

Inquiry into the provision and regulation of supported accommodation in Queensland

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Inquiry into the Provision and Regulation of Supported Accommodation in Queensland



Uluru Statement From The Heart

Common Ground Queensland accepts the invitation of the Uluru Statement from the Heart and supports a First Nations Voice to Parliament enshrined in the Australian Constitution.

We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Owners and Custodians of the land on which we work. We recognise sovereignty was never ceded.





Common Ground Queensland Ltd.
ABN 16 134 647 331
15 Hope Street, South Brisbane QLD 4101
Phone: 07 3370 8320
Email: admin@cgq.org.au
Web: www.commongroundqld.org.au

2 February 2024

Committee Secretary
Community Support and Services Committee
Inquiry into the Provision and Regulation of Supported Accommodation in Queensland
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Committee Secretary,

Inquiry into the provision and regulation of Supported Accommodation in Queensland

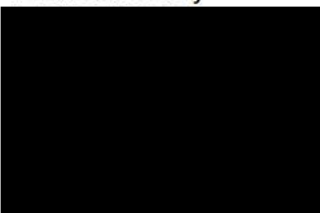
Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the Inquiry into the *Provision and Regulation of Supported Accommodation* in Queensland. The Common Ground Queensland submission is attached.

Common Ground Queensland (CGQ) is a non-government not for profit organisation established in 2008 to operate Queensland's first purpose built supportive housing building using the Common Ground model. CGQ have been operating Brisbane Common Ground, a 14-storey apartment building situated in Hope Street, South Brisbane for more than 10 years. Brisbane Common Ground provides 146 units of affordable studio and one-bedroom apartments for people who have experienced chronic homelessness and people on low incomes.

CGQ also provides supportive housing across Brisbane north and south in scattered site models to 20 families with young children who have experienced or are at risk of experiencing homelessness and engagement with the child protection system, and refugee and asylum-seeking individuals and families.

CGQ would welcome an opportunity to discuss the issues that we have touched on in this submission in more detail at your convenience. Please do not hesitate to contact me at [REDACTED] or by calling [REDACTED] to arrange a meeting.

Yours sincerely



Sue Pope
CEO

Inquiry into the Provision and Regulation of Supported Accommodation in Queensland

Common Ground Queensland (CGQ) is recognised as one of the only community housing providers in Queensland that specialises in delivering supportive housing for people who have experienced chronic homelessness. CGQ is not considered a supported accommodation provider, however, we do recognise that the definitions of these housing types is unclear and the cohorts that benefit most may be quite similar. We also note that both the Department of Housing and the Public Advocate have pointed to our model at Brisbane Common Ground as highly effective in terms of meeting the housing and support needs of people who experience a range of complex conditions. This submission seeks to clarify what is supportive housing, how it may differ from supported accommodation and to explore the similarities between these models and the people that they currently support.

What is Supportive Housing?

The central premise of supportive housing is to provide permanent, affordable and safe housing intentionally linked to tailored support services designed to meet people's needs. Supportive housing is necessary for people who experience a range of complex issues including chronic homelessness, poverty, trauma, disability, mental health issues and substance use. Supportive housing provides people with the stability to enable them to sustain their housing and thrive as members of a community.

Supportive Housing is a Housing First approach that prescribes safe and permanent housing as the first priority for people experiencing homelessness. Once housing is secured, a multidisciplinary team of support workers can address complex needs by providing tailored support and healthcare to improve quality of life.

Supportive housing is an important model to enable people with chronic experiences of homelessness to live independently and to prevent recurrence of homelessness. The Common Ground supportive housing model aims to end chronic homelessness by housing the most vulnerable in our communities.

Supportive Housing Principles

Quality supportive housing incorporates the following components:

- **Permanent, secure, affordable housing:** People are housed first into subsidised affordable housing with no time limit on residency where lease conditions are met.
- **Support services:** Supports and healthcare are embedded and tailored to meet the individual needs of tenants. Participation in support services is not a condition to maintain the tenancy, it is offered on a voluntary basis.
- **Specialist tenancy management:** The tenancy and property management is intensive and focused on assisting tenants to sustain their tenancies.
- **Separation:** While the tenancy and property management and support services work closely together to maintain and support tenancies, the provision of housing and support is functionally separate. This ensures housing and support are not contingent upon one another and advocacy is provided for the tenants.
- **Social inclusion:** Supportive housing seeks to create independence for individuals as well as a thriving community for tenants and neighbours.
- **Safety:** An on-site concierge service is provided 24/7 to ensure a welcoming but controlled access to the building.

Types of Supportive Housing

Supportive housing is place-based and designed to meet the needs of the community in which it is located. Supportive housing programs may include:

- high-density single sites,
- low-medium density single sites,
- integrated models within existing social and affordable housing, or
- scattered sites utilising public housing or private rental properties.

The following are examples of supportive housing currently operating in Queensland.

Brisbane Common Ground

Brisbane Common Ground was established in 2012 and is Queensland's first purpose built supportive housing building utilising the Common Ground model from the United States. Brisbane Common Ground is a 14-storey apartment building situated in Hope Street, South Brisbane and has been operating for more than 10 years. Brisbane Common Ground provides 146 units of affordable studio and one-bedroom apartments for people who have experienced chronic homelessness and people on low incomes. Thirty-three of the studio units have been designed to accommodate wheelchair access for people with impaired mobility. Onsite facilities include 24/7 concierge service, a computer room, art studio, rooftop garden, communal lounge, library, and billiards room. Social responsibility, respect for others and their differences and appropriate community behaviour are fundamental requirements of a successful community at Brisbane Common Ground.

Common Ground Queensland is the tenancy and property manager of Brisbane Common Ground, and 24/7 on-site support services are provided to tenants by Micah Projects.

Supportive Housing for Families/Keeping Families Together

Supportive Housing for Families operates in Brisbane and aims to enable families on extremely low- incomes to exit homelessness, access and sustain affordable housing and disengage/avoid engagement with Queensland's child safety system. This scattered site model provides housing for 20 families with young children and has operated since 2019. Common Ground Queensland headleases properties across Brisbane from the private rental market and subleases the properties to participating families. Micah Projects provides a range of tailored intensive support services to families, working closely with them to identify their goals and support needs.

Supportive Housing vs Supportive Accommodation

Supportive housing combines affordable community-based housing with flexible support services that help people who face the most complex challenges to live with stability, autonomy and dignity and are intended to meet a broad array of health and psychosocial needs. Supportive housing is an endeavour directed towards people with needs in addition to housing. Supportive housing is long term and permanent as compared with shelters, transitional, time-limited and other forms of non-permanent homeless accommodation.

The key differences between Brisbane Common Ground's supportive housing model and supported accommodation includes the following.

At Brisbane Common Ground:

- housing is permanent, with no time-limit on residency where lease conditions are met;
- there are no shared living arrangements, tenants live independently in a self-contained unit with their own kitchen, bathroom and laundry facilities;
- all tenants enter into a standard Rental Tenancy Agreement for the lease of their unit;
- a multidisciplinary team of tenancy managers and support providers work with the tenant with a focus on sustaining the tenancy;
- a 24/7 concierge and security service is provided and is an important component of the supportive housing model as it ensures a safe environment for all tenants.

Brisbane Common Ground is owned by the Queensland Government Department of Housing and Common Ground Queensland is a funded service under the Housing Act (2003) to provide property and tenancy management. Common Ground Queensland is a Tier 3 NRSCH (National Regulatory System for Community Housing) registered Community Housing Provider and a registered charity with the Australian Charities and Not for Profits Commission (ACNC).

Brisbane Common Ground is not recognised under the Residential Services (Accreditation) Act 2002 and is not defined as supported accommodation.

Brisbane Common Ground Tenant Cohort

At Brisbane Common Ground, our cohort includes some of the most vulnerable chronically homeless people in the community. In addition to experiences of long-term or multiple episodes of homelessness, tenants at Brisbane Common Ground also experience a range of complex conditions including disability, mental illness, problematic substance use and trauma. Many tenants of Brisbane Common Ground also have significant physical health problems. The 24/7 support and onsite health services provided at Brisbane Common Ground by Micah Projects as part of the supportive housing model is well placed to respond to and meet the needs of this cohort.

Snapshot of Brisbane Common Ground Tenants



90-100/146 of tenants receive support from **Micah Projects** at any given time.



24% have a NDIS package



8% are under the Public Trust/Advocate



80% have a mental health issue



39% have problematic substance use issues



18% have an acquired brain injury/cognitive or intellectual disability



12% have some other disability

The Evidence for Supportive Housing

The evidence base on supportive housing is clear: *supportive housing is a successful means to enable people with chronic experiences of homelessness and a diagnosable mental illness to sustain housing.*

Supportive housing is a Housing First model internationally and nationally proven and one of the three pillars of the recently published United States Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness¹. Due to the effectiveness of the model, it has been replicated globally with successful supportive housing programs in the USA, Europe, New Zealand and Canada as well as in most Australian states.

A review of 15 studies examining supportive housing programs for people with mental health issues and people experiencing homelessness found that housing linked with support provides the majority of individuals with stability in their housing, making them much less likely to become homeless, and less likely to be hospitalised². Supportive housing helps people to access services to improve and/or maintain their health and well-being³. In some cases, supportive housing helps to lessen the rate of health decline (e.g., harm reduction, age-related health issues, degenerative illnesses).

An independent evaluation undertaken in 2015 by The University of Queensland found that Brisbane Common Ground's supportive housing model in South Brisbane, successfully assists people with chronic experiences of homelessness make immediate exits from homelessness without the need for interventions to prepare them for housing. Tenants of Brisbane Common Ground overwhelmingly reported high rates of satisfaction with multiple dimensions of their housing, including: suitability for needs, privacy, affordability of rent, size of unit, design of building, condition of unit, location, access to amenity, and communal areas. Nearly all tenants described Brisbane Common Ground as safe and their home. Many tenants reported that their physical and mental health had improved since moving to Brisbane Common Ground, and they likewise reported improvements in access to health care. Most tenants reported improvements in satisfaction with life and mental wellbeing over a 12-month period⁴.

A recent quantitative analyses of 10 years of tenancy sustainment and exit data at Brisbane Common Ground has shown that people with chronic experiences of homelessness can sustain housing for years to come in a supportive housing environment. The data reveals that of the 417 tenants that have called Brisbane Common Ground their home since opening in 2012, 37 have remained housed for ten years and the average duration of ongoing tenancies at Brisbane Common Ground is nearly six years. Of the 417 tenants who have lived at Brisbane Common Ground, 312 (75%) have experienced a positive tenancy outcome and are either still housed or have left voluntarily to pursue other opportunities⁵.

1. December 2022 United States Interagency Council on Homelessness All In: The Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness. (n.d.). Retrieved January 25, 2023, from https://www.usich.gov/All_In.pdf.

2. Rog, D., Marshall, T., Dougherty, R., George, P., Daniels, A., Ghose, S. and Delphin-Rittmon, M. (2014) Permanent supportive housing: Assessing the evidence. *Psychiatric Services*. 65(3): 287-294.

3. 57th Parliament Mental Health Select Committee. (2022). Inquiry into the opportunities to improve mental health outcomes for Queenslanders, Report No. 1, <https://documents.parliament.qld.gov.au/tableoffice/tabledpapers/2022/5722T743-64F1.pdf>

4. Parsell, C., Petersen, M., Moutou, O., Culhane, D., Lucio, E. and Dick, A. (2015). Brisbane Common Ground evaluation: final report. Institute for Social Research, University of Queensland, Brisbane, accessed 18 November 2022, <https://issr.uq.edu.au/files/4003/BrisbaneCommonGroundFinalReport.pdf>.

5. Parsell, C., Perales, F., Kuskoff, E., Stambe, R. and Plage, S. (2023). Brisbane Common Ground: Analyses of Tenancy Sustainment and Exits. School of Social Science The University of Queensland, Brisbane.

Cost-effectiveness

Providing people with appropriate housing and supports not only helps with reducing and preventing homelessness, but also reduces unnecessary hospital admissions and involvement with the criminal justice system. For people who experience chronic homelessness and exhibit high use of health, criminal justice, and homelessness services, a tenancy at Brisbane Common Ground is associated with a reduction in service use that, even when the cost of providing Brisbane Common Ground is included, constitutes a **cost offset of \$13,100 per person per year**. This academic cost offset report demonstrates that due to the supportive housing that tenants received, they reduced their use of public resources, such as the justice and health system⁶ demonstrating that it is significantly more cost effective to provide permanent, affordable and supportive homes compared with keeping people chronically homeless.

Recommendations

More Supportive Housing

CGQ continues to advocate for a commitment from the Queensland Government for more supportive housing including Common Ground models in Queensland as part of the response to the current housing crisis and as a solution to housing people experiencing chronic homelessness and people on low incomes. Supportive housing models could also be a solution for people who are currently in supported accommodation that are not receiving the support and care that they require.

Supportive Housing Plan and Definitions

CGQ is encouraged to see that recent responses from the Queensland Government recognises the importance of providing support to assist people sustain their tenancy, link with appropriate services and engage with the community. A comprehensive housing plan should be developed and include a strategy for the delivery of supportive housing across the state to meet the needs of the most vulnerable Queenslanders and this should include clarification and definitions of housing and support types to increase understanding across the housing sector.

International Models

There is much to learn internationally from countries which have been delivering supportive housing for decades. The Queensland Government, peak bodies, academics, community housing providers and others could benefit from understanding other models to inform approaches in Queensland.

6. Parseell, C., Petersen, M., Moutou, O., Culhane, D., Lucio, E. and Dick, A. (2015). Brisbane Common Ground evaluation: final report. Institute for Social Research, University of Queensland, Brisbane, accessed 18 November 2022, <https://issr.uq.edu.au/files/4003/BrisbaneCommonGroundFinalReport.pdf>.