



“Transitions” - Housing & Support for Aboriginal South Australians

Tandanya National Aboriginal Cultural Institute, Adelaide



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Key policy messages for State Government

Our workshop participants agreed that the creation of an Aboriginal community housing organisation would overcome many of the housing and tenancy issues experienced by Aboriginal people, and this was seen as one way to improve outcomes. While an Aboriginal-led housing organisation does not exist, it is the State Government's responsibility to take action on the following solutions provided by workshop attendees:

1. Create and implement an Aboriginal workforce development strategy

Aboriginal employment and leadership in the provision of housing and support services is the key strategy that is missing in South Australia, to improve the safety and recovery of Aboriginal people leaving institutions. It is acknowledged that the Office for the Public Sector is responsible for South Australia's Strategic Plan Target 53: Increase the participation of Aboriginal people in the South Australian public sector, spread across all classifications and agencies, to 2% and maintain or better those levels through to 2020. It is also noted that between 2003 and 2016 there was an increase from 0.92% and 1.77% in Aboriginal employment in the public sector and this is an improvement. Workshop participants would like to see the South Australian Government develop and implement an Aboriginal Workforce Development Strategy, with Aboriginal peoples, not solely for their own agencies but also for the non-Government agencies they fund. We would also like to see more aspirational targets in the State Strategic plan that aim to achieve higher than a 2% level of Aboriginal employment. The term workforce development is taken to mean all aspects of recruiting, retaining, training, supporting and developing Aboriginal people to take up employment across the provision of government and non-government housing and support services.



2. Embed cultural competency in policy and service delivery

Mainstream housing and support agencies, government and non-government, must commit to systematically improving their cultural competency and embedding cultural safety in policy and service delivery through ensuring that all government and non-government staff achieve cultural training and this is measured in their personal and agency key performance indicators, strategies, policies and funding agreements.

3. Ensuring Aboriginal people do not fall through the gaps of service delivery

Aboriginal people exiting institutions require housing and support that works across government portfolios, departments and the community sector, in a collaborative way, to ensure people do not fall through the gaps of service delivery. Issues affecting Aboriginal people are complex and are not being served by working in silos. Ministers must commit to working together, across their portfolios and insist that their departments can provide evidence of coordinated, cross-departmental responses to vulnerable Aboriginal people.

4. Urgently increase the supply of social and emergency housing

There is not enough public housing, emergency accommodation, residential rehabilitation or transitional housing to safely accommodate Aboriginal people in South Australia. We need a housing strategy that contains clear targets for the housing system to provide the homes that South Australia needs and can afford, with specific consideration of Aboriginal people, in all types of accommodation – social housing, private rental and home ownership.

5. A more culturally appropriate justice system

Policy and guidelines must be developed to enable courts to sentence Aboriginal people to treatment or home detention, without prison to reduce the harms associated with incarceration.

“Culture is part of everything we do”

“Western Human Resources processes are NOT SUITABLE [for Aboriginal people]”

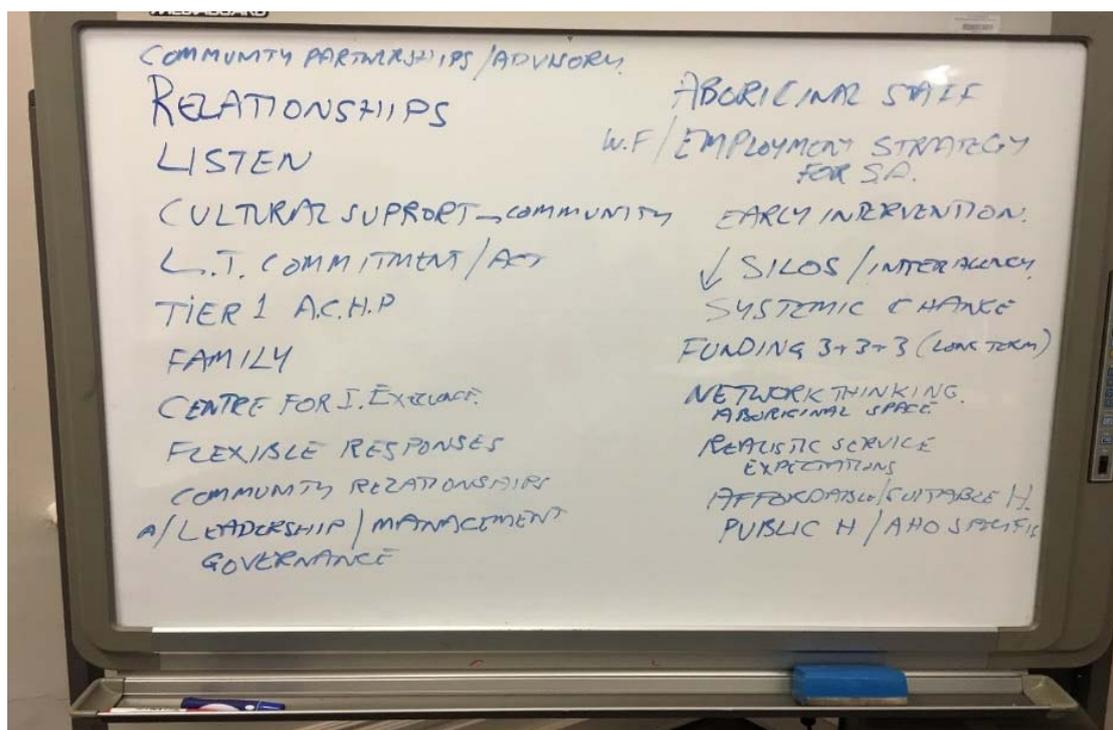
“Silos create more barriers for people with complex needs”

“Housing is a human right”

“There are cultural blockages to home detention”

Key messages for service delivery for government and non-government

1. Aboriginal housing and service providers must work with families, not just individuals.
2. Long-term support with continuity of workers is critical for people to safely transition from institutions to community and family.
3. Intensive support for young people (24/7) with a gradual transition to less support and ability to re-enter services when needed is essential.
4. Working with people before they are released and ensuring every person has a discharge plan before they return to community, that addresses where they will live and ensures that supports and services are in place.
5. Communication and collaboration between institutional services and community supports and services is a key element of ensuring continuity of support.
6. Affordable, safe accommodation is the basis upon which people can recover and return to their lives.



Background

Shelter SA formed an Aboriginal Cultural Advisory Panel (the ACAP) to provide policy and advocacy advice about the specific housing and homelessness issues as they are experienced by Aboriginal South Australians. The ACAP has ten members, including Aboriginal people with professional and/or personal knowledge of homelessness, housing instability, and complex needs for Aboriginal people. The ACAP identified that Aboriginal people experience discrimination in the private rental market, a lack of affordable and safe accommodation and support options upon leaving institutions and arriving from regional and remote locations for medical appointments, kinship and cultural purposes, study and escaping family violence. The ACAP agreed that the Shelter SA workshop should focus on 'transitions' to capture what works well for Aboriginal people at the times they are leaving institutions and returning to their families, communities or other support networks. The focus was positive, sharing effective programs and strategies, as opposed to a deficit-based approach.

The objective of the forum was to provide an opportunity for people from a diverse range of organisations to discuss housing and support services for Aboriginal people during times of transition. The programs, models and initiatives of most interest were those that have benefited Aboriginal people at times of exiting hospital, prison, youth detention, drug and alcohol rehabilitation, or family violence situations where safe, culturally respectful pathways back to home and communities are achieved.

Identity terminology

As is common in South Australia, the term 'Aboriginal' is used throughout this report however, participants at the workshop discussed housing and support services for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people residing, or temporarily living in South Australia due to medical, study, kinship, or other reasons. This report is inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



Mainstream services present barriers

Workshop participants discussed the factors behind the high demand for social housing and support services during times of transition for Aboriginal people, being broader than other population groups. Inter-generational legacies of colonisation - namely racism, social inequities, dispossession of land, and past policies - stolen generations, segregation and assimilation - impact on access to mainstream services. Participants agreed that geographically, the demand for housing and support services is not restricted to Adelaide. Regional centres that experience high seasonal or situational transience include Ceduna, Port Augusta and Coober Pedy. Accommodation is also required in some remote regions of South Australia, including Aboriginal Lands. Aboriginal people requiring housing in Adelaide and regional centres include non-residents, because State/Territory borders are not the same as First Peoples' borders, so intra-migrations based on cultural practices and kinship relationships are not restricted to one State/Territory. Also, it is common for Aboriginal people from Northern Territory and remote Western Australia to be referred to Adelaide for hospital admission or specialist services.

Transitions

Times of transition can include the following situations:

- Medical – travelling from regional or remote regions to access specialist services, hospital admission, post-admission care and rehabilitation, or ongoing dialysis.
- Mental health – admission to hospital and access to specialist services.
- Alcohol, drugs and other addictions - rehabilitation and specialist services.
- Family and community violence.

- Relationship breakdown.
- Leaving premises due to over-crowding or inadequate infrastructure.
- Exiting youth detention and prison.
- Kinship and cultural (i.e. sorry business).
- Accessing study opportunities.
- Relocating for work.
- Social determinants that result in increased experiences of homelessness, housing insecurity, or inability to secure or sustain suitable housing due to racism.

Workshop format

The workshop featured two speaker panels and time for questions and answers with workshop participants. Participants discussed the panel presentations at their tables and wrote their key thoughts and ideas on coloured post-it notes. Participants completed an evaluation form to provide feedback on the content of the workshop (Appendix 1). A list of participant organisations appears at Appendix 2. At the end of the two panels, there was a whole of room discussion to agree on the key messages and priorities (transcribed at Appendix 3). The panellists included the following representatives and you can learn more about their organisations at the provided links:

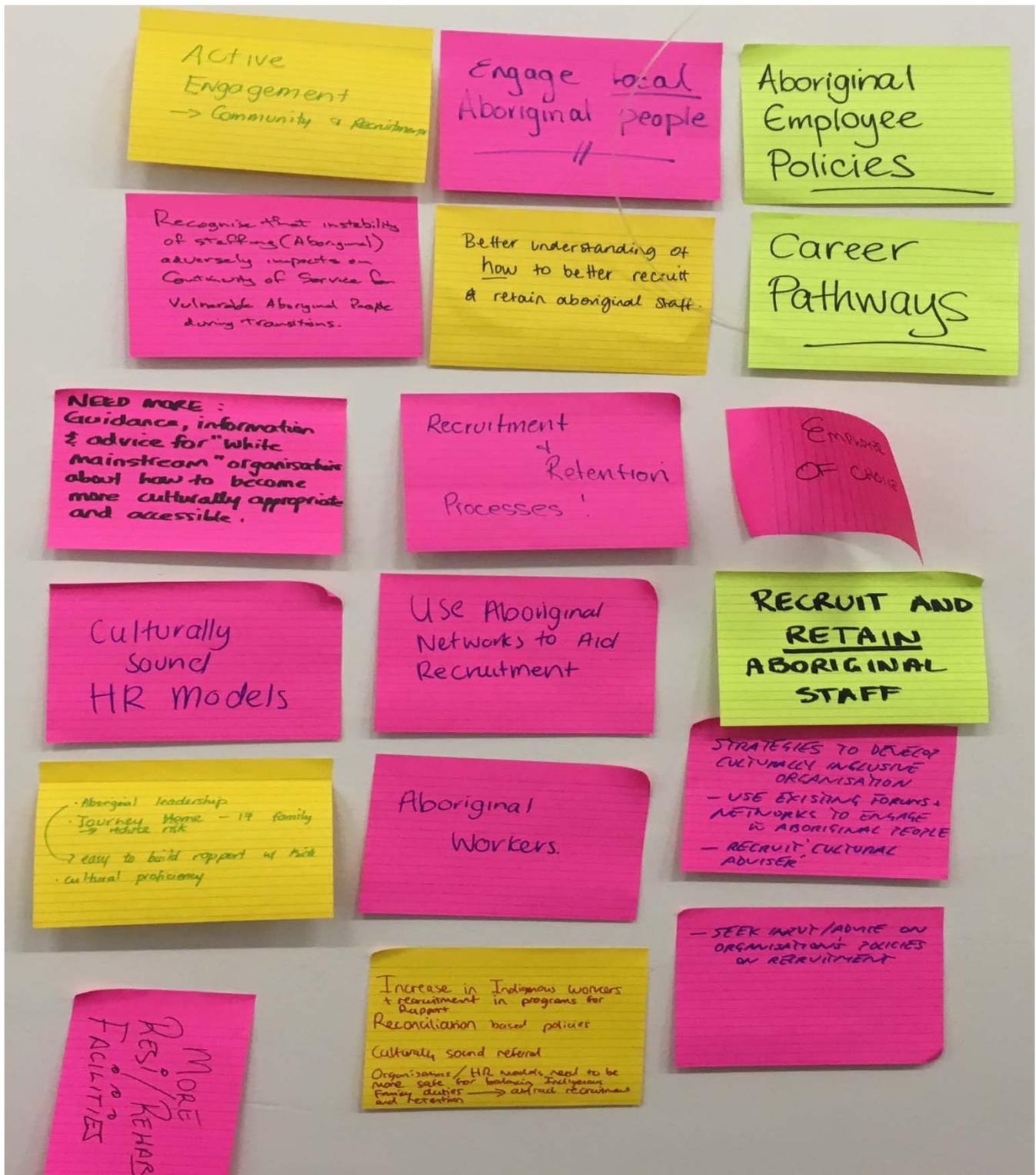
- | | |
|----------------------------|---|
| 1. Lana Dulic | <u>Youth Sobering Up Unit</u> |
| 2. Curtis Falla | <u>Kurlana Tapa, Adelaide Youth Training Centre</u> |
| 3. Brian Martin | <u>Uniting Country SA</u> |
| 4. Catherine McLaren | <u>Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services</u> |
| 5. Zoe Lui and Keyvan Abak | <u>Uniting Communities</u> |
| 6. Leigh Garrett | <u>OARS Community Transitions</u> |
| 7. Natalie McCabe | <u>Housing SA</u> |
| 8. Alice Clark | <u>Shelter SA</u> |

The Transitions workshop was held at Tandanya National Aboriginal Cultural Institute in Adelaide with approximately sixty people attending, including Aboriginal community members, volunteers, and representatives from forty-four not for profit organisations and government departments. The key messages from the forum will be used by Shelter SA to promote public debate and advocate for change leading up to the South Australian election in March 2018.

Results - solutions

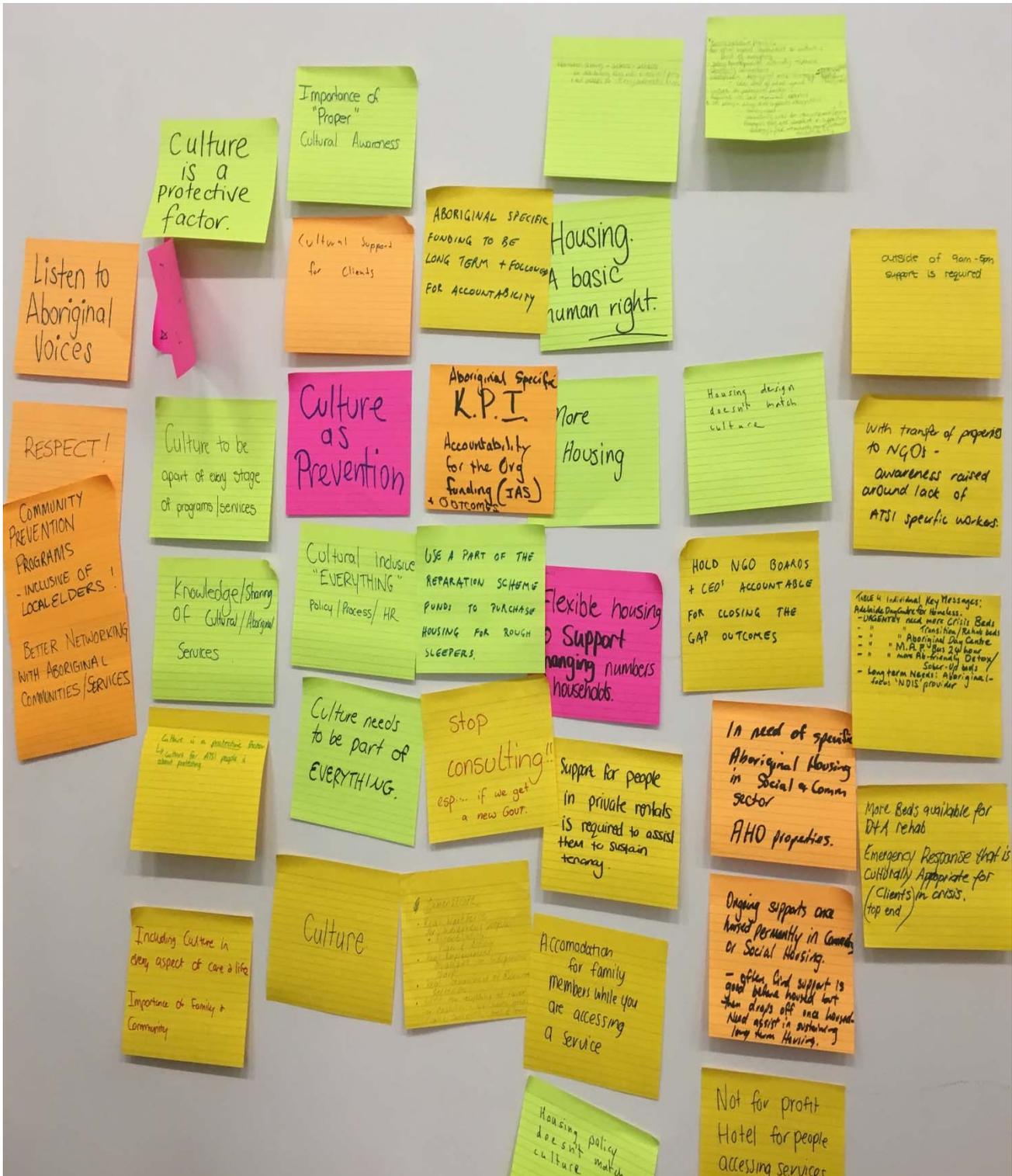
Aboriginal workforce development

Panellists talked about the importance of having Aboriginal workers, to increase the cultural safety of housing and support services and this theme was evidenced by the messages participants left on their post-it notes and in the whole of room discussion.



Results - improving cultural competency

Participants agreed that when systems, policy and service delivery are mainstreamed, there is a greater need for non-Aboriginal organisations to strategically and methodically strive to achieve higher levels of cultural competency and deliver housing and support services that are safe for Aboriginal people.



Panellist & participant solutions

Policy

1. All organisations to develop and deliver an Aboriginal employee recruitment strategy and target ratio of 5 – 10% of the total workforce.
2. All organisations to develop and implement a Reconciliation Action Plan and a cultural framework to underpin service delivery.
3. Both employees and organisations need to demonstrate cultural accountability, and this means understanding and balancing workers' responsibilities to their families and to their clients and organisation.
4. We need to work across portfolios, departments and service areas to better serve complex problems that are not experienced by people in isolation – holistic, cross-portfolio responses are required with policies and funding to support them.
5. Home detention without prison and sentencing to treatment without prison must be policy settings that overcome cultural barriers and reduce incarceration rates.

Service Delivery

1. Service providers need cultural advisers, especially when there are no Aboriginal staff and mainstream services. Connecting with Aboriginal organisations, local elders and key community people is encouraged.
2. Aboriginal people need Aboriginal case managers to coordinate pre-release planning and discharge/transition support and ensure there is collaboration between systems and workers within institutions and between institutions and the community setting.
3. Technology can assist families who have access to the internet and computers or smart phones, to reconnect with family in rural and remote regions, although many families do not have the resources needed to use technology.
4. Working with families, not just individuals, in all aspects of case management – planning, delivery and evaluation to ensure connection with families and communities is achieved and maintained.
5. Cultural awareness training for all staff. Ideally, workers will have relationships with Aboriginal people and their families prior to a crisis occurring. Linking young people to role models and family in the local community is recommended.
6. A house and a home are not the same and clients benefit from housing that is secure, safe and affordable near family and support networks.
7. Aboriginal cultural impact assessments should be conducted by mainstream service providers when considering new or altered policy and service delivery and should be embedded in all aspects of a community service organisation.
8. Transport is needed to help people transition from institutions to new settings, especially outside of Adelaide where it is not always available.

Conclusion

Workshop participants heard from panellists about “what works” for Aboriginal people who are receiving services from a cross-section of organisations and programs. Participants voiced the challenges and issues they experience as workers in the housing and support sector with their peers and discussed possible solutions.

Participants agreed that when people are transitioning back to family and community the issues they face are much broader than bricks and mortar, so strategies need to be expansive, flexible and culturally safe to be more effective. There are gaps in services that can impact negatively on Aboriginal people with complex needs, in crisis situations and when they are exiting institutions. For example, safe and affordable transport to and from medical and social support services continues to be inadequate and allowance for transport should be made in funding and service agreements.

Panellists and participants said that it is imperative to increase interagency and inter-government collaboration to work more effectively across silos and systems. The relationship between housing, justice, health, family and social services is very complex and when social determinants specific to Aboriginal people are added, such as discrimination, intergenerational trauma and inequity, the complexities are even greater. Several Aboriginal participants voiced their concerns about young people exiting detention or State-care, who ‘vanish’ and who are not provided the ongoing supports that are critical to keeping them safe and in the community, highlighting that people are still falling through the gaps.



Some participants said that it is not easy for Aboriginal people to find information about suitable accommodation and support services, especially during times of crisis. With an increase in information and service registration being online, low computer literacy and internet access amongst Aboriginal people can make it impossible to access services. State Government should invest in providing information and education about available services that does not require the use of computers and the internet.

Participants discussed the low rates of Aboriginal employment in the majority of not for profit services that provide housing and support and suggested that organisations need to develop Aboriginal employment strategies and address workplace culture to become “employers of choice” for Aboriginal people. Housing and social support strategies, policy and service delivery need to include cultural frameworks, developed with Aboriginal peoples, to ensure Aboriginal people have access to culturally safe services and supports.

Unlike other sectors, such as health and education, participants said that the social housing sector in South Australia does not overall, have a high level of good practice in cultural competency. Participants said that some not for profit organisations are doing moderately well, but this is a critical area that needs to be addressed. Many participants agreed that their organisations must do more to become culturally competent, to ensure services that are culturally safe and responsive to the needs of Aboriginal people in South Australia. Panellists suggested that one starting point would be increased collaboration with Aboriginal organisations and communities, to ensure programs and services are culturally safe and a good fit with the aspirations of Aboriginal people. Strengthening community relationships and increasing levels of Aboriginal employment in the sector, will also help to ensure cultural competency.

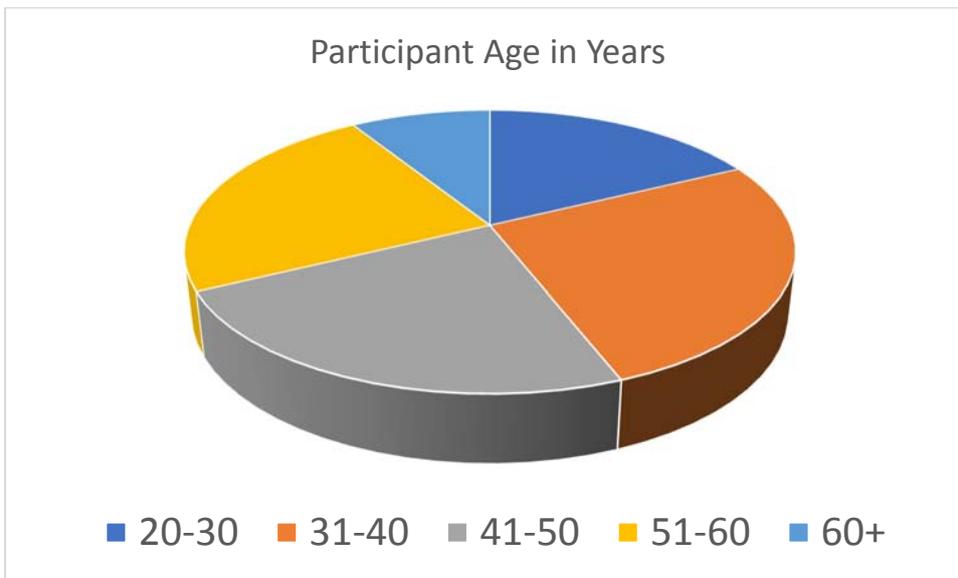
Workshop participants agreed that culturally appropriate housing and supports during instances of transition will enable people to achieve good health and wellbeing as well as increase social inclusion – so that Aboriginal people can live their lives their way.

Prior to its publication, Shelter SA circulated this report to all workshop participants, inviting their feedback, to be incorporated into this final version. Shelter SA wrote to all South Australian political candidates and parties in late 2017, asking them to respond to the outcomes of the workshop. The workshop report and the responses we receive from candidates will be shared via our enews, website, mainstream and social media to encourage public debate on the important issues discussed at the workshop prior to the South Australian election. Please contact us with any questions or comments sheltersa@sheltersa.asn.au or (08)8223 4077.

Appendix 1 - Participant evaluation

Of the participants who completed evaluation forms:

Identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	20%
Participants who would recommend the workshop to others	82%
Rated the workshop as Extremely Valuable or Moderately Valuable	85%
Advice Rating	81%
Advocacy Rating	85%
Policy Rating	67%



Participant Quotes

Continue to provide a forum where we can look to advise government about needs and how to provide them

Deadly

More Aboriginal presenters, more Aboriginal staff and tenants to attend

Should be all day

Discussion, knowledge of services, required to challenge government, Aboriginal staff and recruitment

Everyone loved the catering by Red Centre Enterprises

<https://www.facebook.com/redcentreaustralia/>



Appendix 2 - Organisations in attendance

Community Youth Justice
Adelaide Day Centre
Aboriginal Family Services
Aged Rights Advocacy Service Inc SA
AK Advisory
Anglicare SA
Australian Red Cross
AYTC Assessment and Case Coordination Team
Youth Justice Cultural Champion Network
Baptist Care SA
Catherine House
Centacare
Community Housing Limited
City of Adelaide
Community Housing Council of SA
Community Sector Banking
Don Dunstan Foundation
Dreaming Connection
Drug and Alcohol Services SA
Grandparents for Grandchildren SA Inc
Housing Choices South Australia
Housing SA
Indigenous Business Australia
Inner Southern Homelessness Service
Interlife Australia
Intract Australia Pty Ltd
Junction Australia
Life Without Barriers
MYSA
Ninko / WSSSA
Nunkuwarrin Yunti
Office for Women (DCSI)
Rebekha Sharkie MP Advisor
St Johns Youth Services
Street to Home
SYC Ltd
Tauondi Aboriginal College
Uniting Communities
Unity Housing Company
University of Adelaide
Westside Housing
Women's Legal Service (SA)
Women's Safety Services
Welfare Rights Centre SA

Appendix 3 - Verbatim post-its - themed

Culture

Culture is a protective factor
Culture to be a part of every stage of programs and services
Knowledge / sharing of cultural / Aboriginal services
Including culture in every aspect of care and life
Importance of proper cultural awareness
Cultural support for clients
Culture as prevention
Cultural inclusive everything – policy/process/HR
Culture needs to be part of everything
Cultural proficiency

Accommodation

Accommodation for family members while you are accessing a service
Support for people in private rentals is required to assist them to sustain tenancy
Flexible housing to support changing numbers of households
More housing
Housing is a basic human right
Housing policy doesn't match culture
Housing design doesn't match culture
State housing criteria legislation does not meet the needs of community
In need of specific Aboriginal housing in social and community sector – Aboriginal Housing
Authority properties
Not for profit hotel for people accessing services
More residential / rehab facilities
More beds available for Alcohol & Drug rehab
With transfer of properties to NGOs, awareness raised around lack of Aboriginal and Torres Strait
Islander workers
Adelaide day centre for homeless – urgently need more: crisis beds, transition/rehab beds,
Aboriginal day centre, MAP bus 24 hr, more Aboriginal friendly detox/sober-up beds. Long term
needs: Aboriginal focus NDIS provider

Respect and Relationships

Respect
Listen to Aboriginal voices
Important of family and community
Ongoing supports once housed permanently in community or social housing – often find support
is good before housed but then drops off
Emergency response that is culturally appropriate for clients in crisis
Outside of work hours supports it required
Engage local Aboriginal people
Active engagement

Aboriginal Workforce

Better understanding of how to recruit and retain Aboriginal staff
Culturally sound HR models
Employers of choice
Career pathways
Aboriginal employment policies
Aboriginal specific funding to be long term and followed for accountability
Increase in Indigenous workers and recruitment in programs for rapport
Organisations/HR to be safer for balancing Indigenous family duties
Recruit cultural adviser
Seek input/advice on organisations policies on recruitment
Aboriginal leadership – easy to build rapport up
Recognise that instability of staffing (Aboriginal) adversely impacts on continuity of service for vulnerable Aboriginal people during transitions

Service Delivery

Culturally sound referral
Need more guidance, information and advice for non-Indigenous organisations about how to become more culturally appropriate and accessible
Transport
Work to keep families together
Better non-medical response – transport, accommodation – regardless of provider
Community prevention programs – inclusive of local elders
Better networking with Aboriginal communities / services
Journey Home – reduce risk

Policy & Funding

Aboriginal specific KPIs / accountability for the organisations funding and outcomes
Use part of the reparation scheme funds to purchase housing for rough sleepers
Reconciliation based policies
Strategies to develop culturally inclusive organisation
Aboriginal impact statement throughout case planning
Funding for State government for more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural advisors and case workers
Programs to prevent incarceration
Use existing forums and networks to engage with Aboriginal people
Family connections essential
Agency having an Aboriginal community presence
Support safety net needs to be tight
Catching people who vanish
More funding
System failure