

**SETS Community of Practice**  
**Communique: Health and Housing Service Linkages Subgroup Meeting**  
**Videoconference – 29 November 2022**

On 29 November 2022, SETSCoP held a Health and Housing Service Linkages subgroup meeting. The focus of this group is to discuss best practice strategies and discuss trends and issues identified through the delivery of health and housing support to SETS clients. Attendees comprise SETSCoP members from around Australia with an interest in health and housing related supports for refugees and migrants.

### **Resource Development**

Service providers discussed the key strategies used and confirmed strategies discussed in previous meetings, in order to develop a resource to be distributed to SETSCoP members called “Tips and Tricks for Supporting SETS Clients into Housing”. Key points confirmed were:

- Encourage clients to complete ‘Rental ready training’: Ensure that training and information sessions include rights and responsibilities for tenants. Ensure that the training and information sessions is delivered in language that is understood by clients.
- Provide information sessions to clients on what case workers can / cannot do. Invite state tenants’ associations (or similar bodies) to the sessions for clients to meet.
- Include demonstrations on how to apply for rental properties online in information sessions for clients, ensure they are aware of documents required.
- Deliver financial management information sessions to support ongoing maintenance of a lease and include activities that assist clients to identify affordable and sustainable accommodation.
- Refer clients to housing services who you have built a good relationship with, when required.
- Present complex cases to cross-agency Care Coordination meetings (if they occur in the area)
- Connect clients to the Department of Housing private rental specialists.
- Connect clients to ethno-specific organisations who have connections to real estate agencies.
- Ask a real estate agent to train SETS staff in the most effective way to work with them.
- Foster good relationships with real estate agencies and provide information to real estate agents on the most effective way to get help from SETS staff.
- Provide a letter of support to clients, if you know the clients are able to sustain a tenancy.
- Link elderly people or people with a disability into rent subsidy programmes.
- Support real estate agents on how to use interpreter services (which are usually free)
- Enter some clients into the Tenancy Awards.
- Host events where real estates and landlords can come and learn about client group.

### **Future resource requests from SETSCoP for 2023**

Service providers were asked for requests and suggestions for the types of resources or webinars they would like to participate in as part of the SETSCoP over the next 12-month period.

Service providers requested that housing and health are separated as subgroups. Domestic and Family Violence also has nuanced and separate impacts on housing and vice versa, housing with DFV. This may require a separate discussion or action group.

A suggestion was made to create an award for inclusive businesses, in particular real estate agents. The aim would be to encourage real estate agents to support migrant and refugee clients through public recognition of successful partnerships.

Service providers requested for a resource, such as a flow chart, which explains the housing options for clients and the processes required to be followed for each option, including government or community housing or private rental housing. There was also a request for a resource which supports clients to understand the online application process.

Webinar requests included health webinars on alcohol and drugs abuse in settlement, including support available for problem-alcohol use. Notes were made that drug and alcohol abuse is often linked to trauma and mental health issues, as well as the cultural stigma associated with the issue which often prevents clients and communities seeking support.

### **Current Issues**

Housing challenges continue to increase, due to **increasing rental prices**. There are increasing numbers of clients seeking houses in the market at prices which exclude them from the application eligibility. This is particularly a concern for clients who are living on income payments from Centrelink. There are almost no houses that these clients are able to apply for that meet their budget.

Previously, clients could apply for houses through one portal covering Multiple real estate agencies. This has changed and case workers are spending much more time with clients supporting them to apply on different portals.

Many clients continue to request for support from SETS providers to act as a middleman between them and their landlord or real estate agent. As clients get closer to their exit from SETS eligibility this is a concern. The **resistance of real estate agents to use language support**, and the free access to The Interpreter Service (TIS), makes it very difficult for clients.

Providers reported that previously clients were quite stable before in their houses, but have recently been issued notices to vacate because they can no longer afford rent. Many then move in with friends / family and overcrowd existing public housing stock or rental. This means they **enter secondary homelessness**, couch surfing with friends and other community members, rather than primary homelessness. This is not always captured in the data on homelessness. Some local housing services are no longer accepting sole income job keeper clients because they are not eligible due to no affordable rental stock.

### **Shared Resources**

Free interpreter information for real estates: <https://www.tisnational.gov.au/or/Agencies/Charges-and-free-services/About-the-Free-Interpreting-Service/Free-Interpreting-Service-for-real-estate-agencies>