SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION

Services that support seniors and older women

Date of consultation: 18 August 2017

Group consulted with: Services that support seniors and older women

Number of attendees: 8

Name of organisations: Women's Centre for Health Matters, Affordable Housing Advisory Group, Older Women Lost in Housing (O.W.L's), Retirement Living Committee (P.C.A), CatholicCare, National Seniors' Australia, ACT Office for Veterans and Seniors

Key themes arising from the consultation

- Education and services need to suit the needs of many different clients – not just the 'typical' clients.
- Ensure building and planning codes allow for older people to age in place and have access to dwellings that suit their needs.
- Make sure affordable products go to the right people.
- More affordable rental and affordable home ownership models are needed for older people. More accessible homes are also needed for older people with disability – we could incentivise builders or developers to build these products.
- We need greater utilisation of existing properties and land. There is potential for this to provide greater options to 'age in place' and increase social connections and natural supports.
- Better coordination, support and information sharing between health, mental health, homelessness, justice, counselling, social work and other support services – partnerships are very important to addressing the issues.
- Continue working collaboratively with all stakeholders including funding bodies to co-design innovative service models for seniors, older women, and women and children escaping domestic violence. These models could build on partnerships between government, private sector, and community sector to provide both accommodation and support to groups including older women and women and children experiencing family violence.
- Build capacity in front-line direct service delivery staff to have good engagement, intervention and advocacy skills.

- Consider if support could be provided separately from tenancy management. Tenancy/property management assists clients to sustain their tenancy, while support services help build the capacity and resilience of clients so that they can address their needs and achieve their goals including moving from short-term accommodation to longer-term housing.

Key quotes

- "We need better identification of who we are targeting."
- "Definitional cracks don't pick up on the differences between people needing help and their unique needs."
- "It is important to understand what is hidden behind the situation that makes people, especially older women, become homeless or at risk of homelessness, and what it means to provide a home with support to older women. Addressing homelessness is not only about providing a house."
- "Because clients come from complex and different circumstances, a one-size-fit-all model does not work. We need to design more tailored services that help address individual client's needs.
- "Housing is the most frequently asked for area of assistance for the older people we work with."

What is working well?

- Land Rent has been working well to give people an opportunity to buy a home without the full cost of a house and land.
- People from community and private sector are willing to discuss solutions and join hands to address homelessness issues.
- A community sector with specialist skills to assist clients.
- The Affordable Rental Office is not well known but is a good model for older people – could be better promoted/expanded

What could be improved?

- Ensure affordable products are made available to people/households in Q1 and Q2 only (earning lowest 40% of incomes).
- Need to look at building codes and the practicality of many standards such as minimum room sizes, which encourage people to build overly large dwellings
- Universal Design Standards could help people to age in place.
- Help older people to improve their own homes to reduce living costs and build in efficiencies in rental accommodation.
- Improve transport routes – they don't always reach outer suburbs, which contributes to isolation for older people.
- Recognise family and caring needs of older people, such as child care arrangements, family members moving home temporarily and long-term visitors
- Provide more Housing First/outreach support/crisis beds.
- More resources to address homelessness, but investment in early intervention and prevention will provide savings in the long run as crisis intervention is costly.
- Better understanding of the reasons that older women become at risk of homelessness in order to design more tailored, relevant and targeted support – could establish a 'gender specific hub.'
- Current information services (OneLink) do not cater for all groups- such as older women seeking crisis accommodation.
- Central Intake Services/OneLink should be more accessible to people around Canberra, beyond Belconnen area where the service is currently located.
- Awareness raising and education about the need to support older women at risk of homelessness.
- 5 year contracts for services.

New ideas

- Territory Plan amendments to:
- Encourage ability to age in place (with accessible designs and options to downsize on the one block)
- Allow community or multi-family living on one block
- Encourage densification through changing plot ratios
- Allow older people to build a second affordable and accessible dwelling on the block and sell or rent the original dwelling.
- Older persons could rent spare rooms, providing that didn't trigger tax changes.
- LVC exemptions for downsizers to encourage people to take action.
- Consider exploring possibilities to use empty buildings to provide temporary accommodation for rough sleepers.
- Improving share house schemes to target them to older women, like a government developed share house portal.
- Design more targeted outreach and longer-term accommodation options, with attention to:
- older people
- women escaping violence (to access support and resources to help them sustain their housing/ tenancy)
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities (investigate a support model that takes into account cultural aspects so that services can truly meet the needs of service users)
- Education, capacity building and life skills programs.