

Integrating homelessness and social housing service delivery

Tasmania, Australia



Tasmania has been reforming its housing, health and human services to improve integration, streamline service delivery, and strengthen the client focus. A key plank of this reform was an in-depth review of homelessness support and accommodation services.

The review was conducted by KPMG in Australia in 2011-12. KPMG recommended ways to improve services for clients, including integration of homelessness and social housing access and assessment into a new one-stop-shop 'front door', to be managed by the non-government sector.

Context for the review

Tasmania had restructured its entire homelessness service system in 2000. Since that time, increasing demand and financial pressures on the broader Australian social housing and homelessness sectors had led to a major reform of these systems as articulated in:

- The National Affordable Housing Agreement
- The Road Home (Australian Government's White Paper on Homelessness)

- Coming In From The Cold (Tasmanian Government's State homelessness plan)
- Tasmanian Social Inclusion Strategy.

Important themes to emerge from these processes included:

- separation of accommodation/tenancy services from support services
- creation of streamlined access points and common assessment processes
- greater emphasis on prevention/early intervention
- the move to 'housing first' solutions that provide wrap-around support.

In parallel to these social housing and homelessness reforms, the wider health and human services system in Tasmania was also undergoing significant change to streamline service delivery and improve client outcomes.

Given these changes, the Tasmanian Government considered it timely to review the suite of homelessness support and accommodation services to ensure they were being delivered in the most effective and efficient way. The goal was to focus on contemporary good practices and ensure that the social housing and homelessness system was aligned.

The KPMG review

The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) engaged KPMG in Australia to undertake the review because they had successfully partnered with them before on significant reforms (social housing, disability, child and family services). KPMG understood the community, and had a demonstrated knowledge of international good practice for outcomes-based human services.

The first part of the review involved one-on-one consultations with all service providers to map current service provision and practice; analysis of data to identify trends and project demand; a policy and document analysis to assess alignment with Tasmanian and national policy directions; and a literature review to identify international good practice and evidence for homelessness service delivery.

The second part of the engagement explored options for a new service

model to address identified gaps and opportunities. This involved extensive stakeholder consultation to agree on overarching principles, test gathered evidence and assumptions, and develop options for the proposed new model.

The review identified several strengths of the current system, including a skilled workforce and a strengths-based service philosophy. Challenges included the integration of social housing and mainstream services, 'bottle necks' in emergency accommodation, and increasing demand by some client cohorts. Some duplication was also identified, particularly around assessment, case management, and tenancy support services.

Recommendations to build on strengths

KPMG proposed that 12 existing 'service types' be streamlined into three core services. The aim was to simplify access and service provision for clients

and reduce duplication, allowing for more targeted investment in areas of growing demand.

Service type one – the 'front door' – would provide an integrated social housing and homelessness access point, combining intake and assessment for all accommodation and support services to deliver a one-stop-shop for people in need of housing support. The front door would have a key role in facilitating service integration, monitoring clients, and coordinating homelessness prevention actions. Service type two comprised 'floating' support services, and service type three comprised emergency accommodation.

KPMG also made longer-term recommendations to improve data collection and move towards an outcomes-based funding model in the future, once the new model is in place.

What happened after the review?

KPMG suggested that DHHS use a select tender process with existing non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to procure the new service system. The objective of this non-competitive approach was to achieve locally-determined operational arrangements, and to promote cooperation – channelling efforts into delivering collaborative service, rather than competing for contracts.

The new service system has now been implemented as Housing Connect, with a consortium of NGOs delivering the Housing Connect 'front door' across Tasmania.

“KPMG in Australia drew on wide experience in human services delivery and integration, and our understanding of effective homelessness responses, to deliver this project. Our focus was on working collaboratively with the client and their stakeholders to gather the information, analyze what it meant for Tasmania, and help them develop a solution that was informed by evidence, and tailored to local needs and circumstances.”

Liz Forsyth
National Sector Lead:
Health, Aging and Human Services

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Designed by Evalueserve. Publication name: Integrating homelessness and social housing service delivery. Publication number: 130859. Publication date: February 2014