



## INFORMATION FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS

# Housing Connect Reform

*The Housing Connect Reform commences under Tasmania's Affordable Housing Action Plan 2 (2019-2023). The Reform involves implementation of the recommendations from the Housing Connect Review which concluded in June 2019.*

### **Why was a review of Housing Connect needed?**

When Housing Connect was established in 2013 it was identified that a review would be done once operations had fully commenced.

The purpose of the Review was to critically examine the existing Housing Connect model and provide recommendations on ways to improve the model and service delivery; to more effectively respond to housing crisis and homelessness in Tasmania.

The Review focused specifically on Housing Connect Front Door and Support Services. The Review also considered opportunities to clarify roles and strengthen integration and working relationships between these services and the multiple Homelessness Accommodation providers (crisis and transitional services) that operate statewide as part of the Housing Connect service system.

### **Who did the Review?**

In August 2018, the Department of Communities Tasmania with the support of the Housing Connect Steering Group, contracted the Brotherhood of St Laurence (BSL) Research and Policy Centre to review Housing Connect.

The Review involved extensive analysis and consultation with Housing Connect service providers and other key stakeholders.

The Brotherhood of St Laurence is a community organisation that works to prevent and alleviate poverty across Australia through delivery of programs, research and support. The mission of the Research and Policy Centre of BSL is to research, develop and deliver innovative and high-quality services, practices and policies to drive change that benefits all Australians.

### **What was the outcome of the Review?**

The Review concluded in June 2019. The Final Report to the Department outlined a number of recommendations on how to improve the Housing Connect model and service delivery to more effectively respond to housing crisis and homelessness in Tasmania.

The report recommendations are summarised and categorised under five headings:



## **1. Design principles and strategic priorities**

- Incorporate a set of endorsed Principles into the design, practice and outcome framework for Housing Connect, including a revised Policy and Practice Manual, SHIP-Tas reporting framework, new Community of Practice and Evaluation Plan.
- Develop a targeted strategy to prevent homelessness experienced by young children (under 12).
- Develop a comprehensive Youth Homelessness Strategy for 12-25 year olds joining up the work of the Youth Taskforce and other initiatives in the Affordable Housing Action Plan 2.

## **2. Service models and practice**

- Design and trial a web-based Housing Assistance Portal for people to access information about housing assistance and make applications for social housing.
- Incorporate (a refined) Winter Emergency Support assertive outreach approach with state-wide coverage.
- Improve integration of crisis and transitional accommodation service providers.
- Introduce 'maximum caseloads' into Housing Connect Support contracts.
- Trial specialised support responses.

## **3. Data evidence and quality**

- Develop an on-line Training and Professional Development Portal for all Housing Connect workers.
- Convene an Evaluation Working Group with external research expertise and key stakeholder representation to design and oversee a rigorous Housing Connect Evaluation Plan.

## **4. Governance**

- Establish a new Housing Connect Reform Steering Committee to oversee the successful delivery of the Reform over the three-year term of the project.
- Appoint an Independent Chair to the new Housing Connect Reform Steering Committee to guide the refinement of the Housing Connect model.
- Appoint a Reform Project Manager (Executive Officer) to lead the project and help drive consistency in service delivery statewide.

## **5. Commissioning**

- Maintain the two lead agencies delivering Front Door services.
- Maintain the current diversity of Support providers but consider building specialist support capacity aimed at particular cohorts such as children and young people.
- Invest in joint commissioning of services to scale up existing interventions with health, welfare and justice departments to prevent release or discharge into homelessness.



## **How will the Review Recommendations be adopted?**

The Recommendations of the Review form the basis of the Housing Connect Reform project.

The Housing Connect Reform is focused on delivering four key milestones which will be met over the next three years:

- Develop and endorse Housing Connect Design Principles (by 29 November 2019).
- Develop and endorse a refined service model (by 27 November 2020).
- Redistribute Housing Connect funding to support the refined service model (by 31 March 2021).
- Develop and endorse a Practice Framework for the new service model (by 30 September 2021).

A detailed Implementation Plan is currently being developed which will outline when, how and by whom all other recommendations will be delivered.

## **Who will lead the Reform?**

Communities Tasmania will play a lead role in the Reform and will work closely with Housing Connect to develop and implement the changes.

A Steering Committee will be established to oversee the Reform. This Committee will comprise:

- Housing Connect Independent Chair
- Housing Solutions Manager, Colony 47
- CEO, Anglicare
- Director Housing Services, CatholicCare
- Housing and Homelessness State Manager, Salvation Army
- CEO, Hobart City Mission
- Director Housing Programs, Communities Tasmania
- Two Homelessness Accommodation representatives (1 North & 1 South)

The Reform Project Manager will play a coordination role for this group.

## **What resources are available to deliver the Reform?**

The Reform Project Manager will be recruited to lead implementation of reform activities over the next three years. They will also be focused on achieving greater consistency in statewide service delivery. The Reform Project Manager will report to the Housing Connect Reform Steering Committee with line management provided by the Director Housing Programs, Communities Tasmania.

The Brotherhood of St Laurence will be engaged to help deliver the key milestones of the Reform.

Staff within the Housing Programs team of Communities Tasmania will support the Reform Project Manager to deliver the Reform.

Consultant services will also be used as required to deliver specific recommendations (including a review of PRA and delivery of SHIP enhancements).

Additional funding has been provided for specific recommendations including additional brokerage funds for Housing Connect and continued funding for the Emergency Support Program (formerly known as Winter Relief Package).



## **What impact will the Reform have on service providers?**

The Reform will focus specifically on Housing Connect Front Door and Support services to improve the way housing and homelessness services are provided in Tasmania. This will involve change to the way things are currently done. The change will occur incrementally, driven by the timing of key milestones (as outlined above).

The key milestones and recommendations will involve refining the service model and aligning the funding distribution to reflect this change. Once the new service model has been confirmed, a Practice Framework will be developed to support the model, introducing greater clarity and better process by refining policy, business processes and training.

Homelessness Accommodation providers (crisis and transitional services) will be involved in this change through a focus on clarifying roles and responsibilities (i.e. the way support services and homelessness service providers work together) and strengthening working relationships between all providers in the Housing Connect service system. This clarity and strength will come chiefly from better processes, policies and training which will be outputs of the Practice Framework.

Mainstream service providers will also be consulted in the development of improved and clarified practices and processes. A further recommendation of the Review is to investigate greater joint commissioning opportunities with mainstream services for new and existing programs.

## **Will there be updates on the progress of the Reform?**

Yes. Regular updates will be provided to all Housing Connect services providers about the progress of the Reform.

Individual services will also be involved as required in specific recommendations relating to them.

## **What are the next steps?**

Planning and preparation for the Reform project is already underway.

The first steps will be to establish the Housing Connect Reform Steering Committee and recruit the new positions of the Housing Connect Independent Chair and the Reform Project Manager.