

Meeting Summary Communique

DISCUSSION: Issues

- Though housing is a national crisis felt across Australia, SETS clients are experiencing a unique set of challenges:
 - Discrimination. Providers are reporting clients experiencing discrimination from real estate agents. Applications are not even being looked at. A reported case: A real estate agent contacted the SETS provider stating they would not be processing applications from refugees.
 - Digital literacy/access. Most application processes (including at the inspection stage) are now online - clients with low digital literacy or lack access to adequate devices are greatly disadvantaged.
 - Language barrier. Navigating real estate jargon, renters' rights, maintenance requests, and correspondence with real estate agents/landlords is another challenge. Real estate agents rarely use the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National), despite it being a free service for real estate.
 - Homelessness/crisis accommodation. Homelessness support is only available for people who are already homeless and not those at risk or vulnerable to becoming homeless. Crisis housing in some cases is only available for up to three days due to demand.
 - Clients may be unfamiliar with the private rental market.
- In cases where clients should refer real estate agents to proper authorities of malpractice – issues such as unfamiliarity with renters' rights, legal systems, language proficiency and capacity for self-advocacy are barriers. This also further allows real estate agents to continue taking advantage.
- SETS providers have reported that some real agents view them (providers) as disrupters due to the support they provide clients - assisting and advocating in rental application processes.
- Housing quality and maintenance – housing conditions may not meet minimum liveability standards and maintenance requests are not being met promptly.

DISCUSSION: Models & Approaches

- Guideline for real estate sector – The real estate sector has high turnover, in some cases, the agents themselves lack proper knowledge of rights and may mislead clients or mispractice.
- Recognise good practice in real estate – awards for real estate agents who demonstrate good practice when working with settlement services.
- The use of interpreters among real estate agents is extremely low. This is an opportunity for collaboration across services, raising awareness of free service to real estate agents and regulatory bodies.
- Housing roundtable forum – collaborative approach. Be sure to include the real estate sector.

CONTRIBUTION: Planned Settlement Peak Body Research & Policy Area (2024-2025)

- Models & Approaches Report –
 - Table and advocate in the report: the housing crisis.
 - What can be done to ameliorate the crisis in the context of settlement? National and global models and successful approaches amidst structural challenges.
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Attendees (15 Attendees / 13 SETS providers):

Nick Ross (Social Policy Group - SETSCoP Secretariat)

Chai Oonnakat (Social Policy Group – SETSCoP)

Carmen (Assyrian Australian Association, NSW)

Diana (St Vincent de Paul, QLD)

Fatima (Uniting, VIC)

Hiba (Whittlesea CC, VIC)

Inas (Arabic Welfare, VIC)

Kaveh (MultiLink, QLD)

Kimberly (Jesuit Social Services, VIC)

Mercy (SECL, VIC)

Mohsen (Uniting, VIC)

Sandra (Chaldean League, NSW)

Sarah (MiCare, VIC)

Sky (SSI, NSW)

Soe (SECL, VIC)

Vincent (Chinese Community Social Services, VIC)

Zac (SSI, QLD)