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|  A.C.T. LEGISLATIVE<br>ASSEMBLY<br>COMMITTEE OFFICE |          |
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*Karin*  
Dear Ms MacDonald

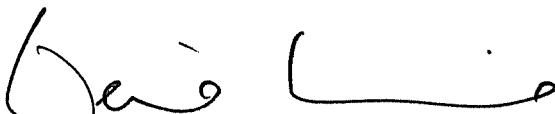
Thank you for your letter of 15 September 2005 requesting information for the Inquiry into Appropriate Housing for People Living with Mental Illness.

I have enclosed for your information, a Report on Mental Health and Housing in the Northern Territory (Attachment A) which is in line with the Terms of Reference from the Inquiry.

As you are aware, the Northern Territory has the smallest population of any jurisdiction in Australia and therefore, alternative support based housing models for people with mental illness are limited.

I hope the information supplied is helpful to the Inquiry. Should you require any further information on this matter, please contact Ms Rebecca Orr, Senior Development Officer, Mental Health Services, Department of Health and Community Services on (08) 8999 2464.

Yours sincerely

  
DELIA LAWRIE

14/10/05



Northern Territory Government

## **MENTAL HEALTH AND HOUSING IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY REPORT**

### **1. Criteria for gaining access to Public Housing in the Territory.**

Territory Housing offers housing to applicants on 'first in with their application, first housed' basis. Applicants are placed on a 'waiting list,' with the longest wait being three and half years for a one bedroom flat in Alice Springs. However, housing may be offered 'out of turn' to people who are homeless, or at risk of becoming homeless or have serious medical or social problems including a mental disability that affects their ability to gain housing in the private sector.

Territory Housing has a mandate to house those most in need, which includes those applicants who cannot be housed in the private sector. Mental health case managers often make application on behalf of a person suffering a mental illness with supporting medical evidence and an Out of Turn Committee considers all applications. The Out of Turn Committee usually requires a case plan for the applicant indicating who will be assisting if the person has difficulty holding tenancy due to their mental illness.

Once an out of turn application is accepted they are put on top of the waiting list and are usually allocated a property within three to six months.

### **2. Support mechanisms for Mental Health Consumers in Territory Housing.**

Territory Housing and Mental Health Services have had positive results for consumers when good liaison practices have been operating. Up until now this has been an informal arrangement, relying on the personal commitment of staff in both sectors to ensure effective inter-sectorial liaison and training for workers. Territory Housing has found training in mental health conditions especially helpful for Tenancy Officers.

Quality assurance indicators to ensure both sectors have intersectorial liaison practices permanently in place are currently being considered as part of the obligations under a new Memorandum of Understanding being developed between the Department of Health and Community Services (DHCS) and Territory Housing.

### **3. Non-Government involvement in provision of appropriate housing in the Territory.**

The Territory Housing, Community Housing Program has been helpful in assisting mental health non-government organisations (NGO) providing accommodation services to people requiring ongoing support with a mental illness. Territory Housing supports the concept of community housing as an alternative to public housing. This is achieved through property acquisition, property upgrade and community service resourcing. Another objective is to develop and improve partnership opportunities between Territory Housing and community agencies like Mental Health.

The Community Housing Program offers financial assistance and housing stock to community based organisations providing or seeking to provide longer-term accommodation for people who have mental health problems that affect their ability to hold a tenancy. Capital funding is available for the purchase, construction, upgrading or renovation of housing to accommodate people with special needs as well as grants for project proposals and infrastructure development relating to accommodation for mental health NGOs.

NGOs providing or seeking to provide accommodation for people who are in crisis may also access funding through this program. The ongoing support required for people housed in accommodation from the Community Housing Program must be sought from the appropriate programs in DHCS.

In the Territory, the Mental Health NGOs which have successfully acquired Supported Accommodation resources are the Top End Mental Health Association (TeamHealth) and the Mental Health Association of Central Australia (MHACA). Both these mental health NGOs receive recurrent grant funding from the DHCS Mental Health Program to supply outreach support and rehabilitation services for the residents of their Community Accommodation Housing options.

TEAMHealth in Darwin has secured capital grants to purchase a five bed home for long-term mental health consumers and a block of eight flats for women with a mental illness who have children. Also they have been allocated approximately 20 beds (a variety of two bedroom flats and three bedroom houses) from Territory Housing stock to auspice. Tenancy obligations and furnishing of the accommodation is the responsibility of TEAMHealth.

MHACA in Alice Springs have also been given capital grants from Territory Housing for two, two-bedroom flats. MHACA has recurrent grants with the DHCS for Outreach and Recovery based Rehabilitation Programs.

In addition TEAMHealth has managed a five bedroom Transitional Accommodation Program for over 10 years. The Territory Government owns the building and a recurrent grant from the DHCS ensures the Unit has appropriate levels of support and rehabilitation staff.

## **2. Alternative community based support models in the Territory and other related matters.**

- *Subacute Individual Care Packages and 24 hour supported subacute accommodation options.*

In 2004/05, \$835 000 was allocated to the DHCS Mental Health Program to conduct Individual Care Package trials for 18 months. \$500 000 was allocated to the non-government sector. The remaining \$235 000 has funded additional clinical positions within mental health services to provide clinical care to consumers in the community, particularly after hours. The aim of the new services is to provide consumers with a time limited, intensive level of support in their own home or other suitable accommodation when they are experiencing a relapse of their mental illness.

## ATTACHMENT A

It will also provide an alternative to an inpatient admission or facilitate early discharge from hospital where appropriate. The Top End Association for Mental Health and the Mental Health Association of Central Australia are the non-government providers of these services, which commenced in September 2005.

Also new funding of \$1.8M in 2005/06 and \$1.1M ongoing from 2006/07 was announced in the recent Northern Territory Budget to establish Community Based Residential Services with 24-hour support for people with mental illness in Darwin and Alice Springs.

This new service will create 14 beds (eight in Darwin and six in Alice Springs) to provide a residential 'step-up or step-down option' for people who cannot be intensively supported in their own home. The service will complement the individual care package trials in the Top End and Central Australia. Consumers will be offered these voluntary time-limited services as an alternative to admission or as an early discharge option from the Inpatient Units. These services are currently in the planning stages.

- *Outcomes based Mental Health Case Management*

Mental Health Services in the NT have recently implemented a case management case-planning format based on the Health of the Nation Outcome Scale (HoNOS). Item 11 of this scale refers to problems with living conditions. If a person receiving case management services scores two and over on this scale then an action plan to assist the consumer in this area is developed. This will include inter-sectorial linking with appropriate agencies like NGOs and Territory Housing.

- *Local Research*

TEAMHealth received funding through the Australian Government to do an Action Research Project on Housing Options Project for People with a Mental Illness in Darwin. This report is available on the FaCS website under Homelessness Publications at:  
[http://www.facs.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/aboutfacs/programs/house-housing\\_options\\_project\\_mental\\_illness.htm](http://www.facs.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/aboutfacs/programs/house-housing_options_project_mental_illness.htm)

- *NT Homelessness Framework*

The Northern Territory Government has established an interagency Taskforce with representatives from DHCS, Chief Ministers Office and Territory Housing, Northern Territory Council of Social Services (NTCOSS), NTShelter (Peak Homeless Organisation), FaCS (Australian Government) and NT Supported Accommodation Assistance Program TAC to work on the NT Homelessness Framework.