

Communique

Overview:

- The SETSCoP Housing, Cost of Living & Financial Capacity Subgroup will meet three times in 2023.
- The group discussed the challenges that SETS providers are experiencing to assist clients to find housing amidst the current housing crisis and rising cost of living, the complexities of working with real estate agencies and private landlords and the need to continue working on a coordination model to assist people who are in crisis to access help and advocating for further housing alternatives to be explored.

Discussion points:

- SETS providers discussed the following challenges for clients:
 - Limited digital literacy and understanding how the application process for a rental property works.
 - SETS clients competing with people who have rental history and stable and higher incomes.
 - SETS providers as well as clients perceive underlying discrimination in rental housing. Even clients with full-time employment and stable income suffer from dozens of rejections, which make people feel they are being excluded based on the colour of their skin or their cultural background.
 - Natural disasters such as regional flooding have damaged houses and exacerbated shortages (i.e., Shepparton).
 - There are examples of properties becoming increasingly overcrowded due to difficulties in securing rental properties or increasing rent demands.
 - Many real estate agents do not know or refuse to use free interpreters.
 - Regional SETS providers worry that they sometimes have to refer clients to metropolitan areas due to extreme housing shortages in their areas. Migration to cities represent a great loss for regional areas and has negative long-term impacts for the economy and community.
 - SETS providers at capacity and not always able to assist clients with each rental application or take clients to inspections.
- Settlement practitioners shared their experiences about building networks of private landlords who have positive experiences renting to refugees and migrants, complementing networks of real estate agents.
- SETS providers discussed the importance of clients maintaining a good relationship with real estate agents and landlords.
- A SETS provider commented on the need to work on a coordination model to assist people who are in crisis to access help, the need to create a network for providers to discuss complex cases and advocate for further alternatives to be explored in terms of finding spaces that could be used for housing.
- A SETS provider noted that beyond renting, it is important to prepare clients for future home purchases and to build people's skills so that they can resolve issues on their own and become independent.
- A SETS provider commented on the importance to connect with local service networks to build knowledge on what SETS providers can and cannot provide regarding housing and homeless services.
- A SETS provider commented on how many real estate agencies approach SETS providers for assistance, but this relationship is not reciprocal as when SETS providers need their help the agencies are not collaborative. When SETS providers provide help to real estate agencies, they are investing time and resources and it's important to make agencies aware of this.
- SETS providers shared their experiences in delivering budgeting sessions, a rental ready training, and a course that involved community leaders providing support letters to clients that did not have rental history or had recently arrived in Australia.



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Outcomes:

- Network for SETS providers to discuss complex cases.
- Advocacy for migrant and refugee perspectives in the wider housing crisis.

Next meeting: Scheduled for 26 July 2023 (2:00pm – 3:30pm AEST).

Attendees (15 SETS):

Nicholas Ross (SPG)

Maria Rosales (SPG)

Marita (Migration Information Centre)

Karen (North Coast Settlement Services – Coffs Harbour)

Maria (Migrant Resource Centre North)

So (Southeast Community Links)

Sarah (MiCare)

Carmen (Assyrian Australian Association)

Katie (CatholicCare)

Diana (SVDP QLD)

Noura (AMCHR)

Say Nay (LCMS)

Rallian (Wyndham Community Aid Education Centre)

Ruth (Multicultural Australia)

Fatima (Shepparton)

Monsin (Uniting)

Lowilla (Uniting)

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