

Accreditation Status Report

The Report

This report provides an overview of Churches of Christ, Care Housing's performance in relation to the National Community Housing Standards.

The report consists of two main parts:

- Accreditation Status Report
- Accreditation Evaluation Report

Accreditation Status Report includes:

- Recommended / Current accreditation status
- Background information about the organisation's work and history
- An overview of the Evaluation team's assessment of the organisation's performance, identifying major achievements as well as major areas for improvement.
- Evaluation Team
- Methodology

It is important to note that the Accreditation Status Report, for accredited organisations only, will be made publicly available on the CHSAU Website – <http://www.chsau.qld.gov.au>

The Evaluation Team has assessed the organisation's performance by rating each Standard against a five-point scale, as outlined below:

Surpassed	Performance meets expectations in all of the three categories of evidence (documentation, processes, measuring outcomes), and at least one category has exceeded expectations
Met	Performance meets expectations in all of the three categories of evidence (documentation, processes, measuring outcomes)
Partially Met	Where there are no categories of evidence (documentation, processes, measuring outcomes) not met, and any of the three categories is partially met.
Not Met	Where there is a not met rating in any of the three categories of evidence (documentation, processes, measuring outcomes)
Not Applicable	The standard cannot be met by the organisation because external legislation, organisation definition or funding policy guidelines prevents them from doing so.

Accreditation Status

Churches of Christ Care in Queensland (Care Housing) have met the required standards and have been awarded three year accreditation for the period 8 December 2008 to 7 December 2011.

Summary of Feedback from Tenants and other Stakeholders

The organisation provided the results of the tenant and external stakeholder surveys conducted in 2007. The evaluation team also surveyed tenants and interviewed community agencies and the funding body.

The organisation's stakeholder survey was undertaken by an external consultant and the very comprehensive report indicated that Care Housing is highly regarded by those surveyed. Feedback to the evaluation team from external organisations confirmed those findings and said that Care Housing has highly effective referral systems, tenancy and property management systems and that management of the service is transparent, and staff constantly provide and seek feedback and information on issues of mutual concern and interest. It was stated that Care Housing actively participates in collaborative and supportive partnerships with other service providers.

There were 61 responses to the tenant survey done by the evaluation team. This survey was conducted, as the evaluation team had not had the benefit of the normal tenant meetings as an important part of the evaluation process. A significant majority expressed satisfaction with Care Housing, its services, rent payment options, information provided, and responsiveness of staff members.

Feedback from three tenant advocate services interviewed as part of the accreditation evaluation process was that they had not been canvassed for their views with regard to Care Housing's services for tenants and that contact with the organisation was limited to interaction related to tenant disputes and evictions. The common thread of the feedback was a perceived lack of those elements that distinguish social housing service delivery from the private housing sector.

Overall Summary of Major Achievements including Areas of Excellence

Areas of excellence

Care Housing through Churches of Christ Care have a thoroughly documented and comprehensive governance system with clear delineation of roles, responsibilities and lines of authority. There is an effective framework for organisational performance, financial and legal accountability. The Board undertakes a self-assessment process annually and findings from this process are used to improve its operation.

Organisational goals and values are clearly articulated in a range of documents including the constitution and strategic plan. Strategic planning is undertaken on a three yearly cycle and an integrated business plan linked to the Strategic Plan, is developed annually. The Strategic Plan is supported by the Strategic Plan Implementation Guide which provides background on the Strategic Plan and assists

with its implementation. A documented process is also in place to guide research and development of objectives, measures and outcomes for the Strategic Plan.

The organisation has an extensive range of reporting which is used to monitor progress against the operational plan and the strategic goals. The “Balanced Scoreboard” measures achievement in relation to strategic objectives; Integrated Business Plan reporting is done quarterly through “Dashboards” as a part of the organisation’s Planning and Reporting Application. A feedback/improvement system is in place as part of the organisation’s system of continuous improvement. It can be accessed by internal users on the intranet (Share Point) and external users on Care’s website. Feedback or complaints are registered and tracked to ensure they are actioned.

Care Housing regularly reviews progress in achieving its goals and uses feedback from stakeholder and tenant surveys to inform its review and planning activities. A Strategic Planning group is convened to oversee and manage the completion of Strategic Plans. There is a documented continuous improvement policy and a three year internal audit plan which is reviewed annually plus a one year internal audit plan incorporating both systems and compliance audits.

Care Housing staff participate in the Churches of Christ “education network” which is supported by the Organisational Development fund, established for the purpose of promoting the professional development of individuals throughout the organisation. A Corporate Culture survey is conducted annually and together with the performance development framework is used to identify training and development needs of staff and succession planning is used as a motivation for staff by providing recognition and a career path within the organisation.

Churches of Christ Care have an employee assistance program and the data from usage of the program is monitored to identify emerging needs. A recent informal review identified a need for supervision of staff in a particular service area and ongoing supervision is being implemented.

The organisation has well documented financial systems which are structured for accountability and support efficient and effective financial management of the organisation. The system is based on documented principles including loss minimisation, timeliness, and separation of duties and maintenance of internal controls. The documented intent of the system is to achieve the “most efficient and cost effective uses of Churches of Christ Care financial resources, sustainability of the organisation as a whole and support the organisation’s outcomes and strategic targets.”

Areas of achievement

Care Housing has adequate procedures and systems to manage the application and allocation processes for the range of different housing programs and tenancies that it manages.

New tenants are given a Tenant Handbook and information sheets on tenant rights and tenant advocacy services. Arrears are managed through repayment agreements and tenants are encouraged to discuss tenancy or other issues impacting on their tenancies with Housing Managers.

There is a documented process for managing complaints which clearly outlines the steps, timeframes and responsibilities. Tenants are provided with a

feedback/improvement form to be used for suggestions or complaints. Information on the process is documented in the Tenant Handbook.

Procedures for repairs and maintenance are well documented and an efficient system is in place for tracking repair requests. Repairs and maintenance expenditure is regularly monitored against the budgeted amounts. Tenants are provided with information about repairs and maintenance including explanations of emergency repairs. A maintenance form is also provided together with a fridge magnet which lists emergency contact numbers.

New staff members receive an induction, the process for which is documented, and are subject to a probationary process. Staff performance is evaluated annually and interim reviews are performed.

Policy review dates provided indicate that all policies have been reviewed recently or are scheduled for review in 2008. The organisation has a policy in place requiring periodic review of the policy framework.

Overall Summary of Strategic Recommendations

Tenancy Management

That Care Housing consult with a tenant focus group to ensure the Tenant Handbook is user-friendly to the full range of tenants.

That the Tenant Handbook includes further information on:

- Tenant access to advocacy and support services;
- How the organisation will assist tenants to exercise their rights;
- Rehousing and modification options including the organisation's under or over utilisation policy;
- The request and approvals process for rehousing and modifications and how these requests are prioritised and decisions notified.

That Care Housing develops a documented process that supports how it will assist tenants to exercise their rights as tenants and clients of the organisation.

That Care Housing further explores issues of access to services of the organisation for culturally diverse tenants.

That external agencies surveyed annually be broadened to include tenant advice and advocacy organisations in areas where Care Housing provides accommodation and that feedback received be considered in relation to service delivery.

That Care Housing develops a broader range of strategies to address tenant participation and ensures avenues for tenant participation are continually pursued.

Human Resource Management

That documentation includes information about the timing of review of positions which remain occupied.

That existing processes be expanded to provide for regular reviewing and monitoring of the human resource system and for documentation of the outcomes and implementation of improvements.

That staffing arrangements are monitored to ensure alignment with expansion or growth of property portfolio or property management arrangements.

Background information about the organisation

History, location and community served

Churches of Christ was first established in 1930 to provide food and clothing to those in need during the Great Depression and now operates 133 services throughout Queensland providing aged care, early childhood, child protection, and affordable housing and welfare services.

Care Housing was formed through the internal amalgamation of the South West and Ipswich Community Housing (SWICH) service, which provided the Community Rent Scheme in that region, and Careworks, a service addressing homelessness through housing and work activities across Brisbane and the Gold Coast. Care Housing sits within the Family and Community Care Division of Churches of Christ Care.

Care Housing operates in Brisbane, Ipswich, Gold Coast, Pine Rivers and Logan areas.

Services provided by Care Housing

Long term housing; Community Rent Scheme; Affordable Housing; Community-Managed Studio Units; Affordable Housing; Drug Court Program; Supported Accommodation Assistance Program; and Home Assist Secure.

Number of staff employed

The total staff contingent of Churches of Christ Care is approximately 2000. Care Housing is the smallest Service of the Family and Community Care Division and has two staffed Regional Offices (Brisbane and Ipswich) and a Head Office.

Service Manager - full time

Standards Officer – full time

Senior Housing Worker (property manager) – full time 2 persons

Housing Workers (property manager) – full time 3 persons

Social Housing trainee – full time 1 person

Administration Officer – full time 1 person

Housing Support Worker – full time one person and part time (30 hrs) one person

Cleaner/caretaker – casual one person.

Property Portfolio

Community Rent Scheme Program

Community Managed Studio Units Program

Long Term Housing Program

Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP/CAP)

Affordable Housing (Tenancy and Property Management functions)

Drug Court Program

Target group / s

Community Rent Scheme targets are:

- 40% People with Disabilities (includes people identified, diagnosed or not, with mental health issues)
- 15% Women escaping DV
- 18% Indigenous people
- 15% Young people under 25 years
- 20% Single people

Community Managed Studio Units Program targets are:

- Gold Coast - single people (sharing) or single mothers, 75% under 30 years
- Ipswich City - single men and women on low and fixed incomes; exiting homelessness

Long Term Community Housing targets are:

- 40% single people > 55 years
- 35% people with disabilities sharing
- 25% people with special needs

Crisis Accommodation Program tenants are:

- 15% Young People Exiting Residential Care
- 85% Families in crisis or homelessness

Affordable Housing tenants are:

Singles, couples, families on low income, high priority referrals and with special needs – disability pensioners, drug and alcohol addiction, aged pensioners with no resources or family.

Short Term Lease Activity tenants are:

Those families with children in immediate housing need, on low income, but within a short period should be able to exit to private housing market.

Number of tenancies managed

440

Income sources

The organisation receives recurrent or capital assistance from the Department of Housing for the following Community Housing programs: - Crisis Accommodation Program, Crisis Accommodation Head Lease Program, Community Rent Scheme, Long Term Community Housing Program, Community-Managed Studio Units Program, Affordable Housing Capital Grants Program and the Drug Court Residential Program.

Housing Support funding is provided by the Department of Communities.

In addition Care Housing head leases a number of properties from the Department of Housing, Property Portfolio Branch, uses properties owned by the organisation and manages properties for other affordable housing providers such as Brisbane Housing Company.

Management/Governance structure

Care Housing is a Service arm of the Family and Community Care Division of Churches of Christ Care, in turn the welfare organisation of Churches of Christ in Queensland (The legal entity under the Religious and Education Institutions Incorporation Act).

The Service Manager of Care Housing reports to the Divisional Director who in turn reports to the Executive Director. The Executive Director is an ex-officio member of the Board of Churches of Christ Care.

Key issues over the past 12 months

- Obtaining experienced and qualified staff to match the needs of the Service and the development and succession planning imperatives.
- Developing and implementing an entirely new systems approach as a small service operation within a larger organisation and setting up the evidential documentation for accreditation.
- Positioning the Service in the Social Housing sphere as it develops under Departmental initiatives and directions.
- Addressing an increasing demand for services from all target groups and stakeholders with very little increased resources and reducing supply and increasing demand in the private market.
- Developing partnerships with the Department of Housing for capital projects.
- Developing the approach to the private market owners/agents as property supply tightens and rents increase along with selectivity.
- Re-positioning support service within the SAAP environment.
- Understanding the competitive development of the community housing sector following the Department's consolidation strategy development and the distribution of power and influence within the community housing sector, peaks and the community sector in general.

Key Goals for next 12 months

- To achieve unqualified Community Housing Standards Accreditation.
- To achieve a fully satisfactory compliant audit for 2007 Care Management System for the Care Housing Service Stream.
- To continue to increase housing outcomes – number of people successfully housed from crisis; successfully exited to permanent or transitional; and those established in permanent housing options.
- To complete the construction of 70 units of accommodation at the Gold Coast and Brisbane City which now have Development Approval.
- To identify new development opportunities for inclusion in the 2008-2011 plan.
- To identify and act through amalgamation, consolidation and partnership towards developing the business.
- To develop the SAAP support service through amalgamations and consolidations within our region of interest.
- To develop a successful partnership with Disability Services Queensland, Department of Housing and Church Communities to address the shared housing needs of people with disabilities.
- To successfully integrate the HAS services into the portfolio and commence a growth and development strategy.

The Evaluation Team

Coordinator: Fran Young

Accreditation Officer: Carmel Sakrzewski

Peer Evaluator: Helen Collins

Trainee Peer Evaluator: Fran Manning

Methodology

Prior to the accreditation evaluation the service used the Self-Evaluation Workbook to evaluate its own performance. The evaluation team then conducted a desk-top assessment of information and documentation provided by the organisation. This was followed by an on-site evaluation.

The external evaluation process involved gathering and assessing an extensive amount of information and documentation and included:

- reviewing the organisation report and other documentation and evidence of various kinds
- conducting a range of interviews with management members and staff
- inspecting office facilities and equipment
- assessing policies and procedures
- reviewing the tenancy and property record audit reports
- interviewing and/or surveying tenants
- reviewing reports on the results of surveys of tenants and other organisations undertaken by the organisation
- interviewing or seeking feedback from key referral organisations and the funding body