



SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

Supportive Housing can provide an immediate solution for ending the homelessness of the most vulnerable and chronically homeless people in Queensland. People who are chronically homeless experience long term or repeated homelessness and/or have a co-occurring disability, including a mental illness or addiction.

Services provided to people who sleep rough or are chronically homeless are expensive emergency responses from the police, ambulance, hospital emergency rooms, prisons, city council, food vans and other outreach services. Emergency shelter is a costly alternative to permanent housing and while it is sometimes necessary for short-term crises, too often it serves as long-term housing. Supportive housing will fill a gap in housing options for these people, through the close integration of suitable housing and tailored support services.

There are supportive housing projects in communities across the United States and Europe, many that have similar characteristics and populations of homeless people as Brisbane.



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15 Hope Street, South Brisbane
Artist's impression of the
Ground Floor Foyer. Image
courtesy of Nettleton Tribe.

Features of Supportive Housing

The Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH) promotes and assists supportive housing projects in the USA. The CSH defines supportive housing as **'a successful, cost-effective combination of affordable housing with services that helps people live more stable, productive lives'**.

A supportive housing unit is defined by the following elements:

- The unit is available to, and intended for, a person or family whose head of household requires support to sustain a tenancy and to have quality of life and has multiple barriers to employment and housing stability, which might include mental illness, chemical dependency and/or other disabling or chronic health conditions;
- The tenant household ideally pays no more than 30% of household income towards rent and utilities and never pays more than 50% of income toward such housing expenses;
- The tenant household has a lease (or similar form of occupancy agreement) with no limits on length of tenancy, as long as the terms and conditions of the lease or agreement are met;
- The unit's operations are managed through an effective partnership among representatives of the project owner and/or sponsor, the property management agent, the support services providers, the relevant public agencies and the tenants;
- All members of the tenant household have easy, facilitated access to a flexible and comprehensive array of support services designed to assist the tenants to achieve and sustain housing stability;
- Service providers proactively seek to engage tenants in onsite and community-based support services, but participation in such services is not a condition of ongoing tenancy;
- Service and property management strategies include effective, coordinated approaches for addressing issues resulting from substance use, relapse and mental health crises, with a focus on fostering housing stability.

Onsite and Scattered Site

There are two basic types of supportive housing. **Onsite supportive housing** sees support services physically located within the housing. Developments can include single multi-storey buildings and sprawling housing estates for families. Support services usually have an office onsite and are accessible to tenants in business hours and in some cases, 24 hours a day. Onsite supportive housing is especially effective for people with high support needs. **Scattered Site supportive housing** is where support services outreach to people living in public or community managed or private rental homes. Services visit tenants as often as is needed to support them to maintain their tenancies. Micah Projects currently provides scattered site supportive housing in Brisbane.

Supportive Housing Works

There is a strong evidence base to show that tenancies are sustained and evictions avoided in supportive housing. CSH reports that approximately 75-85% of people who enter supportive housing remain housed and are supported to access the support and health services they need and deserve. Tenants do not become homeless again and often move onto more independent housing. Their homelessness is ended, permanently.

Sustainable Solution

Supportive housing improves housing stability, employment, mental and physical health, and school attendance and reduces active substance use. People in supportive housing are able to live more stable and productive lives.

Investment in Ending Homelessness

Supportive housing breaks the cycle of homelessness and crisis accommodation that is the typical experience of people who are chronically homeless. Supportive housing represents an investment into permanent solutions to end homelessness for individuals. Where it has been implemented, there are indicators of its cost effectiveness. Cost-benefit studies in Australian supportive housing projects are underway.

Beneficial to Communities

Evaluations of supportive housing projects have shown that it helps to build strong, healthy communities by improving the safety of neighbourhoods, beautifying city blocks with new or rehabilitated properties and increasing or stabilising property values over time.



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Rosanne Haggerty, Founder &
President of Common Ground.

About Common Ground

Common Ground is a supportive housing provider that originated in New York City with the first development in Times Square in 1991. It has had great success linking up Street to Home outreach programs with supportive housing to end homelessness for individuals. Common Ground leads a nationwide campaign to secure 100,000 homes for 100,000 chronically homeless Americans (100k Homes) with 76 communities participating. In Brisbane, Common Ground has supported the 50 Lives 50 Homes campaign* and lent its expertise to the development of the Brisbane Common Ground project.

Common Ground has been the inspiration for new supportive housing developments in most Australian capital cities. The Australian Common Ground Alliance is a network of the organisations working in partnership with government, corporate, philanthropic and community stakeholders to promote and deliver supportive housing solutions for chronically homeless Australians.

Principles of the Common Ground model of Supportive Housing

Design: Designing or renovating buildings thoughtfully to create a dignified and positive home environment and including in the design community spaces that can be utilised by tenants and the wider community.

Permanency and Affordability: Housing is permanent, affordable and self-contained with rent less than 30% of income.

*For more information visit the 50 Lives 50 Homes campaign page at [www.micahprojects.org.au/news & events](http://www.micahprojects.org.au/news&events).

Tenancy Mix: There is a mix of tenants with half being people who have experienced homelessness and half people who have never been homeless. This mix helps ensure a vibrant community and a diversity of tenants.

Safety: A concierge service is provided 24 hours, 7 days per week to ensure a welcoming but controlled access to the building at all times.

Support Services: Onsite supports including holistic case management, mental health, primary healthcare, recreation and other specialist services to prevent people becoming homeless again and to support people to achieve their goals and aspirations.

Social Inclusion: Each element of supportive housing from building to support services design aim to create the greatest degree of empowerment and independence for people, as well as a thriving community for tenants and neighbours.



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Artist's impression of the Brisbane Common Ground building due for completion by June 2012. Image courtesy of Nettleton Tribe.

For more information:

micahprojects.org.au

csh.org.au

commonground.org

commongroundaustralia.org.au

100khomes.org