

Appendix A

HPLS conducted consultations on key issues in the Green Paper at a number of welfare agencies:

- Matthew Talbot Hostel: on Wednesday 28 May 2008
- Wayside Chapel: on Wednesday 4 June 2008
- Norman Andrews House: on Thursday 5 June 2008
- Women's and Girls' Emergency Centre: on Tuesday 10 June 2008
- Parramatta Mission: on Wednesday 11 June 2008

The following are the direct comments, responses and questions provided by the homeless people who attended those consultations.

Comments from homeless people on their housing needs



Consultation at Matthew Talbot Hostel

- Rent is a big factor – it's gone up so much but it should still be possible to cover it with Centrelink.
- Each/some dwellings should accommodate more than one person.
- Rent is too much for one person to pay if all the accommodation is in single dwelling places.
- Prices for rent are too high.
- No money shortage – long term homelessness is poor management. Centrelink money is enough to live off – it will provide the basics and people have the wrong priorities! Maybe rent vouchers rather than cash will help people manage this.
- It is difficult to be amongst the general public especially old people. They need to be comfortable to do what they want. Here at Matthew Talbot we can do what we want, but out in the general public it's more difficult. There should be more ads in the paper for rent.

- There are some people in Talbot House that should be in institutions, private housing is not appropriate.
- It's good how the Government is creating housing with some private dwellings, some half-way and some co-ops.
- People need counselling on how to manage money for rent. But then a lot of them don't want counselling.
- There should be more ads in the paper for places to rent.
- Private rental – they should go to real estate agents and get the agents to be more friendly to homeless people so that they can integrate into the mainstream/get jobs etc.
- I can look after myself. I don't need housing. If I want it I can get it.
- You can't force someone to accept financial counselling. They need to want it for themselves.
- Community housing could have problems with compatibility between people.
- Mental health, drug problems, alcohol, gambling – mean they don't have money left to spend on rent.
- My problems are different from others – they won't apply to your question!
- People aren't motivated to find homes.
- Some people can't live individually because they haven't got the living skills.
- They should do it like Cuba – the Government should make housing for everyone.
- Transition from hospital is hard if you don't know where to go or you don't have anywhere to go. The same applies to leaving prison.
- It would be better if you had a chance to stay in housing you used to have, before you become homeless in the first place.
- Waiting in a crisis centre for Department of Housing approval creates its own problems for me. More funds should be allocated to underlying issues such as mental health and alcoholism and addictions.
- Support would be more appropriate than supplying houses. Support means rent vouchers rather than payment from Centrelink. Or give money directly to the landlords.
- It's hard to start over in a new place, especially when times are tough. It's hard enough to make friends in the first place.

- There needs to be different levels/types of housing for different kinds of people. People who earn less money should have more help.
- Rental should be capped.
- Housing is an opportunity for disadvantaged people to arrange their lives in a better way.
- Accommodation takes up most of your income if you're on Centrelink, so you have no choice but to stay on the streets – it's a catch-22. If you put your money in rent there's very little left for yourself – about \$40-\$80 per week at most. I'd like to see the PM live on that kind of money.
- When I was unwell I lost my housing, so now I don't have a place to stay and so I can't have my kids to visit. I'm waiting on the Housing Commission to get back to me. The pension isn't enough to cover rent plus food plus clothes – it should be double the amount it is now.
- The question is how long will it take? I'll die of old age before I see a change. There's not enough investment in us.
- If there's cheap rent it means being in a bad area and it's hard to care about your place and your neighbourhood.
- Affordable rent is especially a problem in Sydney.
- One hard thing is the cost of getting started – bond, furniture, etc. There should be some kind of start up kit to help people get started – a fridge and a washing machine and a table and bed. You need at least \$300 for that stuff. Sometimes they give you an advance from your Centrelink benefit but then it gets taken out over the weeks so you are always behind the 8-ball, from the start.
- But – what's the point of having housing or a start-up grant if most of your money goes to rent and you can't afford to live?
- What does housing mean to you:
 - stability;
 - you can belong to the community;
 - sense of belonging;
 - somewhere to call home;
 - a chance;
 - security of items, security of person.

Re: Department of Housing

- Currently, they are knocking back everyone who applies. Then you have to appeal and then you might be lucky! This is time wasting for people in dire need of a house.
- The Housing Commission is corrupted, you need money to get a house. If youth get off the drugs, then it could be helped.
- When you go to Government housing they want you to move to a new neighbourhood away from family and friends, this is isolating. It's not fair that we are expected to take whatever is available, if the housing that is offered is inappropriate.
- I have Government housing now and it makes life a lot easier. The only problem is that rent goes up when your income goes up so it's hard to get ahead. It's hard to cook for myself because I get lazy about shopping but I eat for about the same price per week.
- Housing Commission waiting lists are long – I've been waiting two years and they say it will be at least 5 years before I get a house.

Re: Promise of 600 homes

- The first question is when will the new accommodation be provided. The second question is that 600 new homes doesn't seem like a lot. But I suppose it's better than none at all.
- There should be at least 6,000 new dwellings not 600. Six Hundred is an insult, a slap in the face.
- I reckon 600 new dwellings for homeless people is a good thing.

Consultation at Wayside Chapel

- We will never afford our own
- It's a basic need - not a privilege
- Centrelink doesn't make private rental affordable: you have to move away from support in city to afford housing
- Even 'ordinary' people can't afford it.
- Homeless Persons' Services need to be more user friendly/supportive, understand the whole picture.
- Government-sponsored facility for looking/finding properties.
- So expensive to look for properties.

- Job network providers to provide help with housing.
- Work schemes for homeless people, work for housing and go up on the housing list.
- Employment.
- More monitoring of emergency accommodation centres - some are dives!
- More flexible models for housing.
- Organisations should practice what they preach
- People need a place where they can sleep at night & have security
- 30% of income on rent is regarded as 'rental stress'.
- There are too many people in Sydney and there will never be enough housing.
- Stop selling off public housing.
- There will be lots more people in Sydney in future - we need to prepare for that.
- The hostels are rejecting homeless people because they are full.
- I only know of two women's hostels in Sydney.
- Housing is out of reach for most people, people should not have to be renting - they should have homes.

Re: Department of Housing

- Lumping people together can cause further stress.
- DOH does not understand people with mental illness. People are evicted because they are unable to manage well
- When you're on a housing list there is no communication.
- DOH 30% of income as rent is the calculation.

Re: Promise of 600 houses

- Is that a joke? That's definitely not enough!! Times it by 10!
- Where will they be?
- I think they should be close to transport and to places for social interaction, you need support structures and work around housing to prevent homelessness.

- Amount of houses that covers 50% of homeless.
- Is that a false promise?
- There's rental crisis - 600 doesn't seem like enough houses.

Consultation at Norman Andrews House

- Contact details, very hard to reply when we have no fixed address.
- There are too many forms.
- Duplication eg, authority to disclose.
- Unreasonable deadlines are placed on us.
- Starting at zero because agency contacts changed.
- Racial preferences.
- Failure to consider appropriateness of placements, eg, age, race, culture.
- Levy development and more money for collective/state housing funds.
- Too many vacant investment properties.
- Review Commonwealth/State housing agreements.
- Mentality: if you get a job, you have to get out.
- Emphasis on workers' housing, eg, nurses, bus drivers, needs reconsideration.
- Getting kids off street and studying.

Re: Department of Housing

- Continual means testing to keep the list short.
- Socialisation between Department of Housing and the homeless.
- Manage Department of Housing in local communities – know local needs.
- Time limit/progress plan to get people out of DOH. houses so that other needy clients Better maintenance of properties leads to less complaints from those with housing and more time for Department of Housing staff to spend with those without housing.
- can move in.

Consultation at Women's and Girls' Emergency Centre

- What about subsidies for private landlords for those who'll lease at affordable rates?
- We need housing near services which are in the inner city.
- Boarding houses are expensive (\$130+), dirty, men bang on your door all night, you have no rights and you can get kicked out at any time.
- Rental assistance not enough for rent, even studio apartments.
- No change in private rental.
- 70% to 80% income on rent.
- Everyone's situation is different but no assessment of what basic standards should be – fragmented process, trying to get out is a genuine trap.
- Makes you dependent and you can't get out.
- Regulated society that requires you to have money to function in society, can't do anything without money.
- Kids taken and jailed because they have to pay so much in rent.
- When is it going to happen? I think it's disgusting.
- Rent needs to be controlled. There's not enough places to rent. You need rent-controlled accommodation.
- Rent's not one stable amount. In NZ, less privileged families pay \$60 per week.
- We don't want to share with 20 junkie men, but it's over \$400 to rent a place.
- They need controlled rents and protection of tenancy at boarding houses.
- The front doors of boarding houses are open all night.
- It's always about what the government can afford, not what people need.
- People with gender issues can't go into male-only accommodation – we have to stay on the men's floor at some places. There should be places for transgender people to go. Just having men or women doesn't cover it.
- Charities are struggling to do what they're doing.
- I need help with paying back unpaid rent.

- It's so judgmental. You get assessed as problems by government departments. Governments shouldn't be part of the problem.
- A lot of housing options are for men only.
- So much money is being spent on things like grass and parks when we need housing
- Need rights to protect housing, the only thing we have is boarding house or refuge.
- Women with children would take housing offer to others, 2 bedrooms' too expensive.
- Places.
- Most people on welfare would get out of it if they could.

Re: Department of Housing

- DOH doesn't assist with anything over 50% of income.

Re: Promise of 600 new homes

- 600 new homes delivered for homeless people – where will they be?
- I think it's tokenistic. 600 would make no real difference.

Consultation at Parramatta Mission

- Public perception is unrealistic in current market in terms of affordability, and landlord's preferring people on wage not Centrelink.
- Should be higher subsidies for living in private rental, ie, higher rent assistance, so that the cost of private rental is equal to DOH.
- Paying for bond is not enough if you can't afford weekly rent.
- Community garden so people can all meet (Victorian model).
- There aren't many new units that are affordable for people in low social economic groups (look at how the Scandinavian countries operate).
- To make sure info about services and to be kept up to date so that those who are homeless know where to go for support and housing
- Retrospective to all existing private accommodations on a sliding scale
- Low socio-economic status, nowhere to voice concerns.

- Rent 27 ¾ now (30%= is called mortgage stress for private), should be reduced to 22%; take 2% off every renter to build ongoing accommodation for people who have nowhere to live.
- Unless you get to DOH with a social worker you don't get heard (not everyone has this luxury).
- Why have they not got accommodation ready for those that have none?
- Vacant government buildings, eg, old hospitals should be converted.
- Housing likely to be targeted at specific groups, leaving out others who fall outside of target groups.

Re: Department of Housing

- But don't repeat mistake of 60s/70s and create separate suburbs of people on Centrelink; DOH: Breeds crime; Needs to be more integrated.
- Priority list is too long.
- Hard-sell from DOH to get private rental.
- But in DOH accommodation, only charged 25% of income.
- Need twice as many disability officers in DOH.
- Should not be so quick to take people off the housing list.

Re: Promise of 600 new homes

- Not enough!!
- Who are they targeted at?