

Investigation into the Provision of Social Housing

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Introduction

The Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy (the department) provides a range of accommodation and support products and services to Queenslanders in housing need.

Tasked with managing and maintaining Queensland's \$16 billion housing assets, the department supports more than 74,000 households in social housing and delivers frontline housing services and supports to people across the state.

The department also manages housing legislation, regulation and regulatory services and provides program funding to community housing and specialist homelessness services to assist Queenslanders in greatest need.

Each day, the department assists people with their housing and support needs. People can seek assistance through the statewide network of Housing Service Centres, over the phone and online. This includes access via the 24/7 Homeless Hotline, a range of user-friendly mobile apps or in person through funded housing and homelessness services. We work together with other government and the non-government agencies and funded not-for-profit providers to support Queenslanders in housing need.

The department supports Queenslanders to access and sustain housing. This includes delivering an expanded range of products and services to help people to:

- find and secure housing in the private market
- sustain a tenancy including advice and financial assistance
- access affordable home loans.

As the state's largest residential landlord, we also support access to social housing which includes:

- public housing - owned and managed by the state
- community housing – which can either owned by government and managed by others or owned and managed by non-government organisations with funding, support or regulation by government.

The department also works with the homelessness and broader human services sectors to provide temporary crisis accommodation, reduce homelessness and improve pathways to safe, secure and affordable housing in Queensland.

Legislative framework

Queensland's broader housing sector is guided by six (6) legislative pieces.

Housing Act 2003

The Housing Act 2003 is in place to improve the access of Queenslanders to safe, secure, appropriate and affordable housing and to help build sustainable communities. The Housing Act governs housing assistance provided by the Queensland Government, including social and other housing services.

Manufactured Homes (Residential Parks) Act 2003

The *Manufactured Homes (Residential Parks) Act 2003* regulates the operation of residential parks and promotes fair trading, including relationships between home owners and park owners.

Residential Services (Accreditation) Act 2002

The *Residential Services (Accreditation) Act 2002* regulates the conduct of residential services, such as boarding houses, to protect residents' health, safety and freedom and encourages service providers to continuously improve and trade fairly.

Retirement Villages Act 1999

The *Retirement Villages Act 1999* (RV Act) regulates the operation of retirement villages, promotes consumer protection and fair trading, and encourages the continued growth and viability of the sector.

Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act 2008

The *Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act 2008* (RTRA Act) establishes the rights and responsibilities of renters and rental property owners or their agents in tenancy arrangements (which includes caravan parks and rooming accommodation) in Queensland. The RTRA Act regulates the making, content, operation and ending of tenancy agreements and the processes for resolving disputes about these agreements.

The Residential Tenancies Authority is the statutory authority that administers Queensland's rental laws and provides a range of advisory, bond custodianship, dispute resolution and enforcement services to Queensland's residential rental sector.

Human Rights Act 2019

The *Human Rights Act 2019* acknowledges that human rights are essential in a democratic and inclusive society and that these things are an equal and inalienable right of all human beings.

The *Human Rights Act* requires all government departments and agencies, including public service employees, to make decisions and act compatibly with the human rights of individuals in our work and in our interactions with Queenslanders.

Housing Service Centres

Queensland's Housing Service Centres are the Queensland Government's frontline delivery arm of housing service delivery in Queensland and are available to discuss housing need and provide information on and access to a range of service outcomes for Queenslanders.

There are 20 Housing Service Centres located in Queensland with services extended out in regional and remote areas through the Queensland Government Agents Program (QGAP) and mobile services.

Most people who visit the statewide network of Housing Service Centres or Housing Hubs are social housing tenants. People will also visit us to talk about their housing need, specifically their housing application or to understand the range of housing assistance that can be provided.

Anyone who needs housing assistance can contact the one of the 20 Housing Service Centres during business hours or the 24/7 Homeless Hotline.

Current Housing Context

Queensland has experienced unprecedented growth in recent years, placing pressure on the supply of housing across the state through increased demand. In 2021, Queensland had its highest net interstate migration since 1994¹, with 40,619 people moving to Queensland.

Housing supply and affordability is further impacted by critical challenges in the construction sector as a result of COVID-19 with building materials, trades skills shortages being experienced across industry, extending construction timeframes and increasing costs and making it difficult for markets to meet increased demand in a timely manner while increasing overall construction costs. These factors were further exacerbated by Queensland's recent severe weather event and flooding with properties moderately to severely damaged and many of these households needed to seek alternative accommodation, placing further pressure on housing availability and affordability.

The shortage of rental properties can be seen in local vacancy rates with almost three quarters of Local Government Areas in Queensland having private rental market vacancy rates below one per cent, including Queensland's most populous cities and regional centres (a market is considered 'tight' below 2.5 per cent). Rental prices are also rising. In the 12 months to December 2021, rents in Queensland increased by 9.3 per cent for a three-bedroom house. Annual rent increases in the preceding decade ranged between 0-4 per cent.

Housing affordability in general has been a long-standing policy issue both nationally and internationally and Queensland's affordability has been exacerbated by an acceleration in price growth and a tightening of the rental market throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Queensland Housing Strategy 2017-2027

Released in July 2017, the *Queensland Housing Strategy 2017-2027* (the Housing Strategy) outlines the vision for the state's housing system and lays out the Queensland Government's commitment to making sure all Queenslanders have a pathway to safe, secure and affordable housing. It is the first strategy in the state's history to encompass the entire housing continuum from homelessness services and social housing to affordable housing, the private rental market, and home ownership.

Delivered through multiple action plans, it demonstrates Government's intent to work with communities, industry and the housing and homelessness sector to deliver more social and affordable homes and better services for vulnerable Queenslanders.

Importantly, the Housing Strategy and each Action Plan is focussed on cross-government opportunities, to ensure integrated responses are delivered by the department and agency partners to support Queenslanders in housing need.

Queensland Housing Strategy Action Plan – 2017-2020

As the first action plan of the Housing Strategy, the *Queensland Housing Strategy Action Plan 2017-2020* (QHAP) focussed on a foundational program of work that included actions to develop an accelerated pipeline of social housing delivery, new products and services to assist people in the private housing market, stronger partnerships with the community housing sector, regulatory reforms to increase consumer protections and transformational reform to frontline service delivery.

¹ Source: ABS 3101.0, released 17 March 2022, National, state and territory population. Table 2. Population Change, Components – State and Territories

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Action Plan 2019-2023

Queensland's first program of work under the *Queensland Housing Strategy Action Plan 2017-2020* (QHAP) exclusively supporting First Nations people and communities, the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Action Plan 2019-2023* (ATSIHAP), provides a framework which empowers communities to participate through shared leadership and decision making to provide culturally responsive housing assistance and a stronger housing sector. A key element of the ATSIHAP is the development of Local Housing Action Plans in partnership with local councils to increase housing availability in remote and discrete communities.

The Queensland Housing and Homelessness Action Plan 2021-2025

The most recent action plan developed, the *Queensland Housing and Homelessness Action Plan 2021-2025* (HHAP) responds to current housing market conditions and need and reaffirms the commitment to increase housing, support vulnerable people with strong responses to housing need and to secure a fair and accessible housing system.

The HHAP includes a strong supply response and includes the Queensland Housing Investment Growth Initiative (QHIGI) as a key deliverable.

CSSC – Areas of Interest

Measures to increase social housing stock in Queensland

The Queensland Government recognises the impact of the current housing market conditions on many people across Queensland and remains committed to ensuring Queenslanders have access to safe, secure and affordable housing. In June 2022, the Government launched the *Queensland Housing and Homelessness Action Plan 2021–2025* (Action Plan) with a \$2.9 billion investment to help more vulnerable Queenslanders into homes quicker through the Queensland Housing Investment Growth Initiative (QHIGI).

This is the largest concentrated investment in social housing in Queensland's history and will see the commencement of almost 10,000 new social and affordable homes over the life of the Housing Strategy, which includes commencing 6,365 new social homes by 30 June 2025.

The \$2.9 billion comprises:

- \$1 billion for the establishment of the Housing Investment Fund, to boost housing supply
- \$1.8 billion over four years 2025 to increase the supply of social housing and upgrade the existing housing property portfolio through the new QHIGI, through which 6,365 new social homes will commence across Queensland by 30 June 2025
- \$94.9 million over four years to 30 June 2025 to support the housing and homelessness service system and deliver better outcomes.

The QHIGI is a place-based response to local market conditions and specific community needs to increase housing supply. It capitalises on a range of land and funding opportunities to increase housing supply, including development of under-utilised government-owned land. It will deliver housing types based on local need. It is an investment in regional Queensland, stimulating local economies.

The QHIGI is delivered through three key initiatives that provide the framework to boost Queensland's housing supply across Queensland. These initiatives include:

- The Housing Investment Fund, delivering 3,600 new social homes through an ongoing model

that is funded from the annual returns of the Queensland's Government's initial \$1 billion capital investment.

- QuickStarts Qld, boosting social housing through 2,765 new commencements across Queensland delivered through an integrated capital investment program to accelerate planned acquisition, new construction, and redevelopment opportunities.
- Help to Home, a \$40 million investment over two-years to deliver housing outcomes for up to 1,000 eligible households by sourcing vacant properties from the private housing market that have not previously been available.

The Queensland Government has exceeded its first-year target under the Second Action Plan of 727 new social housing commencements under QuickStarts Qld by 30 June 2022, with 832 new social homes commenced across the state over the past 12 months. This is in addition to the 2,742 commenced under the first Action Plan.

Construction of 410 new homes has also been completed in this time. In addition, 98 dwellings that were planned to be delivered in 2021-22 were successfully completed ahead of schedule in late in 2020-21, providing homes sooner for Queenslanders. The department will continue to complete homes as quickly as possible to make these available for Queenslanders in need. However, the department, similar to the broader market, is experiencing project delays due to the exceptionally difficult market conditions driven by material and labour supply shortages.

While we have a strong focus on the development of new properties, we will also supplement construction with strategic purchases where appropriate, to help ensure the state's housing portfolio continues to evolve and respond to local need.

With an acute focus on increasing housing supply across the state, we recognise that high quality housing outcomes also contribute positively to the people who live in them and the communities in which they are located. The state's contemporary social housing is designed to contribute positively to community safety, liveability and resilience and provides opportunities for tenants to strengthen their ties with community, reduce living costs and encourage connections to the supports and services that encourage positive life outcomes.

Housing Investment Fund

The \$1 billion Housing Investment Fund (HIF) opens up greater opportunities to increase the supply of social and affordable housing in Queensland. QHIGI.

The HIF program provides a vehicle for housing providers to leverage innovative funding opportunities with more stakeholders including public and private financiers and investors, developers, land owners and federal and local governments.

The investment supporting the HIF is administered by Queensland Treasury (via Queensland Investment Corporation). The anticipated annual returns from the HIF of \$40 million (GST exclusive) Both Queensland Treasury (QT) and the department are working to optimise the use of the \$40 million to deliver 3,600 new social home commencements, plus additional affordable homes by attracting a range of delivery partners.

With the approximate \$40 million in expected annuities in the first four years, and stable returns for up to 20 years, the HIF is able to provide upfront capital as well as on-going subsidies to developments that include social and affordable housing.

The HIF is anticipated to support the commencement of at least 3,600 new social housing plus additional affordable homes by the end of June 2025.

Through the HIF the Queensland Government announced a pipeline of up to 1200 new social and affordable homes via a commercial partnership between Brisbane Housing Company and the

Queensland Investment Corporation. Seven projects within South East Queensland with an estimated value of \$250 million have now been supported to progress through the development cycle. These projects will ultimately provide 590 new social and affordable homes for people in need. These new units will be well located and accessible to the local communities they are being constructed in and will provide much needed housing for a wide range of people.

Innovative ideas to improve social housing accessibility

A wide range of housing solutions

Queensland's population growth, plus the cumulative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and natural disasters, has significantly increased demand on local housing markets. Vulnerable people and those on low incomes have been most affected by reduced availability of private rentals and higher rental costs. Social housing is an important safety net for Queensland's most vulnerable, however it may not be the only solution, or the right one, for everyone in housing need.

One of the most effective ways to improve housing accessibility is by broadening the options available for a range of households. The Housing Strategy considers the housing continuum, from focussed responses to homelessness, through emergency and transitional housing, social and community housing through to private market rental and ownership opportunities. By developing a range of solutions to support better housing outcomes, we can more effectively support people into the housing solution that best suits their individual circumstances.

Help to Home

As noted above, the Help to Home initiative has been launched to quickly deliver an additional 1,000 private market outcomes, for households eligible for social housing, while construction of new housing is underway.

Help to Home properties and tenancies will be managed by community housing providers who will deliver tailored pathway planning services to help people eligible for social housing achieve their long-term housing goals.

Help to Home will assist to consolidate headleasing products and provide a single avenue for bringing new supply into the market, not just sourcing from the current pool of properties already on the rental market. The Government is targeting properties that are new to market or have not previously been available through the private residential market. The Queensland Government will enter into two-year headleases for suitable properties and sub-lease them to pre-approved community housing providers. Community housing providers will manage the properties and work with tenants to them plan their longer-term housing future. The initiative will allow tenants to access safe, stable accommodation while a longer-term housing solution is established.

Local Housing Plans

The Queensland Government is committed to working with local councils to improve the availability, diversity, and quality of housing in rural and remote Queensland through local housing plans, to encourage community liveability, resilience and social and economic growth and prosperity. Under Action 5 of the HHAP, the Queensland Government has committed to work with regional councils to increase and diversify the supply of housing, including opportunities for alternative government and non-government investment and incentives.

On 10 March 2022, the Deputy Premier announced a partnership with the Western Queensland Alliance of Councils to fast-track Local Housing Action Plans (LHAPs) for rural and remote councils. Given impacts of the Severe Weather Event and Flooding in Gympie, the department has been engaging with Gympie Regional Council to prioritise development of the draft Gympie LHAP.

Under Action 1 of the ATSIHAP, place-based, Community-led, Local Housing Plans have also been developed with the 17 remote and discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander council areas.

Rental Law Reform

The Queensland Government is committed to delivering rental law reform in Queensland, including minimum housing standards, to improve protections and stability in the rental market.

The Queensland Government has made significant progress on its commitments to improve renting in Queensland with the *Housing Legislation Amendment Act 2021* implementing Stage 1 reforms to increase safety, security and certainty in Queensland's rental market.

Stage 1 rental law reforms provide a strong, balanced approach that protects the rights of renters and rental property owners while improving stability in the rental market by:

- allowing renters experiencing domestic and family violence to end their interest in a tenancy quickly with limited liability for end of lease costs from 20 October 2021
- ending no grounds evictions and requiring rental property owners to have a reason to end a tenancy and making it easier for renters to have a pet from 1 October 2022
- requiring rental properties in Queensland to comply with prescribed minimum housing standards for safety, security and functionality for new tenancies entered from 1 September 2023, and for all tenancies from 1 September 2024.

Private Market Products

The department continued provision of flexible and scalable products and services to assist people to access or sustain a private rental market tenancy, with Queenslanders assisted through products such as Bond Loans, Rent Subsidies, No Interest Loans, and Head-leasing products.

The department continued the TenantConnect engagement program to assist public housing tenants to better engage with the department and be more involved in their local community.

In 2020–21, the Queensland Government provided more than 205,000 forms of housing assistance to Queensland households, including emergency housing, social housing, and private market assistance.

Private Home Ownership Lending Products

The department's Queensland Housing Finance Loan provides lending assistance for Queenslanders experiencing difficulty in obtaining finance from a bank or building society to buy or build their own home.

The department also offers a Mortgage Relief Loan for existing Queensland home owners with a mortgage experiencing difficulties with their home loan repayments as a result of an unforeseen change in their circumstances (unemployment, accident, illness, etc). The interest free Mortgage Relief Loan of up to \$20,000 is available to eligible Queenslanders.

Build to Rent

The department collaborates with Queensland Treasury on the Build-To-Rent Pilot Project to stimulate emergence of Build-to-Rent as a new asset class in Queensland and ensure inner-city residents have a new source of affordable housing close to their employment. This is supported by a \$70 million budget held centrally by Queensland Treasury.

A targeted rental subsidy will be provided to deliver affordable and market rental housing within the Build-to-Rent developments in Brisbane. Final developments are expected to provide all residents with a high amenity rental experience, access to transport and employment nodes, and premium service delivery.

The Queensland Government has approved two Brisbane-based affordable housing projects by developers: Frasers Property Australia at 210 Brunswick Street Fortitude Valley; and Mirvac at 60 Skyring Terrace, Newstead. Combined, these properties will offer almost 750 apartments in total with up to 240 dwellings to be offered at a discounted rent. Works have commenced on both of these developments, with construction completion and operations commencement anticipated in 2024.

The Queensland Government has also expanded the Pilot Project with two ongoing tender processes.

The role of community housing providers in Queensland

A strong and viable housing and homelessness sector helps to encourage better, more sustainable housing outcomes for Queenslanders. Community housing providers are not-for-profit community organisations, faith-based entities or local governments that deliver a range of housing programs, including those funded by the Queensland Government under the *Housing Act 2003*. Community housing providers help to meet housing need in Queensland by managing and owning properties across the state under a range of programs (excluding crisis accommodation).

Providers of community housing are funded by the Queensland Government and are registered to provide services under the *Housing Act 2003*. The department partners and manages contracts with funded providers so customers receive the quality services they need. Community housing providers manage the delivery of services under program specifications administered by the department. They operate within the same eligibility requirements as Public Housing and must ensure that all allocations come from the housing register, must be reviewed for ongoing eligibility, need and match to the property.

Community housing providers receive assistance from Government in the form of grants, loans, dwellings, current and recurrent operational funding to provide housing for people on low to moderate incomes with a housing need referred from the department's Housing Register. They will partner with Government and other providers to supplement the social housing system and are registered and regulated by government.

Community housing is an important part of the social housing system and provides an appropriate housing option that is affordable, secure, responds to local community needs and supports tenant participation in community life.

Some community housing organisations specialise in helping specific cohorts, including people with a disability, women and children escaping family and domestic violence, Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander peoples, singles and older people.

One of the greatest advantages of the community housing sector is the diversity of housing and operating models, which reflect local needs and can deliver housing and support services that are targeted, responsive and place-based.

Community housing providers play an important role in increasing the supply of social housing through partnerships with the State Government. Community housing providers are able to leverage funded assets in order to bring in financing, through National Housing and Finance Investment Commission (NHFIC) and other financiers, to deliver more social and affordable housing. They are also an important partner in the delivery of the QHIGI, with a role in each of the three initiatives being delivered.

Community housing providers are active in their communities and offer additional programs to tenants and the local community and home connections to other charitable and not-for-profit organizations.

Creation of a stronger Indigenous Community Housing sector is also being supported by

Queensland's peak organisation, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Queensland (ATSIHQ), which was launched as key deliverable under the ATSIHAP. ATSIHQ is working with Indigenous Community Housing Organisations and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Councils create a strong and diverse housing sector to support improved housing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders.

Measures to address housing shortages in First Nations' communities

The Housing Strategy renewed the Queensland Government's commitment to First Nations people with a plan to deliver actions that support Closing the Gap; encouraging positive economic and social outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and improving housing outcomes in urban and regional areas as well as remote and discrete communities. The ATSIHAP further reinforced those commitments with actions that supports partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to strengthen joint decision-making and enable community-led, place-based housing responses across urban, regional and remote settings.

Queensland's ATSIHAP provides the policy framework for Queensland's approach to improving housing outcomes for First Nations Queenslanders, and puts local decision making at the heart of culturally responsive housing and homelessness investment and service design. In partnership with communities, local housing plans are being developed in urban, regional, remote and discrete communities to identify local needs and priorities, including strategies to reduce homelessness.

Under the ATSIHAP, the department has committed to multiple measures to address housing needs in First Nations' communities. The government and communities are working together to develop local housing plans to respond to challenges in regional, remote and discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities including the delivery of new housing. Action 1 includes the development of place-based, community-led, local housing plans (LHPs) to identify and respond to local housing challenges and priorities. LHPs have been provided to all 17 remote and discrete Councils in May 2022 with work ongoing to finalise and operationalise these plans.

The ATSIHAP includes a \$67.1 million investment which focuses on improvements in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing outcomes, including \$40 million in state funding to remote and discrete communities for new housing supply, using various place-based approaches. Under the \$40 million Interim Remote Capital Works program, proposals have been approved for all 17 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Local Government Authorities (LGAs). As at 30 June 2022, 54 new dwellings, 34 extensions and 40 new land lots are programmed for construction, of which, 14 new dwellings, 11 extensions and 15 new allotments have been completed.

A further \$105 million in Commonwealth funding is being implemented across 16 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Councils and the Torres Shire. As of 30 June 2022, 17 Councils have submitted their housing investment plan proposals under the \$105 million Forward Remote Capital Program and based on these proposals, the overall program yield is currently the construction of up to 154 new dwellings, 20 extensions and 122 new housing allotments are programmed to be delivered.

The department is also committed to providing culturally responsive housing with support through a frontline service offer for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across the housing continuum, including through implementing culturally responsive pathway planning and care coordination (Action 13 HHAP). The frontline service offer is being developed in partnership with service users and key stakeholders to strengthen joint decision making that enables community-led and place-based responses identified through the ATSIHAP.

Funding models used in Queensland for the provision of social housing

Base Funding

The Queensland Housing Fund established in support of the *Housing Act 2003* acts as a repository for a range of monies received for housing purposes including funding from but not limited to:

- the commonwealth for providing housing services
- rent from tenants in social housing
- proceeds from the sale of portfolio property.

Amounts from the fund are then payable for the purposes of the Act including:

- grants to registered providers (including to fund community housing)
- capital works to expand and enhance the social housing property portfolio
- operating costs including maintenance, rates and operating expenses
- growth in social housing is achieved through capital purchases and capital grants.

The Queensland Government is a signatory to the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement (NHHA), with Australian Government funding under the NHHA in 2021-22 comprising over a quarter of the revenue for Housing and Homelessness Services in the Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy.

The housing portfolio is conscientiously managed to optimise value for money. As such, an active program is in place to manage the replacement and redevelopment of existing property holdings to help optimise portfolio performance by reducing latent exposure to maintenance costs, providing a source of developable land on which to grow the portfolio and delivering contemporary housing solutions that are more responsive to priority housing needs.

The Queensland Government also provides funding in the form of capital grants, leases, recurrent and one-off funding to community housing providers to deliver social housing. This enables providers to construct or purchase new dwellings, lease dwellings from the department or headlease from the private rental market. Providers can also use programs surpluses and loans (such as from the NHFIC) as a contribution towards the cost of the construction and/or acquisition of social housing dwellings.

Other funding may also be obtained through specific grants and other programs or arrangements.

This funding pays for the ongoing maintenance and management of the State's housing assets and continued investment in providing homes and services to support Queenslanders in housing need.

Homelessness services, including those for seniors, older women, and youth

Homelessness does not discriminate, and many Queenslanders, young and old, may be only a few rough life events away from 'couch surfing' with family or friends, sleeping in their car or sleeping rough on the streets. Something as simple as a job loss or a relationship breakdown can change a person's circumstances overnight.

The impacts of the global pandemic and unprecedented demands on local housing markets has made the threat of homelessness even more real for many Queenslanders.

The Queensland Government works in partnership with specialist homelessness services (SHS) to deliver crisis or transitional accommodation and other support services to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. In 2021/22, the department allocated more than \$124 million (GST exclusive) in Homelessness Program funding to 88 non-government-organisations to deliver 182 SHS' across Queensland. These SHS deliver temporary supported accommodation and other

support services to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

The Housing Strategy supports a strengthened response to homelessness across the state. Whilst there is a strong focus on supply, investment under the HHAP also includes a commitment of \$94.9 million over four years to 30 June 2025 to support the housing and homelessness service system and deliver better outcomes for Queenslanders. This includes:

- \$20 million over four years for enhanced domestic and family violence housing assistance and support through a specialist response team and flexible assistance packages
- \$20 million over four years for homelessness support services to house people in crisis
- \$54.9 million over four years for continuation of essential housing and homelessness products and services launched under the QHAP.

This year's State Budget also includes investment of \$29.8 million over four years to support initiatives to specifically assist young people experiencing or at risk of homelessness in Queensland, helping young Queenslanders experiencing or at risk of homelessness to find safe, secure and affordable housing

Towards Ending Homelessness

The department is continuing to expand on work commenced through the COVID-19 homelessness responses to prevent homelessness and support people to stay in their homes (Action 6 HHAP). This includes through 'single site' operations at The Park Hotel in Brisbane and dispersed operations through headleasing arrangements through which people are being supported during their crisis period to stabilise and transition to longer term, housing with support. Joint assessments and pathway planning are being used to respond to individual needs and circumstances and to reduce returns to homelessness with the appropriate supports. Referral protocols and information sharing are being enhanced with internal departmental exploration and planning underway for more fundamental system improvements to facilitate this (Actions 6, 7 and 9 HHAP).

Work is underway to enhance the Coordinated Housing and Homelessness Response in priority locations for people with complex housing and support needs. Discussions are ongoing with peak and industry organisations about how best to optimise government and non-government resources to equip workers to deliver best practice services (Action 6 HHAP).

The department is working with Brisbane Festival to make art more accessible to people experiencing or at risk of homelessness and build social inclusion and participation, including specific events for the 2022 Brisbane Festival (Action 10).

Housing with Support

Ending homelessness requires more than just housing. It requires affordable and stable housing, combined with appropriate supports to help people to stay in their homes and achieve improved whole-of-life outcomes.

Under the HHAP, the Queensland Government is committing \$20 million over four years to provide essential housing with support services for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, including commitments to:

- co-designing improved housing and homelessness system responses, including integrated service delivery across government and community services, with significant focus on mental health
- increasing housing for people in crisis and assisting them to transition into longer-term housing with support
- enhancing the coordination of housing and homelessness response in priority locations
- equipping the government and community sector workforce to enhance contemporary responses to homelessness.

Coordinated Housing and Homelessness Responses

The Coordinated Housing and Homelessness Responses (CHHR) is delivering collaboration and integration of frontline housing, homelessness, and broader service delivery across government and the sector, to reduce homelessness in Queensland. The HHAP commits to enhancing the CHHR in priority locations across the state to identify people experiencing homelessness and to coordinate services for people with complex housing and support needs (Action 6.4).

Under the CHHR in 2021-22 the department allocated \$1.95 million (GST exclusive) for the Service Integration Initiative (SII), including a statewide backbone support delivered by Q Shelter, the 'Know By Name' methodology and 'The Vulnerability Index – Service Prioritisation Decision Assistance Tool' delivered by Micah Projects and Care Coordination Facilitators in nine locations (Cairns, Townsville, Mackay, Sunshine Coast, Moreton Bay, Brisbane, Redland, Logan and the Gold Coast).

Priority Groups

Older people with a focus on older women

The HHAP commits to develop and deliver housing with support for older Queenslanders experiencing or at risk of homelessness, including responses for older women, working with the aged care health and disability sectors (Action 15).

Older women are the fastest growing group of people experiencing homelessness, due to a number of factors including income inequality, time away from paid work to care for children and family members, and death of or divorce from the income earning spouse. In February 2022, a new housing support hub and advisory group was announced to help older women access housing, this forms part a \$14 million investment which includes an allocation to build new homes and deliver specialised support services to older women; ensuring they have the security and stability of a home. Procurement for a non-government organisation to operate the hub is underway, with expected opening and delivery of initial services from mid-2022.

With the help of a sponsor group comprising members from the Housing Older Women (HOW) Movement, Sharing with Friends and QShelter, the department developed the Housing Outcomes for Older Women initiative which will collectively contribute to greater housing and support responses for the cohort. The initiative includes an investment of almost \$6 million to establish a new specialised Housing and Support Hub in Brisbane with local outreach services across the state. Over the next four years the initiative will also provide for over \$8 million in capital investment in housing for older women. Locations are soon to be identified through a scoping process.

This is in addition to a variety of housing and support activities for older women including Better Together Housing which assists older women to establish co-tenancies to share the cost of living and decrease social isolation.

Young people

In 2021–22, the department has allocated more than \$39.1 million (GST exclusive) in Homelessness Program funding to 39 non-government organisations to deliver 62 Specialist Homelessness Services across Queensland specifically for young people.

Through Action 11 of the HHAP, the department has committed jointly with the Department for Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs, and the Department of Environment and Science, to assist vulnerable young people to achieve social and economic independence through an integrated framework of housing with support.

This Action will include delivering on the Queensland Government's election commitment to develop a Youth Homelessness policy. The policy will identify the Queensland Government's shared strategic direction and priorities to promote young people's social and economic independence

through access to safe, secure and affordable housing.

Through the HHAP, the Queensland Government will also continue to grow housing options for young people, by leveraging new housing supply through the Queensland Housing Investment Growth Initiative.

The 2022-23 State Budget includes investment of \$29.8 million over four years to support initiatives to specifically assist young people experiencing or at risk of homelessness in Queensland.

The department funds a number of programs that specifically support young people:

- Youth Foyers - provide innovative supported housing in a safe, stable environment for young people aged 16-25 who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness and who are committed to engaging in education, employment or training. To date, Queensland has two Foyers in operation – one in Logan and the one at the Gold Coast.
- An additional Foyer is planned for Townsville – construction is scheduled to commence by the end of 2022, with completion in late 2023. Like the Foyers in Logan and on the Gold Coast, the Townsville Youth Foyer will provide stable and affordable housing, with support for 40 young people in individual self-contained units. The location will also include office space for onsite support workers, as well as meeting and training rooms and communal areas.
- Homelessness Social Benefit Bond - Youth CONNECT program - this pilot program, delivered by Churches of Christ in Queensland, is delivering up to 300 additional places of sustainable housing and wraparound support for 15-25 year-olds who are exiting or have exited statutory care or custody and are homeless or at risk of homelessness in Townsville, Logan (extending down to the Gold Coast) and Ipswich (extending out to Toowoomba)
- Sustaining Young Tenancy - early intervention sustainment approach aimed at understanding young people's support and housing needs and reducing tenancy failure
- NRL Cowboys House - provides supported accommodation for 104 young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from some of North Queensland's most remote and educationally disadvantaged communities, enabling them to access quality secondary education opportunities in Townsville.

Common Ground

The department provides funding to support Queensland Common Ground in Brisbane which opened in July 2012. Brisbane Common Ground is the first purpose-built housing model of its kind in Queensland and includes 146 units, onsite offices for the service provider (Micah Projects) and commercial and retail space for lease on the ground floor.

Common Ground supports a mix of social groups, including people who have experienced chronic homelessness and people on low-to-moderate incomes and provides person-centred supports that assist each tenant to maintain secure housing, improve their health and wellbeing, and improve social and economic outcomes.

An independent evaluation found that Common Ground is an effective and efficient housing and homelessness service that succeeds in assisting a high proportion of its clients to improve their lives, many of whom have experienced persistent disadvantage.

The evaluation found that, on average, Common Ground saves government \$13,100 per person, per year through reduced use of health services and reduced contact with the criminal justice system.

Domestic and Family Violence

Women and children who have experienced domestic and family violence need immediate access to safe and secure housing with appropriate supports to help recover. Under the HHAP, tailored and specialised housing assistance is being delivered to people experiencing domestic, family and

sexual violence, including through a \$20 million investment over four years. This investment will provide additional Flexible Assistance Packages of up to \$5,000 per household for goods and services needed immediately to maintain or access safe housing, deliver additional headleased housing and enhance frontline service responses with the support of a Specialist Response Team.

Immediate Housing Response Package

The new \$16 million Immediate Housing Response Package for Queensland families announced by the Premier in June, includes:

- \$7M for an enhanced Rental Security Subsidy for eligible families – estimated to assist approximately 700 families to secure or sustain private housing tenancies.
- \$6M for additional emergency brokerage funding for short-term temporary accommodation
- \$3M toward additional support workers in Specialist Homelessness Services.

The department is delivering a comprehensive range of assistance to people across the housing continuum, including headleasing properties from the private rental market to respond quickly to customer need, and providing private rental and home ownership products to assist people with less complex needs to access or sustain private housing

With the impacts of COVID-19, the rising costs of living and unprecedented challenges in housing affordability and the private rental market, there is increased demand for support from Queensland families right now.

The package will be delivered alongside the department's current efforts to boost longer-term housing supply through our historic investment in social and affordable housing in Queensland.