



Housing & Homelessness – Briefing for Mental Health Australia Policy Hub

Background

Wellways Australia's approach to housing is based on the premise that all individuals have the right to safe, secure housing and a place to call home. Having a home provides the foundations from which Victorians can improve their physical and mental health, while also building community connections.

There is a complex relationship between mental health, housing and homelessness. There is a need for more support to prevent and respond to homelessness and accommodation instability, as well as a need for greater supply and diversity of affordable housing options.

A collaborative service approach to eliminate silos and integrate care

- A collective response from health, housing and homelessness and community services is required to overcome the issue of homelessness.
- Current funding streams for these programs sit separately, creating silos within the system.
- Community service agencies should be funded to deliver housing and support programs to deliver a Housing First approach, with the individual at the centre of this support.
- This could be achieved through mental health and drug and alcohol funding streams receiving funding for community programs, and these programs creating partnerships with multiple agencies to deliver flexible services to the end user.
- Wellways recommends that mixed service stream programs are funded to eliminate silos and provide more integrated care options.

Choice and self-determination to build capacity in the community

- Consumer choice and self-determination is a key tenet of the Housing First approach.
- People should have a choice in terms of housing and the supports they receive and when they receive them.
- An essential element to housing satisfaction and ultimately sustainability, is choice about a person's needs in a home. Such fundamental needs may include location, size, ability to have pets, proximity to services and employment opportunities.
- Moreover, having choice about the home and community where you live provides individuals greater opportunities to build a sense of community and natural supports, seek and secure employment and maintain a sense of 'ownership' which in turn supports successful tenancies.

Individualised housing and support options for recovery

- A client-driven approach recognises individuals are unique and so are their needs (another Housing First principle).
- Tailored recovery and tenancy capacity building support is vital to housing tenure for people who have experienced homelessness and for those experiencing mental health difficulties which affect their ability to sustain a tenancy.
- Despite the efficacy of programs such as Doorways, there are limited mental health related tenancy support programs across Australia.
- There is a requirement for *ongoing* and sustainable funding for such programs, which extends beyond the short-term.





Novel solutions to increase housing supply

- Wellways proposes government adopt alternative funding models that support both early intervention for housing risk as well as housing first models that support access to the private housing market, ultimately elevating the 'pressure' off the public housing system.
- Wellways advocates that subsidised housing models delivered in conjunction with the private housing market is one effective solution to provide housing to people experiencing homelessness.
- There is a need for new options for housing such as private rentals or working with developer and industry to provide quality homes for individuals on low incomes that are in scattered locations.

