

SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

Position Paper



What is Supportive Housing?



Brisbane Common Ground

The Brisbane Common Ground building at 15 Hope Street, South Brisbane has communal spaces for tenants which include a rooftop garden, recreational room and library for the enjoyment of tenants.

Supportive housing provides permanent, affordable and safe housing intentionally linked to tailored support services designed to meet people's needs. Supportive housing is a proven approach for people who experience a range of complex issues including chronic homelessness, poverty, trauma, disability, mental health issues and problematic substance use. Supportive housing provides people with the stability to enable them to sustain their housing and thrive as members of a community.

Supportive Housing is a Housing First approach that prescribes safe and permanent housing as the first priority for people experiencing homelessness. Once housing is secured, a multidisciplinary team of support workers can work with tenants to address complex needs by providing tailored support and healthcare to improve quality of life.

Supportive Housing Principles

Quality supportive housing incorporates the following components:

Permanent, secure, affordable housing	People are housed first into subsidised, affordable housing with no time limit on residency where lease conditions are met.
Support services	Supports and healthcare are embedded and tailored to meet the individual needs of tenants. Participation in support services is not a condition to maintain the tenancy, it is offered on a voluntary basis.
Specialist tenancy management	The tenancy and property management provide intensive and supportive tenancy management to assist tenants to sustain their tenancies.
Separation	While the tenancy and property management and support services work closely together to maintain and support tenancies, the provision of housing and support is functionally separate. This ensures housing and support are not contingent upon one another and advocacy is provided for the tenants.
Social inclusion	Supportive housing seeks to create independence for individuals as well as a thriving community for tenants and neighbours.
Safety	Strategies to ensure safety for tenants, visitors and the community are provided as appropriate for the housing type. For example, on-site concierge service is provided 24/7 to ensure a welcoming but controlled access in a high-density site.

Types of Supportive Housing

- High-density single sites
- Low-medium density single sites
- Integrated models within existing social and affordable housing, or
- Scattered sites utilising public housing or private rental properties.

Types of Supportive Housing

The following are examples of supportive housing in Queensland.

Brisbane Common Ground

Brisbane Common Ground was established in 2012 and is Queensland's first purpose built supportive housing building utilising the Common Ground model from the United States.

Brisbane Common Ground is a 14-storey apartment building situated in Hope Street, South Brisbane and has been operating for more than 10 years.

Brisbane Common Ground provides 146 units of affordable studio and one-bedroom apartments for people who have experienced chronic homelessness and people on low incomes.

Thirty-three of the studio units have been designed to accommodate wheelchair access for people with impaired mobility.

Onsite facilities include 24/7 concierge service, a computer room, art studio, rooftop garden, communal lounge, library, and billiards room. Social responsibility, respect for others and their differences and appropriate community behaviour are fundamental requirements of a successful community at Brisbane Common Ground.

Common Ground Queensland is the tenancy and property manager of Brisbane Common Ground, and 24/7 on-site support services are provided to tenants by Micah Projects.

Supportive Housing for Families / Keeping Families Together

Supportive Housing for Families operates in Brisbane and aims to enable families on extremely low- incomes to exit homelessness, access and sustain affordable housing and disengage/avoid engagement with Queensland's child safety system. This scattered site model provides housing for 20 families with young children and has operated since 2019.

Common Ground Queensland headleases properties across Brisbane from the private rental market and subleases the properties to participating families. Micah Projects provides a range of tailored intensive support services to families, working closely with them to identify their goals and support needs.

The Evidence

Supportive housing is internationally and nationally proven as a strategy to end homelessness. Due to the effectiveness of the model, it has been replicated globally with successful supportive housing programs in the USA, Europe, New Zealand and Canada as well as in most Australian states. An independent evaluation undertaken in 2015 by The University of Queensland found that Brisbane Common Ground's supportive housing model in South Brisbane, successfully assists people with chronic experiences of homelessness make immediate exits from homelessness without the need for interventions to prepare them for housing.

Tenants of Brisbane Common Ground overwhelmingly reported high rates of satisfaction with multiple dimensions of their housing. Many tenants reported that their physical and mental health had improved since moving to Brisbane Common Ground and reported improvements in access to health care. Most tenants reported improvements in satisfaction with life and mental wellbeing over a 12-month period. [1]

A recent quantitative analyses of 10 years of data at Brisbane Common Ground has shown that people with chronic experiences of homelessness can sustain housing in a supportive housing environment.

The data reveals that of the 417 tenants have called Brisbane Common Ground their home since opening in 2012, 37 have remained housed for ten years and the average duration of ongoing tenancies at Brisbane Common Ground is nearly six years. Of the 417 tenants who have lived at Brisbane Common Ground, 312 (75%) have experienced a positive tenancy outcome and are either still housed or have left voluntarily to pursue other opportunities. [2]

Cost-effectiveness

Providing people with appropriate housing and supports not only helps to reduce and prevent homelessness, but also reduces unnecessary hospital admissions and involvement with the criminal justice and other systems.

For people who experience chronic homelessness and exhibit high use of health, criminal justice and homelessness services, a tenancy at Brisbane Common Ground is associated with a reduction in service use that constitutes a cost offset of \$13,100 per person per year.

[1] Parsell, C., Petersen, M., Moutou, O., Culhane, D., Lucio, E. and Dick, A. (2015). Brisbane Common Ground evaluation: final report. Institute for Social Research, University of Queensland, Brisbane, accessed 18 November 2022, <https://issr.uq.edu.au/files/4003/BrisbaneCommonGroundFinalReport.pdf>.

[2] Parsell, C., Perales, F., Kuskoff, E., Stambe, R. and Plage, S. (2023). Brisbane Common Ground: Analyses of Tenancy Sustainment and Exits. School of Social Science The University of Queensland, Brisbane.