

Accreditation Status Report

This report provides an overview of Yumba-Meta Housing Association Ltd's (Yumba-Meta) 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, may 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

Yumba-Meta Housing Association Ltd has met the required standards and has been awarded full three year accreditation from 6 March 2008 to 5 March 2011.

Overall Summary of Major Achievements including Areas of Excellence

Yumba-Meta operates from a well located office that it owns. The office provides a good working environment for clients, Board of Management members and paid staff. Yumba-Meta has demonstrated a very strong commitment to sustaining the tenancies that it manages. Staff reported to the evaluation team as being happy with their employment conditions including the level of support from the Board.

Yumba-Meta has well documented policies and procedures to provide guidance with service delivery, human resource management and the governance and management of the organisation. Yumba-Meta has made attempts to enter into partnerships to provide opportunities for increasing its funding and housing stock and has had ongoing discussion with other community housing providers about amalgamation to increase the viability of the service.

The Board of Management and staff are active in local and regional networks and have developed a good working relationship with other service providers in the area. The service is represented at Regional Community Housing Council Meetings.

Interviews with other community agencies indicated that Yumba-Meta 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.

2003 Accreditation Evaluation Report

The Evaluation Team noted that Yumba-Meta has implemented the majority of the recommendations and suggestions in the 2003 Accreditation Evaluation Report.

In response to the report, the service is no longer a member of the tenancy data base and now uses the department's rent policy for tenancies in properties funded by the department. Yumba-Meta has reviewed and updated its policies and procedures regarding joint tenancies, mutual exchanges, complaints and appeals and introduced a feedback process to monitor the work of contractors. Yumba-Meta has developed a risk management strategy and introduced comprehensive workplace health and safety policies and procedures.

Summary of Feedback from tenants and other stakeholders

Feedback from tenants

The evaluation team met with seven tenants in the boardroom of the Yumba-Meta office.

Tenants liked the affordability of Yumba-Meta's accommodation and felt that the service tries to get people into housing according to their needs. Tenants also believe that the service is very open about their activities and tenants were aware that there are regular meetings that they are able to attend.

Tenants expressed an interest in attending information sessions and suggested that the sessions be held on weekends and at different venues such as the Townsville Aboriginal and Islanders Health Service to increase accessibility. Lack of suitable transport was given as a barrier that prevented some people attending meetings. Tenants indicated that they receive regular newsletters from Yumba-Meta and appreciate being kept informed about the service. Tenants liked the content and suggested they would like information about the

appeals and complaints process, tenant's rights and information about the local TAAS(Q) service regularly included in the newsletter.

Tenants supported the use of survey forms by Yumba-Meta to obtain feedback, however, not all tenants reported as having received a survey form. Tenants expressed an interest in receiving the collated information from the survey forms and Yumba-Meta's response.

Tenants discussed the requirement that they be members of Yumba-Meta and that they pay a yearly membership fee. Tenants were not aware of what happened to the money received from membership fees and some concern was expressed about the process used to follow-up membership fees that were not paid on time.

Tenants would like to see Yumba-Meta employ more Indigenous staff as they believed that Indigenous staff would be able to establish a better rapport with tenants. The general feeling was that sometimes, especially when Yumba-Meta staff visit tenants in their home, they would be more comfortable talking with Indigenous staff.

Feedback from other stakeholders

The evaluation team contacted the local TAAS(Q) service and two other services by Yumba-Meta. The services reported as having both formal and informal referral relationships with Yumba-Meta. Staff from the services indicated they have a close working relationship with Yumba-Meta and comments were made about the positive outcomes of the referral process between the agencies.

Staff from the services also advised that clients who had been referred to Yumba-Meta reported positive feedback about their dealings with the service and noted a lack of complaints or concerns by Yumba-Meta's clients.

The staff from Yumba-Meta were described as having a very professional approach to service delivery while remaining flexible and supportive to clients. Agencies interviewed believe that Yumba-Meta provides a very supportive housing service to its Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients.

Staff from the agencies interviewed indicated that they had a good knowledge of Yumba-Meta including the location of the services, eligibility criteria for the various programs, hours of operation and the complaints and appeals process. Staff from the agencies reported regular contact with Yumba-Meta staff at the various network meetings and other local meetings.

Overall Summary of Strategic Recommendations

Tenancy Management

It is recommended that Yumba-Meta amend its policy about ex-tenant debt to ensure that the documented policy is consistent with its current practice.

It is suggested that Yumba-Meta:

- review the requirement for tenants to be members of Yumba-Meta given that it is anticipated from July 2008 all properties will be allocated under the one social housing system

- introduce a new tenant's handbook that includes information about the service and information about complaints, appeals and tenants rights
- provide clearer direction to staff about the procedures following requests for transfers, successions of tenancy and mutual exchanges
- include written information about transfers, successions of tenancies and mutual exchanges to tenants during the sign-up interview
- provide clarity for the Board of Management and staff about when the point has been reached where a difficult tenancy is no longer sustainable
- Amend the policies and procedures to reflect the supportive practices used by Yumba-Meta's staff as the current documents only reflect compliance with the Residential Tenancies Act
- include questions about the level of satisfaction with the service and the information when conducting exit interview conducted with ex-tenants for use in the review of its tenancy management practices and for quality improvements planning.

Asset Management

It is suggested that Yumba-Meta develop individual asset management plan for each of its properties.

Tenant Rights and Tenant Participation

It is recommended that Yumba-Meta:

- develop a Statement of Tenant Rights and incorporate the statement into their written policy documents
- review and expand current policy and procedures documents to provide details of the range of strategies that are used to assist tenants to exercise their rights
- provide a definition of the concepts of privacy and confidentiality and the Contractor's Agreement include a confidentiality clause that provides a definition of confidentiality
- extends the current code used to identify its tenancy and property files as the identifier for the spare sets of property keys kept on the premises and in reports provided to the Board of Management.

It is suggested that Yumba-Meta:

- distribute the Statement of Tenant Rights to tenants by way of the new tenant kit, the newsletter, in poster format displayed in the office and in brochure format available in the office and provided to tenants during house inspections
- develop strategies to encourage tenant participation in the decision making of the organisation and identify the barriers that limit greater tenant participation in the service
- use a standard information release consent form with the provision for an end date to the consent being nominated by the client
- promote its complaints and appeals policy in its newsletter and information about the local TAAS(Q) service and other support services to assist clients through the complaints and appeals process.

Management Systems

It is suggested that Yumba-Meta:

- include in the newsletter information supplied by government and non-government agencies that are seeking to engage with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait community
- develop policies and procedures to guide in establishing formal and informal support agreements with other services.

Governance and Organisational Management

It is recommended that Yumba-Meta:

- amend existing policy and procedures to formalise regular evaluation and review procedures to ensure that the organisation is working efficiently and effectively towards achieving its goals
- document evaluation and reviews for quality improvement purposes and develop an implementation plan
- document how improvements to the service have been introduced as result of the reviews.
- develop a formal process of planning and developing the priorities for the service as a whole to ensure that it maximises the use of its resources towards achieving its identified goals and priorities.

It is suggested that Yumba-Meta:

- amend its policies and procedures to include the formal process of planning and developing the priorities for the service
- develop a financial delegations register to assist with financial management and accountability within the service
- develop a range of strategies to involve stakeholders in its planning and development processes
- develop a Delegations Register that contains the various levels of decision making, reporting arrangements and delegations of each of the Board of Management members and the staff
- provide version numbers and the date of ratification by the Board of Management on all of its policies and procedures documents to facilitate the monitoring, review and updating of the documentation
- develop of a fire and evacuation plan in conjunction with fire officers from the Department of Emergency Services and that exit signage be installed at the back of the office
- consider the implications to confidentiality and safety when clients access the toilets, located outside at the back of the building, by walking through the office.

Human Resource Management

It is suggested that Yumba-Meta:

- conduct formal exit interviews for staff and that a standard form be used during the interviews to provide feedback to the Board of Management for quality improvement planning
- develop a staff training and development register
- provide the CEO with access to external supervision with a suitably qualified professional.
- develop a fire and evacuation plan in conjunction with fire officers from the Department of Emergency Services
- formalise the reviewing and monitoring of occupational health and safety systems and ensure that the outcomes are documented for quality improvement purposes.

2003 Accreditation Evaluation Report

The Evaluation Team noted that the recommendation that the CEO position have access to independent professional supervision and development opportunities, contained in the 2003 Accreditation Evaluation Report, had not been implemented.

Background information about the organisation

History, location and community served

Yumba-Meta was formed in 1973 to provide affordable and appropriate housing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families in the Townsville area. The service was initially granted funding to purchase eight homes by the then Department of Aboriginal Affairs and in 1974 five more homes were purchased. Within two years Yumba-Meta had acquired a total of 33 homes and currently the service manages 55 rental properties.

Yumba-Meta gained accreditation in March 2004 and was the first Indigenous community housing organisation in Australia to receive full three year accreditation. Yumba-Meta aims to serve the community efficiently and effectively in as many ways as possible and plans to expand housing services to singles, couples and medical transients, and venture into other projects that will benefit other disadvantaged Indigenous people.

Yumba-Meta operates in an area experiencing a residential building boom fuelled by demand from people working in the mining industry. Market rents have increased to a record high and vacancy rates continue to be at an all time low. An increasing number of families are in housing crisis and risk homelessness. Indigenous people generally experience higher levels of discrimination in the private rental market and the current housing affordable issues have exacerbated the problems experienced by Indigenous people.

The client demographic has changed over the last six years in the Townsville area and there is an increased demand for one and two bedroom accommodation by Indigenous families with two or three people in their family unit.

Services provided by the Organisation

Yumba-Meta provides long term housing to Indigenous people. Funding has also been secured to construct an elders' village at Innes Estate where 16 two bedroom dwellings will be constructed to accommodate elderly Indigenous clients.

Yumba-Meta provides the Homeless Early Intervention Service (HEIS) in partnership with Australian Red Cross to clients who are experiencing difficulty in sustaining their housing or facing eviction.

Yumba-Meta also provides the Queensland Indigenous Alcohol Diversion Program (QIADP) consisting of five properties provided by the Department of Housing and support services to residents funded by the Department of Communities.

Yumba-Meta owns and manages two commercial offices. One of the offices is used by Yumba-Meta as its administration centre and the other office is rented at commercial rates to a private sector company.

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

Yumba-Meta employs a full-time Chief Executive Officer (CEO), who reports to the Board of Management, in charge of day to day management of the service. The CEO implements strategies, oversees financial management, grant administration and reporting to funding bodies and other statutory bodies. The CEO was formally known as the Administrator.

A full-time program manager, reporting to the CEO, is in charge of implementing the QIADP and supervises the four case managers.

Four full-time case workers are employed. They report to the Program Manager, provide client case management services and provide feedback about program implementation and program issues to the program manager.

There are three administrative assistants who report directly to the CEO. They carry out the day-to-day administrative functions of the service as well as property management. Two of the positions are full-time and one is part-time.

Property Portfolio

Yumba-Meta manages:

11 Long Term Housing Program properties funded by the Department of Housing:

- 5 one bedroom apartments at Garbutt
- 2 two bedroom duplexes at Currajong
- 1 three bedroom house at Mt Louisa
- 3 four bedroom houses at Kirwan.

5 medium term properties funded by the Department of Housing under the QIADP to be head leased from the Private market including currently:

- 2 three bedroom properties at Kirwan
- 1 three bedroom property at Currajong.

Yumba-Meta also manages 44 rental properties funded by the Federal Government.

Target group/s

- Indigenous people or people with children of Indigenous decent.
- The target groups of the HEIS program are persons experiencing difficulty in sustaining long term tenancies.

Number of tenancies managed

Yumba-Meta manages 55 rental tenancies.

Income sources

Yumba-Meta has received funding from the Department of Housing for the acquisition of housing stock however the service does not receive recurrent funding from the Department for maintenance, support or property and tenancy management.

Rental income is received from the commercial and residential properties managed by the service.

Department of Communities has provided funding for the QIADP and HEIS.

Management/Governance structure

Yumba-Meta's Board of Management consists of ten voluntary Directors who represent the service in a professional manner and share in the overall responsibility for the management of the service.

The President chairs Board meetings and acts as spokesperson.

The Vice-President chairs Board meetings in the absence of the President.

The Secretary ensures that minutes and meeting proceedings are properly recorded and the legal obligations of the service are carried out.

The Treasurer ensures that the finance activities of the service are properly recorded and managed and ensures compliance with legal obligations. The Treasurer also monitors movements in budgets and endorses receipts and payments.

There are six other Directors sharing in the responsibility of the management of Yumba-Meta and ensuring that the activities of the service are consistent with the policies and procedures.

Key issues over the past 12 months

Yumba-Meta advised that the mining boom in the region has resulted in private home ownership becoming out of reach for most low income people. House prices have reached a record high and the shortage of tradespeople in the building industry has impacted on the cost of construction of residential property.

Very low vacancy rates currently exist in the private rental market and have caused large rental increases resulting in housing affordability crisis for existing tenants and presenting a barrier to prospective tenants attempting to establish a private rental tenancy.

Yumba-Meta has advised that the changes to community housing as result of the implementation of the one social housing system has created some uncertainty and the service has moved to expand services with changes to their constitution broadening the client target groups and securing funding for SAAP services.

Yumba-Meta is also affected by the negotiations between the Federal and state governments in relation to the proposed integration of Commonwealth funded Indigenous housing.

The Evaluation Team

Coordinator: Mike Munsie
Peer Evaluator: Tracey Jones
Trainee Coordinator: Fran Young

Methodology

Prior to the evaluation the service had evaluated its own performance by the use of a Self-study Report. The Evaluation team then visited the organisation. The process of external evaluation involved an intensive process of information gathering. Information gathered may have included:

- reviewing the pre-evaluation questionnaire and other documentation of various kinds
- conducting a range of interviews with management members and staff
- inspection of office facilities and equipment
- assessing policies and procedures
- reviewing the tenancy and property record audit reports
- interviewing tenants
- review of reports of tenant and other organisation questionnaires undertaken by organisation
- interviews with key referral organisations and the funding body.