

Tasmanian Homelessness Charter:

Foundation Document



This document has been prepared by Youth Development Australia Pty Ltd. It contains a statement of service principles and practices that underpin a rights based approach to service delivery to people experiencing and those at risk of homelessness.

Tasmanian Homelessness Charter Preamble

People who experience homelessness are one of the most vulnerable groups in Australian society. The Government of Tasmania is committed to building and maintaining a service system capable of responding to the diverse needs of Tasmanians who experience or are at risk of homelessness.

The Australian Government and state and territory Governments have embarked on a national reform agenda to prevent and reduce homelessness based on the Australian Government White Paper, *The Road Home*.

In accord with this national response, the Tasmanian Government has initiated a reform process involving new investments in support programs and affordable social housing. There is a focus in the Tasmanian response on improving the effectiveness of both specialist homelessness services and those mainstream service systems that are used by people experiencing or at risk of homelessness. The objective is a more user-focused and needs-based service provision culture.

The Tasmanian Government's homelessness reform agenda is expressed through:

- The Tasmanian Homelessness Implementation Plan 2010 – 2013: *Coming in from the cold*; and
- The Tasmanian Social Inclusion Strategy.

Coming in from the cold includes a three-year action plan for a whole-of-government and community approach to preventing and reducing homelessness. One of the priority actions identified in *Coming in from the cold* was the development of a Tasmanian Homelessness Charter.

The key objectives of the Tasmanian Homelessness Charter are:

1. To promote community awareness that people experiencing or at risk of homelessness should be treated in a respectful manner that upholds their basic human rights.
2. To ensure that Tasmanian specialist homelessness services and other mainstream services engaging with people experiencing or at risk of homelessness carry out their responsibilities to deliver services in a manner consistent with the principles outlined in the Charter
3. To provide information and guidance to people experiencing or at risk of homelessness that clarifies what they can expect as standard service practice when using services and outlines their responsibilities as service users.

The Tasmanian Homelessness Charter is underpinned by a rights-based approach and is grounded in the proposition that every human being has basic inalienable human rights. These rights are articulated in the various United Nations Conventions to which Australia is a signatory, especially the Universal Declaration of Human

Rights (Article 25) under which housing is a component of the right to an adequate standard of living. It is acknowledged that access to food and shelter is a fundamental human right and the vision for Tasmania should be to ensure that this is provided to all citizens.

Tasmanians currently enjoy the protection of certain rights under specific legislation such as the Anti-Discrimination Act 1998 (Tas.) as well further promotion of those and other rights by the Commissioner for Children.

The Tasmanian Homelessness Charter is a rights-based charter but not a charter of rights as such. The Charter does not contradict the principles and standards promoted by Tasmanian legislation but rather it is designed as a statement of basic values and guiding principles for services and service users, subject to the reasonable limits of the laws of Tasmania.

The Tasmanian Homelessness Charter has been developed around seven themes that cross-reference to practice principles for quality service provision. The Charter seeks to ensure that the rights of service users are upheld through the provision of 'user-focused' and 'needs-based' services. The seven themes are:

- Dignity and Respect
- Health, Safety and Well-being
- Privacy and Confidentiality
- Equity and Fairness
- Choice and Self-determination
- Non-discrimination
- Social Inclusion

Services that implement the Charter principles will have strong relationships with service users, and other service providers.

At a systems level, the Charter is intended to provide a foundation for preventing homelessness and developing opportunity rich pathways from homelessness to active participation in the social and economic life of the Tasmanian community.

About this Charter

The Tasmanian Homelessness Charter sets out what service users have a right to expect from Tasmanian specialist homelessness services or any mainstream services providing assistance and/or support to people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, and at the same time, provides a guide for both mainstream and specialist homelessness services about what users should expect from services. It sets out the obligations of both parties.

Services can be expected to adhere to certain practice principles that embody 'user-focused' and 'needs-based' service provision. Services would:

- Adhere to the Tasmanian Homelessness Charter;
- Ensure that their required service standards are congruent with the terms of the Charter;
- Inform service users about the service principles and what these mean in practical terms;
- Enable service users to provide feedback on their experience and respond constructively to feedback;
- Help service users to lodge a complaint if they feel they have not received the service and treatment laid out in this Charter;
- Be accountable to service users, the community and the government for upholding the Charter.

The Tasmanian Service System

The Tasmanian Homelessness Charter should apply to all government departments, health and community services dealing with people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

The service system includes:

1. Specialist homelessness services including crisis services that provide accommodation for short periods of time and transitional housing services that might provide longer periods of assistance while working to help service users into permanent accommodation. It also includes services that provide outreach support and/or brokerage funds to buy accommodation or other services;
2. Social housing providers including community housing, public housing and Housing Associations;
3. Mainstream services that provide services to the broader community including people experiencing homelessness such as government departments, Centrelink, schools, police, the justice system, hospitals and health services as well as General Practitioners (GP's) and community services;
4. Specialist services that provide assistance for people with specific needs such as counseling services, mental health services, alcohol and other drug rehabilitation and counseling services, advocacy services, specialist children's services, Child Protection and Youth Justice, disability services, specialist services to diverse minority groups e.g. LGBTI, Aboriginal services, employment and training providers and emergency relief agencies.

It is intended that the Charter should provide guidance on service principles for all services and organisations that deal with people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

Adjunct to the mainstream and homelessness service systems there are other groups who provide accommodation to people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, these include private landlords, rooming house operators, operators of caravan parks with permanent residents or who take individuals and families on an emergency basis and real estate agents managing private rental properties.

Charter Service Principles

People can become homeless for many reasons including financial hardship, inappropriate or unaffordable housing, escaping family violence, abuse or neglect, parental rejection of their children's sexuality, illness or a breakdown in relationships.

People experiencing or at risk of homelessness need the assurance that when they approach a service they will receive assistance to meet their needs and that their basic human rights will be protected and upheld.

1. Dignity and Respect

- 1A. When people experiencing or at risk of homelessness seek assistance and use services they have a right to be treated with the same respect due to any other member of the community, regardless of their circumstances.
- 1B. When people experiencing or at risk of homelessness are accommodated or supported in any service this should be done in a way that upholds their dignity as human beings and citizens.
- 1C. Services are encouraged to nurture and uphold a culture of respect between staff, between staff and service users and between service users. This includes not tolerating violence, abuse and threats, and aiming to achieve safe and healthy reciprocal relationships, based on encouragement, care, empathy and collaboration.

2. Health, Safety and Wellbeing

- 2A. People experiencing or at risk of homelessness should have access to safe environments that support mental health and wellbeing.
- 2B. Services should promote good health and wellbeing and advise service users appropriately if their health and wellbeing seems under threat and take steps to address the threat.
- 2C. Accommodation for people experiencing homelessness must be safe, secure, healthy and respectful. Violence, threats, abuse or exploitation are not tolerated.

3. Privacy and Confidentiality

- 3A. Services should respect the right to privacy of people being supported or assisted.
- 3B. Private information should be handled in accordance with the terms of privacy legislation, whether or not the situation is bound by that legislation.
- 3C. When information is shared between services, agreed terms of confidentiality should be observed and service users informed consent should be obtained, on each occasion.

4. Equity and Fairness

- 4A. Service users should be treated fairly according to law, policies and arrangements that are transparent and applied consistently taking into account the personal circumstance and needs of service users.
- 4B. Irrespective of their needs or circumstances, service users should be able to enter the service system under policies that ensure equitable access that is free from direct or indirect discrimination.
- 4C. Services users with particular needs should receive the appropriate level of support necessary for achieving equitable and sustainable outcomes.

5. Choice and Self-determination

- 5A. Service users should be provided with information about the choices available to them.
- 5B. Service users, in conjunction with their advocates or statutory carers where appropriate, should be encouraged and assisted to make informed decisions about their own situation.
- 5C. Service users should have a voice and be consulted on the planning, development and evaluation of services.

6. Non-discrimination

- 6A. Service users should be treated appropriately and with respect, irrespective of their personal circumstances or characteristics including race, cultural background, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, disability, age and all other attributes protected under anti-discrimination law.
- 6B. Service providers are to ensure that service users are able to access services regardless of their legal status.
- 6C. Service providers are to ensure that service users are able to lodge a complaint or appeal a decision and expect a meaningful response without fear of retribution.

7. Social Inclusion

- 7A. Assistance for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness should contribute to building positive human relationships and foster active participation.
- 7B. Wherever possible, people experiencing or at risk of homelessness should be supported to participate in activities within the broader community.
- 7C. People experiencing or at risk of homelessness should be assisted and actively connected to opportunity-rich pathways to social participation and independent livelihoods.

Responsibilities of service users

Service users have rights but also responsibilities. It is reasonable that service users are asked to accept responsibility for the way they behave towards other service users and service staff.

Service users have a responsibility to:

1. Respect the rights of other service users and service providers.
2. Treat staff, volunteers and other service users in a respectful manner.
3. Take an active role in creating and maintaining a safe environment for themselves and others.
4. Act in a manner that is non-violent and non-aggressive.
5. Respect the privacy of other service users, staff and volunteers.
6. Be fair in their dealing with other service users, staff and volunteers.
7. Be aware of and meet their responsibilities as a tenant or resident.
8. Provide correct and up to date information about themselves.
9. Respect the diversity of other service users and service providers including their race, cultural background, sexual orientation or gender identity, disability, religion, age and other personal characteristics.
10. Accept final decisions which have been reached through due grievance processes.
11. Provide information that will assist services to identify suitable options and pathways that will support service users in achieving their personal goals.

1. Dignity and Respect

Service Principle 1A:

When people experiencing or at risk of homelessness seek assistance and use services they have a right to be treated with the same respect due to any other member of the community, regardless of their circumstances.

The rights of service users should be acknowledged, promoted and supported during all aspects of service delivery.

Service users can expect that:

Services will endeavour to develop a purposeful and trusting relationship with each service user and deliver support tailored to their individual needs and choices.



- Support for service users will be based on developing meaningful relationships between staff and service users.
- Support will be delivered on a needs-basis, accepting that some people have higher needs than others and will require more support.
- During case planning, service users will be assisted to make choices about their own situation and lives.

Service users will be treated in a respectful manner at all times.



- When talking or interacting with service users, staff will act in a courteous manner. This applies to service procedures at intake, minimising the time service users have to wait before being assisted and being respectful during ongoing interactions.

Services will be delivered in a professional manner.



- Service staff will be appropriately trained to assess the needs of service users and provide support and assistance.
- Services will be appropriately resourced.
- Services will subscribe to all relevant ethics and principles of relevant professional associations.
- Services will be delivered in accordance with quality assurance and accreditation systems.

Services will develop, apply and review ethical guidelines for client services.



- These guidelines will be made available to service users and clearly explained to them.

Service users who feel they are not being treated with dignity and respect will be assisted to redress this situation.



- Services will attempt to address grievances within their jurisdiction and either support service users seeking redress or, where this cannot realistically be done, services will provide information about where appropriate support or advocacy might be obtained.

Service Principle 1B:

When people experiencing or at risk of homelessness are accommodated or supported in any service, this should be done in a way that upholds their dignity as human beings and citizens.

As well as adults, a significant number of children and young people experience or are at risk of homelessness. Services need to have a capacity to understand the issues of children and young people and be able to respond to their special needs in a way that meets statutory requirements and is appropriately respectful and upholds their dignity.

Service users can expect that:

They will be supported in a way that makes them feel they are valued members of society.



- Services will ensure that the arrangements for accommodation are of an appropriate standard that meets the individual's or family groups needs.
- When providing accommodation services will try to house family members together – separating families will only occur as a last resort.
- Support services will be delivered in a reliable, coordinated and professional manner.
- Services will have systems and resources that positively engage and respond to the needs of children and young people.

Service Principle 1C:

Services are encouraged to nurture and uphold a culture of respect between staff, between staff and service users and between service users. This includes not tolerating violence, abuse and threats, and aiming to achieve safe and healthy reciprocal relationships, based on encouragement, care, empathy and collaboration.

A 'culture of respect' requires respectful attitudes, behaviours and conversations at every level of service provision. It refers to a code of behaviour for how staff and service users should interact, respecting each other as human beings regardless of status or power. This applies as much to how managers and staff behave within these services as it does to staff interactions with service users. The same respectful standards of behaviour are expected amongst service users.

Service users can expect that:

Services will promote a respect for service user rights.



- Services will advertise their policies and commitments on service user rights visually on notice boards and in service literature.
- Staff will demonstrate a commitment to service user rights when they talk with service users.
- The Tasmanian Homelessness Charter will be displayed on noticeboards throughout the organisation.
- Copies of the Charter will be available in a number of languages for service users to read.
- Information about how to make a complaint or redress an issue will be readily available.
- Services will ensure that staff undertake training and development in the principles of anti-discrimination and the adoption of a rights-based approach to service delivery.

Services will ensure service users have access to advocacy services when needed.



- Services will provide service users with information about how to access appropriate advocacy services.
- Service staff will support service users to access advocacy services.

Service users have a responsibility to:

Respect the rights of other service users and service providers.



- Service users are expected to observe the rules upholding the basic rights of all those in the service setting.

Treat staff, volunteers and other service users in a respectful manner.



- Service users are expected to behave respectfully at all times.

2. Health and Wellbeing

Service Principle 2A:

People experiencing or at risk of homelessness should have access to safe and secure environments that support mental health and wellbeing.

Service users can expect that:

Services will have appropriate safety procedures and equipment in place.



- Staff will take responsibility for occupational health and safety as defined within the Workplace Health and Safety legislation having regard to the safety and well being of services users and staff.
- Staff will have training in basic first aid, occupational health & safety, managing challenging behaviour, aggressive behaviour, alcohol and drug misuse, mental health awareness and safe food handling.
- Safety procedures will include fire risk compliance, safe storage of medicines and chemicals, infectious disease control, syringe deposits, emergency procedures and safe food handling and storage etc.
- Safety equipment will include fire extinguishers and first aid kits as a minimum.

Service Principle 2B:

Services should promote good health and wellbeing to staff and service users.

Service users can expect that:

<p>If a service user has health and wellbeing issues, appropriate advice will be provided to them about what they should do.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Services will have information about health services such as primary health care, mental health and drug and alcohol rehabilitation that is readily available for staff to refer to.• Services will establish collaborative linkages with the range of primary and allied health services that service users might need to access.• Staff will support service users to access health services, particularly those that involve a complicated referral and admission process and long waiting lists.• Staff will attend professional development opportunities on health issues relevant to service users e.g. trauma inclusive care, contemporary therapeutic approaches.
<p>Health promotion will be part of routine practice throughout services.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Health promotion information will be visible throughout the organisation's service delivery sites.• Activities to promote wellbeing will be conducted within services.
<p>Food security is acknowledged as critically important to health and well-being and will be promoted and supported by services.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Services will ensure that service users have food security and where appropriate assist them to access facilities to safely store and cook food.• Food provided by services will be highly nutritious and cater to the specific needs of service users.
<p>Positive healthy behaviours will be modeled by service staff.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staff will not smoke where they might be seen by service users.

Service Principle 2C:

Accommodation for people experiencing homelessness must be safe, secure, healthy and respectful. Violence, threats, abuse or exploitation are not tolerated.

Protection from violence is a primary issue for women and children escaping family violence who experience homelessness, but an environment free from violence and intimidation is something all people experiencing or at risk of homelessness have a right to expect.

Service users can expect that:

Services will provide an environment free from violence or coercion.



- Services will not place service users in situations where there is a risk of threats or violence.
- Service staff and/or volunteers will not present or act in a threatening or coercive manner towards service users.
- Where violence has been an issue in a person becoming homeless, services will implement protective measures for the person escaping the violent behaviour.
- Services will refer all identified issues of violence, including family violence to the Tasmanian Police.
- Services will respond to individuals acting in a threatening or violent manner in a timely and appropriate manner.
- Services will regularly monitor a service user's sense of feeling protected and safe.

Services will have the capacity to deal with issues of violence, threats or exploitation.



- Violence of any kind is not acceptable in services. Staff will be trained to identify and prevent violence of all kinds in their settings.
- Services will ensure that they have rigorous protocols in place for both preventing and managing violence of all kinds.
- Staff will be trained in handling threatening or violent behaviours.

Service users have a responsibility to:

To take an active role in creating and maintaining a safe environment for themselves and others.



- Service users have a responsibility to help others to feel safe.

Act in a manner that is non-violent and non-aggressive.



- Services will have a no tolerance policy for violent and aggressive behaviour that all service users will be made aware of.

3. Privacy and Confidentiality

Service Principle 3A:

Services should respect the right to privacy of people being supported or assisted.

Privacy is embodied in legislation and this should be acknowledged and understood by all staff.

Service users can expect that:

Services will operate in ways that respect an individual's right to privacy.



- Service users will be given private sleeping arrangements wherever possible.
- Services will provide for the secure storage of personal belongings that can be accessed by the owner of the belongings whenever they want.
- Service users will be able to conduct external telephone conversations in private.
- Interviews will be conducted in private spaces.

Services will treat client information in strict confidence according to how confidentiality has been defined.



- The rules for how confidentiality is practiced will be explained clearly to service users and their specific and express consent obtained before disclosing any personal or confidential information to any third party.
- Confidentiality and sharing of information will be negotiated and formally agreed between services and will conform to the requirements of government funded program guidelines as well as relevant legislation e.g. Privacy Act 1998.
- Staff will be trained in the principles and practices of confidentiality and how it should be implemented.

Service Principle 3B:

Private information should be handled in accordance with the terms of privacy legislation, whether or not the situation is bound by that legislation.

Service users can expect that:

Services will be aware of privacy legislation and adhere to its requirements. ➡

- Policies and procedures on privacy will be communicated to service users in plain language.
- Service users will be made aware that they have a right of access to their case files.
- Services will assist service users if they want to access information held by another party where Freedom of Information processes are involved.
- The handling of client information will be considered in terms of Privacy Legislation, whether or not the situation is bound by that legislation.
- Staff will receive training in privacy law.

Service Principle 3C:

When information is shared between services, agreed terms of confidentiality should be observed and service users informed consent should be obtained, on each occasion.

Service users can expect that:

Services will explain requirements for informed consent for private information that may be shared with other services or passed onto government. ➡

- Service users should record their informed consent verbally or in writing and a record will be kept.
- Services will only share information internally on a need to know basis, thereby minimising the number of staff who have access to private information.

Services will have clear policies for handling private information in confidence. ➡

- Services will have clear policies for confidentiality.
- Where appropriate, services will have formalised protocols with other services about agreed principles and practices for sharing client information.

Services will store private information securely and observe secure protocols for handling private information electronically. ➡

- Services will hold files in secure locked cabinets or on electronic storage, appropriately safeguarded.

Service users have a responsibility to:

Respect the privacy of other service users, staff and volunteers.



- Service users should respect the private space of others.
- Service users should show respect to others in communal spaces.
- Service users should respect the private property of others.
- Service users should respect the privacy of information of other service users.

4. Equity and Fairness

Service Principle 4A:

Service users should be treated fairly according to law, policies and arrangements that are transparent and applied consistently taking into account the personal circumstances and needs of service users.

Services should have clear and understandable intake criteria, which contain a policy about the fair allocation of placements and accommodation to those people most in need. A service user should expect a fair and transparent allocation of accommodation policy and process that considers the particular needs of the service user.

Service users can expect that:

Services will explain clearly who is eligible for support, accommodation or assistance and how decisions about priority are made.



- Eligibility criteria will be clearly advertised on websites and printed material about services and programs should be available.
- Initial screening will focus on eligibility.
- Decisions based on priority-need will be explained in plain language e.g. why the decision has been made, and who is responsible.
- Information will be provided where required about what a service user can do if they are dissatisfied with a decision.

If a person approaching a service for assistance does not meet the eligibility criteria, the service will offer information and referral to a more appropriate service option.



- Services will have access to community service directories and a good knowledge of available options in the local area.

Service Principle 4B:

Irrespective of their needs or circumstances, service users should be able to enter the service system under policies that ensure equitable access that is free from direct or indirect discrimination.

Service users can expect that:

Services will, directly or indirectly, assist the achievement of appropriate long-term housing options or support to maintain tenancies at risk.	⇒	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Services will have links with public housing offices, social housing providers and/or local estate agents responsible for private rentals.• Support will in some cases involve accessing financial assistance to provide bonds or help manage rental arrears.
Services that provide assistance to young people and children will ensure that assistance is tailored to address their specific needs.	⇒	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Services will develop links with specialist youth and children's services.• Services should be aware of and raise appropriate issues of concern that affect the health and wellbeing of children and young people with the Commissioner for Children.
Services will ensure that the full range of facilities are physically accessible to people with disabilities.	⇒	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Services will ensure that people with disabilities are able to access services e.g. disabled access to premises, provision of accessible accommodation, access to adaptive technology to assist people with sensory disabilities etc.

Service Principle 4C:

Service users with particular needs should receive the appropriate level of support necessary for achieving equitable and sustainable outcomes.

People experiencing or at risk of homelessness comprise a diverse population with diverse needs. Some people have a high level of need while others have a much lower level. Some have multiple complex needs.

In terms of support and time spent, some people will require a lot more support than others to achieve the same outcome. Service provision should be needs-based but directed towards the same outcomes of a sustainable livelihood and safe and secure housing.

Service users can expect that:

Services will provide support that is focused on the needs of the individual or family group. ➡

- Services will develop case plans in consultation with service users that focus on the achievement of positive outcomes.

Services will provide them with the support they need to live in safe and secure housing. ➡

- Services will apply resources on a needs-basis so that service users can be adequately supported into safe and secure housing and an independent livelihood.

Service users have a responsibility to:

Be fair in their dealing with other service users, staff and volunteers. ➡

- Service users will be encouraged to deal with issues reasonably and to be fair in their dealings with other people.

Be aware of and meet their responsibilities as a tenant or resident. ➡

- Tenants have responsibilities to pay rent on time, maintain property at the same level as when they entered and to clean a property at the point of leaving.
- Tenants and residents should respect neighbours and the rights of neighbours.

5. Choice and Self-determination

Service Principle 5A:

Service users should be provided with information about the choices available to them.

People experiencing or at risk of homelessness should receive reasonable and accurate information and advice as well as assistance to consider all the available options so that they can make the best possible choices about their future. Services should also respect the fact that service users have the right to not accept advice or seek other advice, if that is what they wish to do.

Service users can expect that:

Services will provide timely and relevant information so that they can make informed choices and decisions.



- Services will keep up to date information in a readily available form.
- Services will provide support, information and encouragement for service users to develop the skills to advocate on their own behalf.
- Services will provide access to independent advocacy and/or guardianship to service users with impaired decision-making capacity.

Services will provide specialist support for those people who have limited decision-making capacity.



- Services will facilitate access to special needs support internally or from external sources.
- Information will be presented in a graphically visual form to help people with intellectual disabilities or low literacy or those who speak a language other than English.

Service Principle 5B:

Service users, in conjunction with their advocates or statutory carers where appropriate, should be encouraged and assisted to make informed decisions about their own situation.

Service users should be fully informed of the options they have and the implications of each option. Service users should be given the confidence that their needs will be responded to in a way that recognises and respects their choices, skills, and strengths, as well as their social and cultural backgrounds.

Service users can expect that:

Support and case work will be conducted in a way that maximizes their decision-making about themselves.	⇒	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staff will be trained in providing client-focused case work.• Services will provide the support necessary to assist people to become as independent as possible.
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Services will help them understand the risks and consequences of the various options and decisions they might make.	⇒	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Services have a 'duty of care' to service users as well as staff and volunteers.• Services will promote a culture of service user participation.
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Service Principle 5C:

Service users should have a voice and be consulted on the planning, development and evaluation of services.

Service users can expect that:

Their opinions and input will be sought during the regular operation of programs.	⇒	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Services will provide opportunities for service users to have a voice about the daily operation of services.• Service users will be given opportunities to participate in service development, planning and reviews. This could include contributions through formal feedback, membership of a reference group, a working party or committee/Board, as well as contributing to focus groups or being interviewed.
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Service users have a responsibility to:

Provide correct and up to date information about themselves.



- Helping service users to make choices during support or case work relies on accurate personal information.

6. Non-discrimination

Service Principle 6A:

Service users should be treated appropriately and with respect irrespective of their personal circumstances or characteristics including race, cultural background, sexual preferences orientation, gender identity, religion, disability, age and all other attributes protected under anti-discrimination law.

Services should be sensitive to identity, heritage, country and culture of origin, religion, sexual orientation/preference/identity and service user's life experiences.

Service users can expect that:

Service staff will be competent to meet the needs of all social and cultural groups likely to access the services they provide.



- Services will ensure that their services are accessible to all and are delivered without discrimination, either direct or through the indirect effect of policies or practices.
- Services will actively seek information from service users about their cultural needs in order to inform practices.
- Information will be provided in a range of languages about the service as well as other services.
- Access to interpreters, including Telephone Interpreter Services, Auslan interpreters, etc. will be available if required.
- Staff will undertake cultural awareness training.

Services will acknowledge, appreciate and be responsive to the uniqueness and difference of Aboriginal cultural.



- Services will be sensitive and inter-culturally competent to respond to the needs of Aboriginal service users.
- Where appropriate, assistance will be provided to access Aboriginal-specific services.
- Staff will undertake Aboriginal cultural awareness training.

Services will acknowledge, appreciate and be responsive to the needs of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Trans-sexual and Intersex (GLBTI) service users.



- Staff will be sensitive to GLBTI issues and trained to respond appropriately.
- Services will pay attention to providing accommodation for GLBTI service users free from discrimination.
- Services will seek advice from specialist GLBTI advocates and service providers when dealing with matters beyond the

experience and expertise of the service.

Service Principle 6B:

Service providers are to ensure that service users are able to access services regardless of their legal status.

Young people who have been in state care or juvenile justice systems are particularly vulnerable to experiencing homelessness. When these young people experience homelessness they may miss receiving the support they need because they fall between the two service systems – the child protection and homelessness support system. Young people in these circumstances need to be offered services and support free of discrimination.

Further, when individuals are or have been involved with the justice system (on bail, leaving detention or on community orders etc.) they should be able to access support and accommodation and other services and not experience discrimination.

Service users can expect that:

Services will support people experiencing or at risk of homelessness regardless of their legal status.



- Persons experiencing or at risk of homelessness who are involved with the justice system will receive assistance based on their needs.
- Young people, who are under 'statutory orders' will receive support just the same as other young people not under-statutory orders.
- Collaborative arrangements between service providers and state care and protection programs will be developed to support the interests and well being of the child or young person.
- Children will be supported as individuals with specific needs in their own right, as well as members of a family.
- People exiting prison or on community orders will be assisted without discrimination.

Service Principle 6C:

Service providers are to ensure that service users are able to lodge a complaint or appeal a decision and expect a meaningful response without fear of retribution.

If a service user believes that a decision that affects them is unfair they should be able to access a fair and independent process to resolve the matter. An issue, complaint or appeal should be addressed promptly, respectfully and fairly.

Service users can expect that:

<p>Services will provide information about how to raise issues, make a complaint or appeal a decision made by an agency.</p>	<p>⇒</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Services will assist service users to understand their rights, including both legal and administrative avenues to appeal or seek redress. This will include access to the services of the Ombudsman and the Office of the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner where relevant.• Service users will be supported to make their complaint even if it is about the service itself or due to matters outside the services control.
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<p>Services will accept feedback, even when critical, as an opportunity to improve the quality of the service delivery.</p>	<p>⇒</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Services will seek feedback from service users, both informally and through formal mechanisms and report back to service users in a transparent manner.
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Service users have a responsibility to:

<p>Respect the diversity of other service users and service providers including their race, cultural background, sexual orientation or gender identity, disability, religion, age and other personal characteristics.</p>	<p>⇒</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Service users should be expected to respect difference amongst other service users as well as service staff.
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<p>Accept final decisions which have been reached through due grievance processes.</p>	<p>⇒</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Service users and service providers should be expected to accept and abide by final decisions arrived at through due processes of reviewing issues or dealing with complaints.
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7. Social Inclusion

Service Principle 7A:

Assistance for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness should contribute to building positive human relationships and foster active participation.

People experiencing or at risk of homelessness are often isolated or have weak social support networks. Building positive relationships is an important way of building resilience.

Service users can expect that:

Services will help them to establish supportive social networks so they can participate actively in the community. ⇒

- Service interventions will be designed to prepare service users for independent living in the community.
- Services will encourage and assist people to join in community activities.

Services will foster positive relationships between service users and staff. ⇒

- Services will emphasise relationship-building as a central core of successful support and all case work
- Services will provide mentorship as well as formal case client relationships.

Service Principle 7B:

Wherever possible, people experiencing or at risk of homelessness should be supported to participate in activities within the broader community.

It is important that opportunities are provided for service users to access social, cultural and economic resources in the wider community and develop relationships that make life healthy, happy and productive.

Service users can expect that:

Services will encourage activities in which service users interact with people in the broader community not involved in providing services. ⇒

- Services will endeavour to provide opportunities for leisure and recreation where service users get to do something with a wider circle of people.
- Services will maintain a strong profile in the community as a means of advocating for the issue of homelessness.
- Services that are involved with children on a longer-term basis will develop

programs for the children that provide for healthy growth and development cognitively, emotionally and socially.

Services will participate in broader community events where staff as well as service users will be involved. ➡

- Services will participate in community events as a way of mobilising support and also as a way for service users to take part in community activities.

Service Principle 7C:

People experiencing or at risk of homelessness should be assisted and actively connected to opportunity-rich pathways to social participation and independent livelihoods.

People experiencing or at risk of homelessness often require a range of assistance and support in addition to accommodation. If a service does not, or is unable to provide certain services then information, advice and assistance about how to access the other required service(s) should be provided.

Young people experiencing homelessness are more likely to disengage from education early, as well as suffer exploitation and harm. For this group, support into employment pathways is particularly important, wherever possible, but this may need to be preceded by education and training or preparation for entry into the workforce. It should also be recognised that older people and those with particular needs relating to a personal characteristic or attribute may also benefit from access to education, training and assistance to re-engage with the workforce.

Service users can expect that:

Services will assist them with housing, income support, education and training and employment as well as personal support and accommodation. ➡

- Services will undertake a comprehensive needs assessment and a client-centred approach to identify options that are appropriate to the service users specific needs.
- Services will seek ways to provide a coordinated and more integrated approach across different service systems such as housing support, Job Services Australia providers, training and education options such as Polytechnic and Skills Institute, apprenticeships and traineeships.
- Where appropriate, services will support coordinated case planning using a client-centred approach across different service networks.

- Services will assist people to access education and training.

Services will provide support for service users to access and use the full spectrum of services and service systems.



- This might include but not be limited to Home and Community Care services, primary health care services, allied health services, mental health services, drug and alcohol services, justice systems, education, training and employment programs as well as aged care and palliative care.

Service users have a responsibility to:

Provide information that will assist services to identify suitable options and pathways that will support service users in achieving their personal goals.



- Services will promote the goal of social inclusion or sustainable life-styles and livelihoods throughout their services.
- Services will uphold positive and optimistic expectations for service users while at the same time providing the support required to reach these goals.