

May 2008

Shelter Members' feedback on reducing homelessness

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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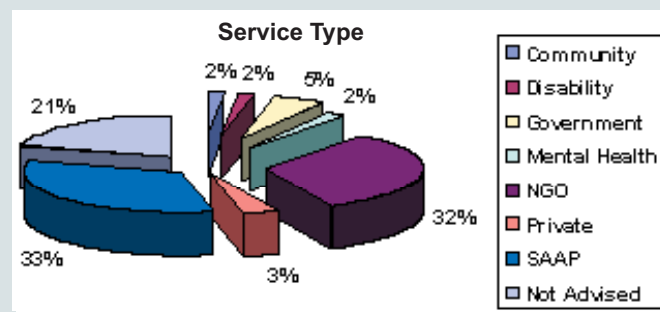
Shelter Tasmania is an independent community organisation committed to the principle of accessible, affordable, appropriate and secure housing for every person and the elimination of homelessness.

Shelter's Tasmania Members

Shelter is a membership based organisation with broad knowledge and experience of issues facing homeless people. Shelter's members are diverse and come from all over Tasmania. They include: tenants groups, large and small not-for-profit organisations, community housing providers, homelessness and crisis accommodation services, advocacy groups, local government, research organisations and a range of individuals and services interested in housing and homelessness issues.

Background

In March 2008 the former Premier Paul Lennon announced the immediate release of \$60 million dollars (for buildings only) to house homeless people. He also called for suggestions on how this money should be directed and assigned. In response, Shelter sought feedback from members on how they thought the \$60 million should be spent to halve homelessness in their region. A survey was sent to all members over a period of a month from 7th April to 5th May 2008. Shelter received a total of 61 responses from a broad range of service types with the majority coming from the Community, Non Government Organisations (NGO) and Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP). See below for a break up of service type.



53% of responses came from the South, 28% from the North and 19% from the North West, reflecting a broad representation of all members.

The Executive Summary will outline only key findings. A complete list of survey results is available from Shelter.

KEY FINDINGS OF THE SURVEY

The Survey gave a broad sense of how members thought money should be spent to reduce homelessness and offer advice to the Tasmanian Government.

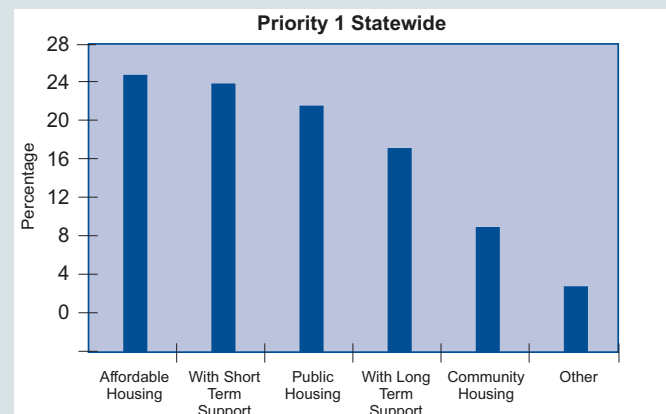
Key Findings include:

- There was a critical need to invest in more affordable housing, including public and community housing
- That any funding for a capital response to homelessness must have support funding factored in as well
- That support needs to be flexible and range from short term to long term, depending on the needs of the individual and or families
- 98% of members had concerns on how the \$60 million would be spent. The main concerns were:
 - mixed messages from government
 - the need to fund support with any capital response
 - the need to consult and work with non-government sector
- The need for specific regional responses to homelessness.

Top 5 Solutions

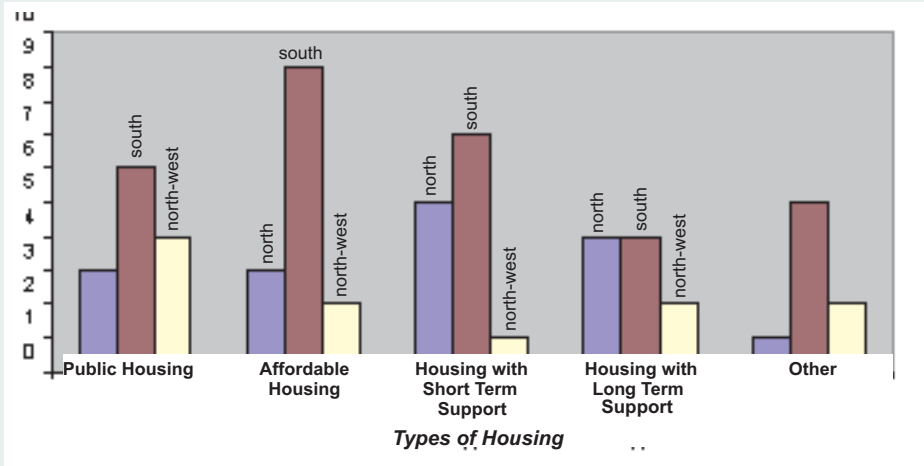
Solutions from members were grouped into 5 key responses.

STATEWIDE



This bar graph shows the top five solutions statewide to reduce homelessness were, in order: affordable housing, closely followed by housing with short term support, public housing, housing with long term support, community housing and other.

TOP 5 SOLUTIONS BY THE THREE TASMANIAN REGIONS



South - Priorities are as follows: affordable housing, housing with short term support closely followed by public housing, then other including community housing, then housing with long term support.

North - Priorities are, in order: housing with short term support, housing with long term support followed by affordable and public housing and then a range of other options

North West - Public housing is the main priority followed by housing with long term support, then a range of other housing including community housing, housing with short term support and then affordable housing.

It is interesting to note the varied priorities in each region. This may indicate the difference in regional capacities and conditions, e.g. North West has no transitional support services. Also, the need for a flexible regional and local based approach to solve both housing and homelessness issues across the state.

98% had concerns about what the \$60 million may be spent on. They include:

- The unclear messages from government on how the \$60 million would be spent: *"Ambiguity around government statements. Also the approach seems relatively unplanned"*
- A high percentage of members expressed concern that capital works would be compromised without any funding for support as well. *"Properties for the homeless, if not attached to support, are likely to become revolving doors back to homelessness and also see expensive degradation of valuable resources"*
- Any effective solutions to reduce homelessness would be at risk without including reviews of current service providers.

Overall there was an even 50/50 even split by respondents on the need for a capital or support response to reduce homelessness.

SOME RESPONSES TO SURVEY QUESTIONS

How would you see these solutions being implemented in your region?

"Hopefully by already established community organisations with expertise in dealing with homelessness and broader issues"

"Build a short medium term accommodation facility that targets families. Provide exit points to affordable long term housing in conjunction with ongoing intensive support. Build up the intensive family support services that already exist to extend to more families at risk"

"Existing services could do much of these solutions. It is a resource issue."

"Consultation with community and other stakeholders to ensure appropriate approaches/options are identified and implemented. Putting more crisis accommodation on Eastern Shore."

"Locally managed projects are the key to success on the West Coast."

What difference would it make to homelessness in your region?

"Reduce it"

"All the difference in the world; stable lives, children about to attend the same school; work opportunities for parents (emotional security for families)."

"Have more crisis beds available for men, women, and in particular families; keep young people from needing to access welfare services and improve general wellbeing; reduce DV and therefore reduce the amount of enforced homelessness if able to be situated elsewhere (group homes and transitional housing)."

Are there any Concerns?

"Concern that the Premier will not have any consultations with NGO's, shelters in particular, before spending the money. I feel that while it would be great to build \$60 million worth of housing without consistent outreach support or increased availability of sheltered or transitional accommodation we may be setting the long term homeless community up for failure or they will continue to remain homeless"

"Low cost housing minimum standards, grouping residences together, creating low income communities with low standard houses"

Any other comments?

"That it is only being spent on buildings and not the support to run/operate/manage these buildings"

"Committees, more enquiries, we already know what works - lets get on with it"

"As a sector we have been asking for the state housing debt to be retired, for there to be public housing options dispersed through existing infrastructure and for increased funding for SAAP services to respond to the increasing cost and demand where there are complex and multiple barriers to participation in our community, complex and multiple barriers to participation in our community"

To Conclude

This summary offers suggestions and solutions on ways to reduce homelessness in Tasmania. The information will be distributed to relevant stakeholders and used by Shelter Tas.

Shelter Tas would like to thank all those who participated and provided feedback.