

Submission to  
Queensland's Strategy  
for Reducing Homelessness 2010-2020

Under 1 Roof  
January 2011



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Under 1 Roof.....*Community in action.*

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## 1. About Under 1 Roof

U1R is a consortium of homelessness, housing and community agencies based in Brisbane's inner city offering a range of services citywide. Initially convened by the Rotary Club of Fortitude Valley, these agencies have been working together since 2006 to build a strong, community-focused consortium supported by local businesses to end homelessness in Brisbane.

While each participating agency is an entity in its own right, U1R represents a commitment by each participant to working together more closely and harnessing synergy as a resource, thus achieving better outcomes for homeless people and improved efficiencies.

Currently U1R is working to contribute to the new Federal and Queensland Government approaches aimed at preventing homelessness, finding homes for people who are experiencing homelessness and, equally importantly, supporting people to remain housed.

## 2. Participants

U1R includes:

- 139 Club Inc.
- Brisbane Youth Service
- CityCare.
- Footprints
- Mission Australia
- New Farm Neighbourhood Centre
- QuIHN
- The Rotary Club of Fortitude Valley
- Communify

## 3. Partners

Brisbane Housing Company and BRIC Housing Company are currently partners of U1R.

U1R has a number of wider partnerships already in place to provide legal, health, social and specialist support to homeless people.

Continuous partnership development is integral to the vision of U1R to create new and strategic alliances that provide holistic support and improve social inclusion for homeless people. Partnerships with West End Community House and SANDBAG are also in development.

## 4. Interim Board

U1R has an interim board consisting of:

- Arch Bevis (Interim Chair)
- Avryl Gration (Mission Australia)
- Julie Heckenberg (Rotary Club of Fortitude Valley – RCFV)
- Samantha Evans (Brisbane Housing Company)
- Fiona Hunt (New Farm Neighbourhood Centre)

## 5. Integration mechanisms

U1R is a consortium striving towards high levels of coordination and integration in service delivery. To achieve coordination and integration, U1R trialed the following key mechanisms:

- Case Coordination Meetings
- Managers' Forums
- The Synthesis Series: reflective dialogue with the wider homelessness service system to develop leading practice in our response to homelessness
- A combined training program (currently under development).
- Workshops to develop shared values, practice frameworks and policies .

The purpose of these mechanisms has been to focus front line workers across the consortium on housing and supporting very vulnerable clients. This approach is based on principles of “No Wrong Door” and “Housing First”.

Case Coordination involves front line workers in face to face contact to coordinate the inputs, resources and contributions of the various agencies, in responding to the situations of particular homeless people.

The Managers' Forums aimed to achieve better coordination of workforce development opportunities and strategic planning across the agencies.

The Synthesis Series is a contribution to wider sector and workforce development. The series picks up on key issues in the sector that may actually contribute to the continuation of homelessness and presents evidence and research from other jurisdictions as a basis for developing a culture of robust debate about what works and what doesn't.

## 6. Leading Practice: the challenge of tenancy sustainment

There is significant evidence that multi-agency approaches are very beneficial to homeless people. U1R received some non-recurrent project funds from Brisbane City Council to develop collaborative mechanisms consistent with leading international practice in highly coordinated responses to homelessness. These approaches were in the areas of:

- Assertive outreach to homeless people (at all stages including once housed)
- Wrap around support to achieve the sustainment of tenancies for as long as it is needed
- Strong links between housing and support agencies so that a housing option is underpinned by adequate long term support
- Housing first – where people are moved as quickly as possible from homelessness into long term housing with attached support (rather than having to negotiate longer pathways through a crisis service system)
- Workforce development and reforms to address outmoded ways of working and refocus practitioners and agencies on evidence of what works.

As part of developing these collaborative mechanisms, U1R conducted extensive research to identify other jurisdictions that have achieved a measurable reduction in homelessness including rough sleeping. As such, U1R embarked on the Case Coordination Meetings, Managers' Forum, Synthesis Series and Training Integration Project as an attempt to replicate some key aspects of these successful practices.

The Federal Government White Paper highlights the importance of:

- *“An increase in the supply of affordable housing and specialist housing models that link accommodation and support (which) is critical to reducing homelessness.*

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- *People who are chronically homeless need wrap-around support that addresses all their needs. People who participate in work and their community are more likely to leave homelessness permanently.” (The Road Home, 2008).*

The implementation of homelessness responses in Queensland has thus far included only quite limited opportunities for the provision of expanded tenancy sustainment services (Brisbane Supportive Housing for example).

**Given that over 2000 people have been enumerated as homeless in Brisbane’s inner city alone and in Queensland over 24,000, then the most critical next step is funded capacity for tenancy sustainment services underpinned by excellence in service coordination and quality housing options. There is an unprecedented opportunity to trial integrated methods of sustaining tenancies in the unique context of large scale housing development and Federal and State Government leadership.**

This focus reflects leading practices within the UK Rough Sleepers’ Initiative which included the capacity for ‘Contact and Assessment Teams’ and ‘Tenancy Sustainment Teams’ with a measurable reduction in homelessness by two thirds by 2002 (Randall and Brown, 2002). The focus on intensive tenancy sustainment is also a cornerstone feature of Supportive Housing models based in the United States and Canada.

Without this funded capacity, it is likely that the targets established for Australia and Queensland will be difficult if not impossible to achieve.

## 7. Unmet Needs

Under 1 Roof has made several funding submissions to various funding bodies seeking the capacity to:

- Sustain efforts to further integrate a multi-agency response to homelessness
- Provide comprehensive and intensive tenancy sustainment services.

Under 1 Roof conducted a visual exercise to map existing outreach and support services delivered across the consortium. This exercise illustrated that across the agencies, there was a higher capacity for:

- Outreach
- Crisis response
- Assessment
- Referral
- Short term intervention (3 months or less).

This capacity generally reflects historical program funding based on time-limited support periods and an over-emphasis on responding to crisis. Across the agencies, the scope for providing ongoing intensive support to those households that needed it was much more limited and this is indicative of funding based resource allocations across the Qld homelessness sector.

On the foundation of this research and trial period, U1R is poised to commence the provision of tenancy sustainment services which involves the provision of intensive support to rough sleepers and other homeless people linked with the provision of affordable and appropriate housing through partners such as Brisbane Housing Company. This intensive support would involve a case manager whose role includes facilitating the inputs and resources of all the other participating agencies.

**While it is U1R’s aspiration to provide intensive support services tied to quality housing options, this is also a wider unmet need in Brisbane and Queensland which needs to be a strong focus in the next State budget.**

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## 8. The Draft Strategy

U1R makes the following comments about the strategy:

### a. A shared vision

Overall, it is positive to have a shared vision and U1R supports this. Based on extensive work across the agencies in service delivery with homeless people, it is important that notions of 'independence' are understood in the context of chronic conditions such as severe mental illness and drug and alcohol abuse. While everything should be done to build resilience and strength in homeless people, some people will require ongoing support to sustain their tenancy and achieve other outcomes such as belonging within a community. The support relationship must involve continued assessment and planning involving the homeless person so that assessment processes identify as early as possible, a change in mental state or a deterioration in living skills due to addiction. **U1R is concerned that using the word 'independence' implies that all people who are homeless can eventually be without support from the service system.** For some people, support will be needed continuously which is a finding in the report by Gronda (2008:137) who challenged shorter time periods for support and case management to homeless people:

*"Possibly the most important conclusion to draw from this synthesis is that effective case management is a time- and resource-intensive intervention. The investment required to establish and maintain the relationship may be wasted in short-term, crisis-orientated programs of 3–6 months duration."*

### b. Key priorities

Generally the priorities are supported. U1R's model is highly consistent with the stated priorities and makes the following comments and suggestions:

#### Person-focussed responses to homelessness

Under 1 Roof's focus on person-focused responses led to the trial of coordinated case management meetings. To achieve this however and to respond in the 'tailored and seamless' way described in the paper, it will be essential to now focus on resourcing expanded tenancy sustainment services.

It will be important the HIMP overcomes existing tensions between integration and privacy to achieve both high levels of ethical practice and excellence in service integration which includes how data is collected and managed, and how well the system can measure actual outcomes (such as a long term housing outcomes and no exits to homelessness).

#### People have access to stable housing with support

This is the entire focus of U1R and with housing providers as partners, the question of how existing, new and emerging tenancies resulting from NRAS and the Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan will actually be supported and sustained, has emerged. With a significant number of new housing products coming online in the inner suburbs and many in the Fortitude Valley Precinct, there is an urgent need to address how these tenancies will be sustained through the provision of support services. Across 2010-2011, at least 270 units of housing have been or are under development in the inner northern suburbs in addition to some existing intensive developments in the Fortitude Valley area and Spring Hill which would benefit from additional tenancy sustainment support.

**More resources for tenancy sustainment are desperately needed and this need is well established. U1R is concerned that the current process to endorse this strategy and develop Homelessness Community Action Plans will delay a program and budget response which is needed immediately. Given the timing of this draft strategy, U1R urges the State Government to ensure that the current budget process includes funded capacity for tenancy sustainment services throughout Queensland given there is already**

adequate documentation of this need. The QCOSS submission to the State Budget in 2006 is one example of the length of time that efforts have been made to advocate the need for expanded tenancy sustainment capacity in Queensland. On this basis, continued planning without a focus on actual capacity to deliver these services will negatively impact on meeting national and state level targets. The following is an extract from the QCOSS budget submission from 2006 to illustrate this point:

*The UK Rough Sleepers' Initiative ....demonstrated that a focus on sustaining tenancies helps to reduce homelessness. An independent evaluation of the Rough Sleepers' Initiative highlighted "a new structure of Tenancy Sustainment Teams...(that) provided support for as long as it was needed" and that resulted in a reduction in tenancy failure rates".*

*The two main policy directions to emerge in light of this analysis are:*

*The need for adequate housing supply to respond to existing unmet need and emerging need.*

*The need for adequate and intensive support that integrates mental health, medical services, educational programs, job training and placement, community linking and individualised attention to ensure meaningful progress.*

*This type of support is proven to work best if it is sustained over the longer term, matching individual needs. The strength of this model is that housing provider organisations partner support organisations to deliver a well integrated response.*

QCOSS 2006:62-63

#### Increased participation in education, training and employment

U1R includes several opportunities within the consortium supporting these outcomes. Examples include Mission Australia's Catalyst Program, CityCare Training Programs, 139 Club social enterprise initiatives and traineeships, and BYS has three employment training programs accessible to young people. These opportunities require continued support and should also be integrated into evaluation and data collection processes that are comprehensive and focused on outcomes measurement. Resourcing and connecting with organisations that provide these and associated programs is critical in ensuring an integrated approach and long term sustainable solutions.

#### Effective coordination and integration of services

While U1R acknowledges and will participate in the development of the HCAP and will work with the planning and coordination project funded within QCOSS, **we are concerned that all available planning, coordination and integration resources will remain at the level of policy and programs rather than service delivery. The real challenge is devolve these resources to the level of front-line service delivery involving support workers, mainstream services, housing providers and the wider community in driving housing and support outcomes.**

U1R's commitment to integration highlights that integration is a process that requires a lot of development, capacity building and resources. Integration resources are needed at the front line if this part of the strategy is to be successful.

#### More community involvement

U1R includes the Rotary Club of Fortitude Valley as an active, founding member as well as general agencies such as New Farm Neighbourhood Centre offering a range of ways to facilitate the involvement of homeless people in their community and the involvement of the wider community in homelessness. Wider community involvement can also be a resource in the context of neighbourhood opposition to homelessness services and social housing.

Community involvement requires a capacity for facilitation however and this requires time and focus. When people have made the transition from street to home, strong connections to a place which includes opportunities to volunteer, civic engagement, community participation, social and recreational

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opportunities is essential to the sustainability of a housing outcome. Through these connections, a formerly homeless person will also be more likely to build non-formal helping relationships which further reduce reliance on state funded services.

This type of broader connection to a community of belonging requires place-focused planning and action strategy development. U1R acknowledges that the strategy already has a focus on place however smaller regional action plans within a wider region such as Brisbane are needed. There are a number of 'hot-spots' such as the outer north, outer south, Stones Corner and Moorooka. These regions already have engaged a range of interests including persons who are or have been homeless, business and broader community interested persons, church and other not for profits'. The strategy needs to work with this existing momentum and break larger regions down into smaller areas which play a role in targeted and responsive homelessness action as part of the overall state-wide strategy. These more localised responses need support and resourcing.

#### Improve capacity and strengthen services

The Synthesis Series and Integrated Training Project are examples of U1R managers focussing on the need for workforce development, support, training and reform. Real support for these processes will be essential to the sector participating in reforms, refocussing resources and having real capacity to implement leading practice rather than practices that have been traditional in Queensland (with a heavy focus on crisis response).

The scope for discussion with the Department about refocussing existing resources towards long term outcomes is also needed. Queensland needs a culture of enabling robust discussion between the sector and the Department about changing needs and the implications for service agreements, with the goal of allowing agencies to negotiate changes if they are clearly aimed at achieving longer term outcomes informed by evidence of leading practice.

There is also a need to strengthen training and workforce development opportunities given that a new strategy will involve new capacities and a strong focus on implementation of practice that is proven to work. At present, the opportunities to train and support the workforce involved in homelessness responses are insufficient. Urgent training opportunities for front line staff and management are needed immediately.

#### Collecting and sharing data

U1R has engaged in serious debate about this point throughout the last 12 months and has widened this debate through the Synthesis Series discussions. U1R is aware of leading practices such as the CHAIN database in London which has enabled service integration as well as data analysis and reporting that demonstrates outcomes. It is critical that Queensland and Brisbane moves towards a mechanism such as this where ethical informed consent processes are used yet also where services are creating comprehensive and accurate histories of all inputs and interventions as a basis for making real progress toward long term housing and ending that person's homelessness.

It is essential that the strategy also determines which outcome measures will be used to determine whether targets have been met. This will require rigorous enumeration processes in addition to the national census as well as focussed measures such as:

- Number of households assisted to sustain a tenancy (3 months, 6 months, 12 months, 2 years) as a measure of whether homelessness has successfully ended
- Number of outcomes to homeless people related to participation in volunteering, employment, training, community participation and involvement and other indicators of wellbeing.
- Comparison between a control group of clients and clients assisted through an integrated response to measure the impact of higher levels of coordination on long term, sustained housing outcomes.

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## 9. Conclusion

U1R considers there is a risk in waiting for the endorsement of this strategy and for HCAPs to be developed (by June 2011) when it is already clear that tenancy sustainment resources are essential to ending homelessness and are well documented as a serious gap in Queensland. While planning is important, it is a concern that Queensland will only have community action plans some years after the Federal White Paper was released and that clarity about the need for tenancy sustainment resources will be contingent on yet another planning process which will only be finalised in six months time.

A budget response is urgently needed given the time of year and the level of social housing stock set to be operational in regions such as Brisbane City, yet which have no access to support services that are long term and intensive for those tenants that need it.

## 10. Summary of key recommendations

- Increased funding and new programs to deliver tenancy sustainment services in Queensland. This increased funding capacity should be urgently reflected in the State budget process for 2011-2012.
- Review the focus on independence in the draft vision to reflect empowerment and resilience while also providing ongoing, intensive support where it is needed (particularly due to chronic mental health problems and drug and alcohol abuse).
- Implement integrated data collection systems which are ethical and which also document all service inputs and interventions as a basis for better service delivery and improved outcomes measurement.
- Integrate outcomes such as training, employment, community involvement and wellbeing into data collection systems.
- Shift the emphasis on and resources for planning and coordination, away from the level of policies and programs to the level of front line service delivery.
- Provide capacity, support and resourcing for local area strategies and action planning including in the Brisbane region where smaller area planning and implementation will be essential to success (not just city-wide) This approach will ensure that existing momentum at the local level is harnessed and strengthened and also that responses are responsive to local need.
- Recognise the resource implications of service integration and of facilitating wider community involvement.
- Support discussion about refocussing existing resources and aligning existing service agreements with Federal and State priorities with a stronger focus on sustaining tenancies and ending homelessness.
- Accelerate the implementation of training and workforce development opportunities based on practices that are proven to succeed in ending homelessness.