



HOMELESSNESS
IS SOLVABLE

Towards an Australian Permanent Supportive Housing Framework

September 2024



MICAH PROJECTS 

waaeh 
western australian alliance
to end homelessness
together we can end homelessness

Permanent Supportive Housing

Permanent Supportive Housing is a highly effective, proven strategy that combines social and affordable housing with intensive, coordinated services to help people live independently. Permanent Supportive Housing is an essential approach in Australia’s efforts to end homelessness and reduce high utilization of institutional and acute care settings.

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In 2022, Micah Projects and the Western Australia Alliance to End Homelessness (WAAEH) partnered with Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH) to develop the document Towards a Permanent Supportive Housing Framework in Australia, based on the experience and growth of supportive housing in the USA, facilitated by CSH. Additionally, WAAEH and Micah Projects, along with CSH, have adapted a needs-based planning framework used in U.S. local communities to determine the need and growth for supportive housing. This work has provided insight into what it takes for Australian local communities to consider developing a Supportive Housing Growth Plan based on a methodology used by CSH. We thank CSH’s Liz Drapa and Kim Keaton for their generosity and professionalism in adapting their work to the context of two local communities: Western Australia and Brisbane, Queensland.

The Foundations of Permanent Supportive Housing

Housing First Approach

Safe Secure and Affordable Housing

Community controlled First Nations partnership opportunities

Trauma Informed and Person Centred

Collaboration and Partnership

Data Driven and Evidence Based

Specialist Tenancy Management

Multidisciplinary Approach



Interagency Planning

Tailored Support Services

Social Inclusion and Community Integration

A Fact Sheet for Supportive Housing

Permanent supportive housing refers to the provision of ongoing, long-term housing combined with intensive support, either on-site or immediately available, generally targeted to people with chronic histories of homelessness and high and complex needs.

A comprehensive affordable and social housing system encompasses a wide range of programs. Permanent supportive housing is a targeted intervention that helps people stabilize and thrive in housing. Permanent supportive housing is an essential approach in Australia's efforts to end homelessness, to reduce high utilization of institutional and acute care settings, and provide long-term stability and improved quality of life to tenants. Studies over the past 30 years consistently highlight high housing stability rates, improved health, and cost reductions or offsets in health, justice, and child welfare system expenditures.

Who is permanent supportive housing for?

- » Households who are experiencing homelessness and who need intensive services to stay housed
- » Rough sleepers and those identified through the A to Z efforts to end homelessness
- » People cycling in and out of institutional care including mental health, justice, or hospital systems
- » People who are living in crisis response systems that need services and housing support to end their homelessness



Is there evidence it works?

- » National and international studies show permanent supportive housing tenants sustain their housing, have improved health outcomes, and reduced justice system involvement whilst reducing costs to crisis, emergency and justice services.
- » At Brisbane Common Ground permanent supportive housing in the year housed compared to being homeless, there was a 44% reduced use of emergency services and hospitals and a 65% reduction in mental health episodes. The average tenancy is six years duration. Secure, affordable, and stable PSH created the conditions for people to both sustain their tenancies and for other people to exit voluntarily under positive circumstances.



What are the benefits?

- » Reductions in homelessness and housing instability. PSH provides a pathway out of homelessness.
- » Improve tenancy sustainability. Tenants are assisted to maintain housing and quality of life.
- » Increased tenant health and wellbeing with coordinated care.
- » Cost savings for the government. Reduces unnecessary use of hospitals, jails, emergency services.
- » Stronger communities. Tenants engaged and integrated into the community.
- » Leveraged partnerships. Links housing with health, community sectors.

Why are the opportunities for Government?

- » Aligns with government priorities - reducing homelessness, improving community health, supporting vulnerable Australians.
- » Allows targeted responses tailored to needs of women fleeing violence, individuals with disabilities, mental health issues, and young adults moving out of youth care models of housing and support.
- » Provides infrastructure to coordinate government and community services more effectively.
- » Innovation in social housing provision to improve outcomes.
- » Investing in proven permanent supportive housing models is a smart social policy and financial investment that will improve the lives of vulnerable Australians.



For more information see Appendix a. on page 8

Why Permanent Supportive Housing is a Smart Investment for Australia

Social housing in its current form struggles to meet the needs of the growing number of tenants facing complex challenges. Issues like mental illness, problematic substance use, trauma, and chronic health problems often undermine housing stability. Complaints of anti-social behaviours and unsafe communities erode social housing live-ability. As a result, too many vulnerable tenants cycle through homelessness, crisis services, hospitals, and jails.

The solution is facilitating innovation through partnerships and collaborations across sectors to reduce the failure to tenants and strains on government resources. This approach incorporates planning, development, implementation and evaluation of permanent supportive housing investments.

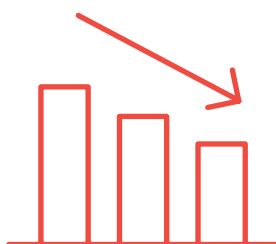


Permanent supportive housing managed by First Nations Community Managed Agencies will address the needs and over representation of First Nations people who are experiencing homelessness in Australia. Permanent supportive housing is culturally adapted for First Nations and a diversity of population groups.



Permanent supportive housing combines affordable housing with on-site, coordinated support services tailored to tenants' needs. This improves housing stability and quality of life for vulnerable groups. Permanent supportive housing considers support is delivered for people with a range of needs by:

- » An operational financial package per building for tenants, based on additional rental subsidies provided by the Government, to ensure security and sustainability for those with the lowest income and multiple needs.
- » Dedicated planning and funding of tailored support and healthcare services for targeted population groups, to be embedded into housing.



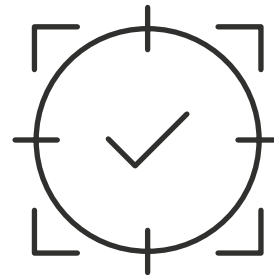
Studies show it also reduces costs for health, justice, and homelessness systems. With the right design and partnerships, permanent supportive housing can transform lives.

Success is driven by a separation of the tenancy manager role, services provider, concierge, clinical and non-clinical support. For First Nations populations, are culturally safe and/or community controlled and embedded in the housing.



It aligns with Government priorities around reducing homelessness, improving community health and supporting inclusion.

Permanent supportive housing offers targeted solutions to prevent crisis, create long-term stability and achieve more positive and equitable outcomes for vulnerable and disadvantaged adults, families and for young people as a pathway out of short term or temporary housing options.



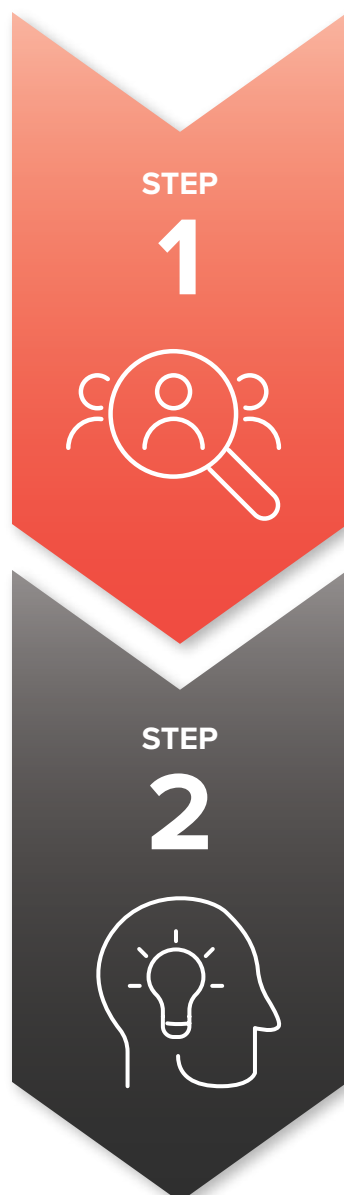
Models like Common Ground demonstrate permanent supportive housing's potential. Tenants experienced over 50% reductions in emergency department use, hospital admissions, and justice system involvement.

By investing further in evidence-based permanent supportive housing, the Australian Government can drive better social, health, and financial outcomes. It is a smart policy and fiscal strategy to help our most disadvantaged citizens and strengthen communities. The time is right for permanent supportive housing innovation.

Designing for Permanent Supportive Housing

The design principles for both support services and the built form will be guided by these recommendations. Permanent supportive housing should be tenant informed, designed with the community and persons with lived experience to ensure priority investments improve safety, security, stability, and the quality of life. Partnerships with First Nations organisations and culturally specific populations will ensure culturally appropriate design outcomes for our diverse community.

Planning Permanent Supportive Housing



Identify Need.

- » Identify the **Target Population Group** Needs including populations stuck in the revolving door of high-cost crisis care and crisis services.
- » Identify **place-based options** to determine compatibility with the community.
- » Determine **density**.
- » Identify **appropriate and possible lived experience inclusion** approaches in project design, ranging from consultation to true co-design.

Plan for Purpose

- » **Supportive Housing** is a type of social housing that is safe and prevents people from cycling through the homelessness system, plus high utilisation of crisis, emergency and justice systems.

STEP

3



Design

- » Endorse **multipurpose** building design and function.
- » **Integrate** housing, services, and communities to:
 - Maximize safety
 - Achieve personal, social, financial, and environmental outcomes
 - Promote sustainability in the community

STEP

4



Financial Model

- » **Identify** building size and rental income.
- » Determine if social housing or a community-managed development.
- » An **operational financial package** per building for tenants.
- » Outline operating cost per building including security required.
- +
- » Identify potential service sources for the target population.
- » Determine the outcomes for best quality of life.

STEP

5



Partnerships

- » Separation of **tenancy management and services**.
- » What specialist services are required? e.g. health, child services.
- » Community engagement plan.
- » Evaluation.
- » Local community partnerships.
- » Tenant informed, ensuring voices of communities and persons with lived experience are included.

Source: Micah Projects

Appendix a.

Components of Permanent Supportive Housing

1. Well Designed for Mixed and Multipurpose

All permanent supportive housing designs share important features, including spaces for private household activities and community interaction. Recognise and design for the importance to First Nations populations of culturally safe and appropriate housing and services.

Each housing unit provides adequate living space for essential daily activities, such as cooking, eating, sleeping, and studying. Each unit has a private bathroom, kitchen, and washing facilities. Integrated or single-site permanent supportive housing locations typically have access to common space where tenants can choose to interact with one another and with visitors. Alternatively, well designed share housing can be developed.

2. Affordable, Secure and Stable Housing

People are housed first into affordable, income-based, long-term housing with no time limit on residency where lease conditions are met. The household pays no more than 25 to 30% of its income towards rent, and the lease is identical to non-permanent supportive housing. Permanent supportive housing is adaptable to different locations and can be delivered in a range of styles and at various scales. Permanent supportive housing may also include well designed and supported shared accommodation models. Affordability is achieved through subsidized public housing; community managed or owned housing and/or rental subsidy to community housing in the private market.

3. Support Connected to Subsidised Tenancy

Support is connected to subsidised tenancy, on site or through mobile support for duration of need and subsidy. Tenants are linked to support services tailored to meet their needs. Case management services are provided directly by staff, who may connect tenants to health, mental health, or problematic substance use treatment, disability, employment services, and age-appropriate services such as children's services or aged care. Services are voluntary.

4. Coordinated Support Services and Specialist Property/Tenancy Management

Property/Tenancy Managers, concierge and service providers are jointly committed to co-ordination to prevent eviction. Property/tenancy managers maintain the physical asset (leases, building, common areas) and coordinate closely with service staff on tenant needs, concerns and provide connection to mainstream services and community resources. Service providers work directly with tenants to sustain their tenancy by case management to connect them to community-

based and specialised support services. Both teams work together to ensure tenants have what they need to be successful. Critical to the success of permanent supportive housing is formalised coordination to create sustaining tenancy plans with tenants.

5. Operational costs

Recognise the need for an ongoing operational subsidy or an additional rental assistance scheme for housing providers to ensure the long-term viability and sustainability of permanent supportive housing projects, as tenants often have limited income and may require rent subsidies to maintain stable housing.

6. Safety and Scale

Depending on scale and purpose a 24/7 concierge team provides a welcoming entrance in a high-density model. The concierge team also provides ongoing information, assistance, and support to tenants. In other types of developments, a comprehensive safety and security strategy is designed for tenants, visitors, property protection and the community. Concierge team may comprise of a security trained member and support worker.

7. Connected Community

Permanent supportive housing facilitates community connection for tenants. The tenants are supported to connect with community-based resources and activities, to interact with diverse individuals (including those without significant vulnerabilities and disadvantages) and to build strong social support networks. Quality permanent supportive housing is in areas accessible to transportation, healthcare, and community amenities. Permanent supportive housing providers are responsive to local community feedback and involvement of tenants within the community.

8. Environmentally Sustainable

The building is designed to meet environmental standards for energy and water efficiency. Tenants are set up with energy efficient washing machines, fridges, dryers, dishwashers, air conditioners/heaters, and hot water systems.

9. Lived Experience Inclusion and Community Voice

Permanent supportive housing is informed by the community and persons with lived experience. This includes ensuring community voice and tenant feedback are part of the creation, design, implementation, and ongoing delivery. Permanent supportive housing maximizes client choice, in clients' housing options and the services they receive.

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A Contribution to the Development of a Supportive Housing Policy for Queensland. Micah Projects – supported by Ellen Whitty Trust, 2024.

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