data and information is maintained, is **supported**.

DHLGPPW will actively revise the models of communication and engagement to enhance and streamline communication between government and providers to ensure timely, relevant and effective communication channels are utilised. This will be actioned in conjunction with and following consultation with the sector.

DHLGPPW is currently developing a stakeholder engagement framework that will assist the department listen to the voices of stakeholders and work closely to achieve meaningful outcomes for the Queensland community.

It provides the context and basis for which the department will plan and implement stakeholder engagement for all projects, programs, initiatives, service delivery, strategies, and decision-making processes.

Housing accessibility and supply

Recommendation 8

Mandate that current government planning processes for building and supplying housing explicitly include considerations for reducing homelessness.

Response

The recommendation to mandate that government planning processes for building and supplying housing explicitly include considerations for reducing homelessness is **supported in principle**.

The recommendation refers to housing generally, however DHLGPPW expects this is a reference to social and potentially affordable housing, but not market housing (as options for reducing homelessness would be harder to specify for market housing). DHLGPPW will seek further discussion and confirmation regarding the scope of the recommendation to inform possible actions.

It should be noted that *Homes for Queenslanders* includes a commitment to deliver (either build or acquire) 37 sites of supported accommodation across Queensland (with each site providing up to 20 units of accommodation), which is specifically for use as crisis accommodation (but could also provide longer-term social housing over time if required).

Recommendation 9

Ensure government regional and local planning and housing targets account for local homelessness needs to better address demand.

Response

The recommendation to implement measures which ensure government regional and local planning and housing targets take account of local homelessness needs is **supported in principle**.

It should be noted that the current target of 53,500 social homes by 2046 announced under *Homes for Queenslanders* seeks to grow social housing and support those in housing stress and at risk of homelessness. Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI) demand modelling was used to inform this target.

The demand modelling is continuing to be refined to ensure that it is an effective tool to inform the Queensland Government's planning, investment, and service delivery over time including consideration of more localised demand modelling.

DHLGPPW will seek further clarification on the practical intent of the recommendation to inform implementation actions.

Service delivery and support

Recommendation 10

Ensure that actions under *Homes for Queenslanders* prioritise support for the homeless, starting with women or families who have children, women escaping domestic violence, and young people under 18.

Response

The recommendation to ensure that actions under *Homes for Queenslanders* prioritise support for the homeless, starting with women or families with children, women escaping domestic and family violence and young people under 18 is **supported**.

Homes for Queenslanders contains a number of initiatives which prioritise support for these cohorts. For example, investment is being directed toward 10 new or replacement DFV shelters, 37 new temporary accommodation sites (each of up to 20 units) for families, young people, and individuals and 8 new youth foyers.

In addition, the Renters Relief Package provides enhanced support for young people, and a youth housing subsidy for community housing providers (CHP) to remove barriers to housing for young people under 25.

DHLGPPW is also delivering three new initiatives as part of *Putting Queensland Kids First*. These initiatives are intended to support young parents and families who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless and early intervention for First Nations families whose young people are at risk of homelessness.

More generally, DHLGPPW works with government and non-government partners to improve cross-agency responses to housing need and deliver integrated health, housing and human services through strong referral processes and integrated service responses. Through these partnerships the department prioritises support to cohorts who have been identified through a whole-of-government response. This includes:

- people needing to exit a government service such as a hospital, health facility or correctional centre who may be at risk of homelessness
- people experiencing domestic and family violence who have an immediate and ongoing risk to their safety
- children in need of protection and young people exiting the child protection system
- young people experiencing homelessness and young people connected to the youth justice system.

Monitoring of progress on all *Homes for Queenslanders* commitments is occurring through a Program Management Office established within DHLGPPW.

Leadership and strategic oversight of *Homes for Queenslanders* commitments is provided by the Housing Delivery Board comprising membership of Directors-General from relevant Queensland Government agencies.

Recommendation 11

Investigate the opportunity to provide SHSs and CHPs with timely access to social housing vacancy data, and CHPs with access to the social housing register, to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of housing placements locally.

Response

The recommendation with respect to providing specialist homelessness services and community housing providers access to social housing vacancy data and the Housing Register will be **further investigated**.

DHLGPPW supports investigating options for providing timely access to social housing vacancy data and will work with the independent review team through phase two to clearly identify both short-term and longer-term system reforms to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of housing placements locally whilst maintaining the integrity of needs-based allocations.

Recommendation 12

Convene a Co-design Working Group to develop a tenancy sustainment model, focusing on preventative actions to enable housing stability and prevent increases in crisis support requirements.

Response

The recommendation to convene a Co-design Working Group to develop a tenancy sustainment model is **supported**.

In addition, DHLGPPW will continue to progress current initiatives which focus on sustaining tenancies to enable housing stability and prevent homelessness. This includes funding to 19 non-government organisations (NGOs) delivering 23 specialist homelessness services for the continuation and enhancement of tenancy sustainment support and brokerage funding from 1 July 2024 – 30 June 2026.

DHLGPPW is also partnering with Queensland Health to deliver *Better Care Together*; a program comprising three Queensland Health funded initiatives aimed at sustaining social housing tenancies and improving mental health and wellbeing outcomes for vulnerable Queenslanders.

Along with this, DHLGPPW is delivering three new initiatives as part of *Putting Queensland Kids First*. These initiatives are intended to support tenancies for young parents and families who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless and early intervention for First Nations families whose young people are at risk of homelessness.

DHLGPPW in conjunction with the Working Group will apply the insights gained through these initiatives to inform development of a tenancy sustainment model.

Recommendation 13

Convene a Co-design Working Group to develop a supportive housing framework that underpins the policy being developed.

Response

Convening of a Co-design Working Group focused on a supportive housing framework is **supported**. A *Supportive Housing Policy* is currently under development and will be accompanied by a framework for implementation.

The framework for implementation is expected to cover the forward work program including development or amendment of program guidelines, service and product guidelines and specifications and incorporation into future procurement activity etc.

The supportive housing policy under development is being informed by a sector working group comprising peak and advocacy groups and frontline services.

DHLGPPW will consider formalising the role of this group and extending its remit to inform development of the implementation framework.