

## Accreditation Status Report

### The Report

This report provides an overview of Gold Coast Housing Company's (GCHC) 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

The Gold Coast Housing Company Ltd has been awarded full three year accreditation from 15 July 2009 to 14 July 2012.

## Summary of Feedback from Tenants and Other Stakeholders

As part of the accreditation evaluation process the evaluation team met with tenants, interviewed a number of community agencies and received a report from the funding body.

### **Feedback from tenants**

GCHC provided the results of the tenant surveys that it conducted prior to the on-site accreditation evaluation visit and the evaluation team met with two groups of tenants at external venues.

Tenants said they were encouraged to participate in tenant meetings and expressed an interest in more regular tenant participation opportunities. Tenants also said that they would like to receive a monthly newsletter from GCHC to keep them informed about changes within GCHC and more information about the social housing especially any changes that impact on their tenancies.

Tenants were positive about GCHC and commented on the professional way the staff interacted with them. Tenants were generally pleased with the way that their housing was allocated to them and the information, including the new tenant's kit, which was provided when they signed their tenancy agreement.

Tenants regarded GCHC as good tenancy and property managers and were confident that any issues that arise could be resolved by contacting the office in the first instance. Some tenants indicated that they would like GCHC to consider using a caretaker as part of their tenancy management strategy in converted motel accommodation.

Tenants advised that they were generally happy with the repairs and responsive maintenance provided to their accommodation and indicated that GCHC often contacts them after a repair to provide feedback about repairs.

Tenants indicated that they were aware of how to make a complaint and would put their complaint in writing or contact the Board if they could not resolve any issues of concern with GCHC staff.

### **Feedback from other stakeholders**

A TAAS(Q) service and a number of other community agencies nominated by GCHC were contacted as part of the accreditation evaluation process.

Staff from the TAAS(Q) service advised that they have very little contact with GCHC and indicated that GCHC were responsive to client concerns when they are raised by the TAAS(Q) service.

Staff from the community agencies indicated they have a good working relationship with GCHC and advised that clients referred to GCHC provided feedback about the professionalism and competency of the GCHC staff. The willingness of GCHC to ensure that tenants are supported by referring agencies and the ability to provide exit points for clients housed in crisis accommodation was highly valued by other services.

Staff from the community agencies interviewed indicated that they had a good knowledge of GCHC including the location of the service, hours of operation and public contact and the eligibility criteria for social housing.

The funding body (Service Delivery Section of Community and Public Housing) advised that GCHC continues to meet its obligation in regards to financial management, governance, service delivery, tenancy matters and property matters.

## Overall Summary of Achievements

GCHC operates from a well located office that provides a good working environment for clients, Board of Directors (the Board) and staff. GCHC has demonstrated a strong commitment to sustaining the tenancies that it manages.

Staff performance is evaluated annually and all new staff receive an induction to GCHC and are subject to a probationary process. Staff reported to the evaluation team as being happy with their employment conditions including the level of support from the board.

GCHC has a 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

GCHC explored a number of funded housing programs to explore opportunities for increasing its funding and housing stock and has had discussion with other community housing providers about amalgamation and tenancy management services to increase the viability of the service.

The Board of Directors and staff are active in local and regional networks and have developed a good working relationship with other service providers in the area.

Interviews with other community agencies indicated that GCHC has a good working relationship with the agencies and referrals are made appropriately with good outcomes for clients. Tenants interviewed during the accreditation evaluation visit were positive about the service.

## Summary of Strategic Recommendations and Suggestions

It is recommended that GCHC review its policies and procedures to:

- provide for a referral to an independent body if a tenant complaint or appeal cannot be resolved within GCHC
- differentiate between consumer complaints and appeals
- provide timeframes for the resolution of a consumer complaint or appeal

It is suggested that GCHC consider the benefits of reviewing its policies and procedures to:

- enable the development of a mutual exchange policy and procedure
- document the full range of strategies used by GCHC to help tenants sustain their tenancies
- provide clarity about when the point has been reached where a difficult tenancy is no longer sustainable thus ensuring transparent tenancy management practices exist that reflect the organisation's commitment to sustaining tenancies
- document how tenant's input can be included in the property acquisition and development process
- provide a more comprehensive process for release of client information when informed consent by the client is not possible
- re-locate the complaints and appeals policy into the Tenant Rights and Participation section to change the focus away a process to resolve tenancy management concerns to a broader based consumer complaint and appeals policy
- include more formal opportunities for community and stakeholder participation in its planning, development and organisational review processes
- provide for a formal annual or bi-annual internal review of its financial systems.
- provide for a three to five external review of its financial systems.

- ensure consistency in Sections 7.1 Procedure: Record Keeping and 7.4 Procedure: Application Process about the time documentation is kept by GCHC before it is destroyed
- provide a timeframe around the notification of unsuccessful applicants and to document the process for providing feedback to unsuccessful applicants about their application
- provide for a person external to the organisation on recruitment selection panels.

It is also suggested that GCHC consider the benefits of:

- extending its tenant participation activities to encourage greater participation by tenants and residents living in detached housing
- reviewing the car parking provided for clients of the service to ensure that disability parking can be accessed by visitors to the office.

## **Background information about the organisation**

### ***History***

The GCHC is the amalgamation of two community housing providers, Gold Coast Vision Housing Limited and Gold Coast Community Housing Association Inc. Both of the organisations had operated as part of the Social Housing System and had provided community housing for a range of client groups.

Both Organisations had been accredited with Gold Coast Community Housing's accreditation expiring in November 2006 and Gold Coast Vision's accreditation expiring in February 2007.

In 2003, the Gold Coast Housing Interest Network, a diverse network of housing providers and government and non government agencies, raised the idea of developing a housing company on the Gold Coast to address a shortage of affordable housing. A number of issues had contributed to a housing crisis on the Gold Coast including the demographic trends, increasing cost of private rental housing, increasing cost of housing ownership as well as the declining social housing stock.

The concept of a housing company was endorsed by all housing providers on the Gold Coast and in 2005 Gold Coast Vision and Gold Coast Community Housing Association commenced the process of amalgamation and the formation of a company.

In September 2006 the amalgamation process was completed and the GCHC was formed.

### ***Location***

GCHC has its offices located at Suite 34, Ashmore Commercial Centre, 207 Currumburra Road, Ashmore

### ***Community served***

The GCHC currently provides housing within the Gold Coast City Local Government Area and plans to develop housing in surrounding regions including Beenleigh and Beaudesert.

In 2006, the Gold Coast City Local Government Area had a population just of under 500,000 and by 2021 the number of people living on the Gold Coast is expected to increase to over 680, 000.

The population of the Gold Coast is rapidly ageing and by 2026 the proportion of those aged over 65 will increase from 13% to 19%. Housing distribution is expected to shift away from the traditional nuclear family to larger households and to single persons and couples without children in one and two bedroom homes.

The Gold Coast is also a culturally diverse city and in 2006 when the national average of people born overseas was 22.2% the Gold Coast was higher at 24.9% with the majority of

people coming from New Zealand and England, with the remainder coming from a wide number of countries including Japan and South Africa.

The Gold Coast has a higher proportion of part time workers than the national average with part-time workers with casual incomes the most likely to suffer housing stress. Results of a recent Demographia International Housing Affordability Survey listed the Gold Coast area as the third least affordable city in Australia and tied with Sydney as the eleventh least affordable market in the world.

The 2007 Gold Coast City Council Housing Needs Assessment identified the three groups of people who are in the most need of affordable housing on the Gold Coast as those on Centrelink benefits, people with a disability or limited mobility and low income working households, which are generally not housed in social housing and which may not be eligible for social housing assistance

### ***Services provided by the Organisation***

The GCHC provides housing and tenancy management through the Community Rent Scheme, Community Managed Studio Units, Long Term Community Housing, Rent Start Program, Drug Court Residential Program and the Transition Housing initiative.

The GCHC also operates a property development arm, developing affordable and community housing on the Gold Coast, utilising State Government and Gold Coast City Council grants, as well as philanthropic donations and funding.

### ***Number of staff employed listing job titles and identifying the hours allocated to these positions***

- CEO – full time position - 38 hours per week
- Operations Manager – full time position - 38 hours per week
- Accountant - part time position - 20 hours per week
- Property Coordinator - full time position - 38 hours per week
- Asset and Development Manager - full time position - 38 hours per week
- Tenancy Coordinator - full time position - 38 hours per week
- Housing Coordinator - full time position - 38 hours per week
- Personal Assistant to CEO - part time position - 20 hours per week
- Planning and Development Coordinator – full time position - 38 hours per week

### ***Property Portfolio***

#### **Community Rent Scheme**

- 118 properties head leased from the private rental market
- located throughout the Gold Coast

#### **Community Managed Studio Units**

- 47 units leased from the department
- 25 located in Burleigh Heads
- 22 located in Labrador

#### **Drug Court Residential Program**

- 4 head leased properties
- located on the Southern Gold Coast

### **Long Term Community Housing Program**

- 36 properties managed
- 24 owned by GCHC and 12 head leased
- located throughout the Gold Coast.

### **Transitional Housing Units**

- 3 properties managed
- leased from department
- located over the Gold Coast.

### **Rent Start Program**

- approved for 25 properties
- 11 properties currently managed
- head leased
- located over the Gold Coast

### **Gold Coast City Council, GCHC and department funded development**

- 43 properties planned
- 3 properties currently occupied managed.

### **National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS) - Federal Government Funded**

- allocated 215 properties
- 6 currently occupied and under management.
- head leased
- located at Southport, Coomera and Holmview.

### ***Target groups***

Accommodation funded by the department is allocated from the department's Housing Register.

Accommodation funded by GCHC is be allocated from GCHC's own waitlist which targets young singles and couples on the Gold Coast who are currently employed in the service retail and industries and are in housing stress. Tenants will come from the lowest 40% of the income strata and will be charged rent at the affordable housing rate of up to 74.9% of market rent.

### **Target group – Community Rent Scheme, Community Managed Studio Units, Long Term Community Housing**

The department's one social housing system intends that the target group for social housing are those people who have the greatest housing need and that social housing is provided for the for the duration of their need.

The majority of GCHC's properties are tenanted through the department's Housing Register with the exception being the Drug Court Residential Program where properties are tenanted from referrals from the Magistrates Court.

### **Target group - Drug Court Residential Program**

The target group are Drug Court participants who are eligible for outpatient rehabilitation and are homeless or do not have access to appropriate housing. Clients are referred by the Drug Court Magistrate under an Intensive Drug Rehabilitation Program.

### **Target group - Transitional Housing Initiative**

Transitional Housing aims to assist low-income earners who are at risk of homelessness and in need of transitional accommodation or moving from crisis to transitional housing.

### ***Total number of tenancies managed***

GCHC manages 241 tenancies.

### ***Income sources***

GCHC receives funding from the Department of Communities (Housing and Homelessness Services), rental income and private development income.

### ***Management/Governance structure***

GCHC is a not-for profit private company limited by shares.

There are nine Directors who are elected by the shareholders and form the Board of GCHC.

There are nine not-for-profit shareholders who elect five directors and five for-profit shareholders who elect two directors respectively. Two independent Directors are elected by the combined shareholders.

The GCHC Board currently consists of the following nine directors.

- Chairperson – Peter Maher
- Vice Chairperson – Jim Donalds
- Director – Lisa Murdoch
- Director – William Owen-Jones
- Director – Stuart Whitewood
- Director – Tony Tippet
- Director – John Nelson
- Director – Dennis Stanfield
- Director – Kerry Young

There are five sub committees appointed by the board:

- Finance Committee
- Corporate Governance Committee
- Property Committee
- Tenancy Management Advisory Committee
- Performance Review Committee

The CEO reports directly to the GCHC Board and oversees both the tenancy and property management and development arms of the business.

### ***Key issues over the past 12 months***

GCHC has advised that the key issues over the past 12 months included:

- development of a management structure, policies and procedures to enable GCHC to manage new housing programs and an increased number of properties
- establishment of a development arm within GCHC to provide affordable and community housing stock
- negotiations for funding from the State Government and Gold Coast City Council for a major development project and ensuring the requirements of the funding grant were met
- tender for and establishment of NRAS properties
- establishment of Rent Start Program properties.

### ***Key Goals for next 12 months***

GCHC has advised that the key goals for the next 12 months include:

- the successful roll out the first stage of their capital works program to deliver 50 affordable and 10 market price dwellings
- the development of new housing solutions under NRAS
- ensuring the ongoing viability of current head lease programs in an increasingly expensive property market
- amalgamation with, or property management for, other community housing providers/community groups within the Gold Coast and surrounding regions
- gaining 200 more properties across the Gold Coast under NRAS
- lobbying the department for more Community Rent Scheme properties on the Gold Coast.

## The Evaluation Team

**Coordinator:** Mike Munsie – Standards and Accreditation Unit

**Peer Evaluator:** Jackie Richards – Bundaberg Housing Services

## 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
- interviewing or seeking feedback from key community agencies and the funding body.