



## Linking Tenants to Employment, Training and Education

### Practice Report

Report prepared by NSW  
Federation of Housing  
Associations

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Housing Associations **inc**

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# Background

## About the Federation

The NSW Federation of Housing Associations (the Federation) is the industry peak body for community housing providers in NSW. Community housing providers (CHPs) are not for profit organisations whose principal business is the management and development of long-term rental housing for very low to moderate income households. The Federation's core members manage over 38,000 tenancies<sup>1</sup>, which constitute the vast majority of community housing in NSW.

The Federation provides advice to members, government and potential partners on the best ways to expand the industry's activities and meet the highest standards of service to tenants, applicants and communities. The organisation is the leading provider of a wide range of good practice information and resourcing to support members' Boards, management, staff and tenants. The Federation is also a Registered Training Organisation and the leading provider of social housing training in Australia. Through its Centre for Training in Social Housing, the Federation delivers both accredited training, such as formal qualifications in social housing management, and tailored workshops in response to members' needs. In addition, the organisation anticipates and supports members' directions and aspirations with effective research, policy development and analysis on key issues affecting the development of the industry, and strategies to support the changing business of the industry.

## NSW Community Housing Industry Development Strategy

This project is part of the NSW Community Housing Industry Development Strategy (IDS). The IDS is a joint initiative of the NSW Department of Family and Community Services (FACS) and the NSW Federation of Housing Associations. The aim of the Industry Development Strategy is to support the industry to respond to the challenges and opportunities of the emerging environment. The Strategy is being implemented through a three year program of projects.

The project objectives as identified in the project plan were to:

- Identify the range of activities providers undertake or broker to connect tenants/clients to employment, education, training and other employment-related opportunities
- Identify the cost of these activities, and existing/potential sources of funding
- Identify any evaluations undertaken, and the results of these
- Identify the critical success factors, barriers, risks and disincentives in connecting tenants to employment
- Build stakeholders' awareness of industry activity and achievements in this area

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<sup>1</sup> NSW Registrar of Community Housing (2014) Annual Statement of Performance ASOP

# Executive summary

While the provision of employment services is outside community housing providers' core business, a significant proportion of CHPs are taking an active role in assisting their tenants into employment. This activity has been taking place for many years, long before shifts in public policy such as Future Directions which has placed a renewed emphasis on improving tenant outcomes. This project identifies ways that CHPs are linking their tenants to employment and training pathways and enhancing their employment opportunities.

An audit of 20 NSW CHPs found that all providers engaged in some type of activity to promote education, training and employment among tenants. The main activities identified were:

- Offering education bursaries or scholarships and providing volunteer work placements (identified by 50% of providers in the sample)
- Providing IT equipment or access to IT equipment, directly supporting social enterprise in the local community or employing staff with specific responsibility for tenant employment and training (identified almost a third of providers in the sample), and
- Providing financial assistance to help tenants transition to work (identified by a quarter of providers in the sample)

These figures demonstrate that CHPs are using their own resources to provide a range of opportunities and pathways to education, training and employment. Almost 40 case studies were collected from 13 different CHPs covering areas such as:

- Financial literacy education
- Employment incentive schemes
- Courses linked to specific employment opportunities
- Provision of employment related accommodation
- Employment ready initiatives
- Social procurement models through the repairs and maintenance service and development projects that have a strong emphasis on training and/or employment.

There is considerable diversity in the range and scope of activities being pursued to connect work-capable tenants with employment. Services are often delivered in partnership with local community organisations and other specialist providers as a way to maximise access and pathways to opportunities. Collaboration and flexibility were the key themes throughout the case studies and the challenge of addressing long-term unemployment is one that no single organisation can address alone. Better linkages and collaboration with job service networks will be crucial to assist long-term unemployed tenants back into the labour market. At present, partnerships between CHPs and established Commonwealth funded Employment Service Providers are fragmented and there was little evidence in compiling this report of strategic partnership-working between CHPs and established Commonwealth funded Employment Service Providers. More work needs to be done to determine which programs are effective and how greater partnerships can be forged.

Key to the Future Directions for Social Housing in NSW<sup>2</sup> strategy is to increase successful transitions out of social housing by 5 per cent. To achieve this, CHPs will need to access additional resources to be able to enhance tenant employability and capacity to move to an alternative tenure. An approach will be to establish the cost to the sector in delivering the additional services to achieve the 5 per cent target. At present it is unclear how additional services can or should be funded, but it is clear that without additional resources, the

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<sup>2</sup> NSW Government (2016) Future Directions for Social Housing in NSW

ability of the sector to deliver good quality housing services will be compromised, including costs in terms of diverting resources from borrowing for new supply.

For many CHPs, particularly smaller providers, promoting employment has been a goal rather than a core social housing management activity. It is clear from Future Directions that the Government has identified employment outcomes to be a fundamental service objective and requires a new focus for social housing providers for the future.

# Introduction

Enhancing tenants' welfare and quality of life is fundamentally a non-core housing service, however, it is becoming increasingly important as a response to significant shifts in public policy such as Future Directions for Social Housing. CHPs are allocating funding and resources to assisting work-capable, jobless tenants to reconnect with employment.

Based on a recent housing management expenditure framework developed by AHURI<sup>3</sup>, the Federation has collected the tenancy management costs associated with supporting communities of tenants, as a contribution to non-shelter outcomes. This includes supporting tenants to engage with employment or training, community development and place making initiatives, and supporting tenants to move through the housing spectrum to affordable housing, private rented accommodation or home ownership. The data for the 2014/15 financial year<sup>4</sup> calculated that additional tenant and community services expenditure accounted for 9 per cent of overall management expenditure, which is consistent with the data collected through AHURI's 'Assessing management costs and tenant outcomes in social housing' research<sup>5</sup>.

The current expenditure data highlights that this fundamental non-core social housing management activity is an area of increasing importance among CHPs. Therefore this report aims to look more closely into what activities CHPs are undertaking to support tenants to seek employment and training opportunities. It also aims to establish best practice in the sector, supporting Government policies on tackling entrenched unemployment and using the social housing system to support these policies through facilitating access to opportunity.

The funding of these initiatives is primarily being generated through rental income. Many case studies presented in this report are delivered in partnership with local community based organisations which allows CHPs to address identified gaps in funding. Data regarding the funding of these activities was difficult to access, however where funding sources have been disclosed these have been presented alongside each case study. It is clear that funding for these activities is limited as it falls outside core housing management services. Despite this, providers are funding at least the initial stages of activities to address unemployment as they recognise the benefits of wider tenant outcomes.

Following Future Directions and other Government initiatives such as Communities Plus, there has been a change to the approach to quantitative and qualitative evaluations, shifting the focus from reporting outputs to measuring outcomes and social impact. As more outcomes data is collected, further work can be carried out to evaluate which programs deliver the best tenant outcomes and where service improvements can be made.

The report focuses primarily on NSW, with some interstate/international input included in the literature review and case studies. The project provides the evidence base for these activities and reports on case studies and other material to encourage innovation, facilitate effective policy settings, and promote the replication of good practice across providers.

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<sup>3</sup> Pawson, H., Milligan, V., Liu, E., Phibbs, P. and Rowley, S (2015) Assessing management costs and tenant outcomes in social housing: recommended methods and future directions. AHURI Final Report No.257

<sup>4</sup> Data collected by the NSW Federation of Housing Associations and available through House Keys benchmarking platform

<sup>5</sup> Pawson, H., Milligan, V., Liu, E., Phibbs, P. and Rowley, S (2015) Assessing management costs and tenant outcomes in social housing: recommended methods and future directions. AHURI Final Report No.257

# Why should CHPs get involved in employment outcomes?

The fundamental core housing management objectives of maximising rental income and minimising rent arrears, minimising re-let times, reducing vacant properties and protecting the asset base do not facilitate employment support. However, a growing number of “housing plus” activities are being undertaken by the sector which are leading to improved tenant outcomes.

The National Regulatory System for Community Housing (NRSCH) sets performance outcomes which include that CHPs work with others to maximise positive economic and social outcomes for tenants and the community. These regulations may apply in circumstances where Tier 1 and 2 providers are involved in place renewal relevant to their community housing activities. However, in addition to these regulatory requirements, CHPs have a collective vision to break the cycle of disadvantage and deliver improved social outcomes for tenants. A strong message from the sector focus group was that;

“Community housing providers have a role to assist those able to transition out of social housing”

Future Directions for Social Housing in NSW<sup>6</sup> sets out the NSW Government's vision for social housing over the next 10 years. The strategy, which looks at the whole continuum of social housing, aims to drive better outcomes for tenants including helping those who are able to transition out of social housing. Future Directions strengthens the importance of much of the work already being undertaken by the community housing sector and will act as a driver to further activity in this area and increase positive outcomes.

Future Directions is underpinned by three strategic priorities:

- More social housing
- More opportunities, support and incentives to avoid and/or leave social housing
- A better social housing experience

Under Future Directions there are expectations and accountability for new and existing residents who are identified as able to transition out of social housing. Housing assistance will be a pathway to independence and an enabler of improved social and economic participation. Future Directions recognises that subsidised housing has the potential to entrench disadvantage and that after accessing a social housing tenancy, remaining eligible for social housing can be a disincentive to improving skills and gaining work. As a result, the strategy aims to remove disincentives for tenants to obtain employment and ultimately increase successful transitions out of social housing by 5 per cent.

An additional NSW Government initiative in Future Directions is Communities Plus. Communities Plus will be an ongoing program that redevelops NSW Land and Housing Corporation sites to be transformed into sustainable mixed communities. New partnerships with private, non-government and community housing sectors will see many of the new social housing units being used as a base for pilot programs that link housing assistance to education, training and local employment opportunities.

The NSW Social Housing Discussion Paper<sup>7</sup> points out that the average tenure in social housing is long and increasing, with more than 50 per cent of tenants living in public housing for 10 years or more. For the social housing system to be sustainable at current levels of investment, tenure cannot be for the term of a tenant's life. However, social housing tenants report lower educational achievement, high levels of unemployment,

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<sup>6</sup> NSW Government (2016) Future Directions for Social Housing in NSW

<sup>7</sup> NSW Government (2014) Social Housing in NSW: A discussion paper for input and comment

poorer health and higher rates of mental illness than the NSW average<sup>8</sup>. These factors highlight the complexity of issues surrounding many community housing tenants and the challenge faced by CHPs to achieve the 5 per cent target of successful social housing exits.

A central objective of the Australian Government's welfare reform program<sup>9</sup> is to increase workforce participation as it is recognised that a properly functioning community and economy relies on its labour force. CHPs are well positioned to assist the Government to achieve this objective. Evidence from the UK suggests that working with and through trusted and credible organisations based in the community, such as social landlords, is one of the more effective ways of promoting employment and enterprise within deprived areas<sup>10</sup>.

It is worth noting that providing housing assistance alone has little impact (either negative or positive) on employment outcomes<sup>11</sup>. A 2011 study into whether the employment outcomes of Australian labour market programme participants vary according to whether they receive housing assistance found that social housing in itself does not increase the likelihood of employment. Therefore, interventions and services that meet residents' needs are key to having a positive effect on employment outcomes.

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<sup>8</sup> Legg, S. and Webber, A. (2013) Over-representation of Crime in Public Housing, Department of Attorney General and Justice.

<sup>9</sup> McClure, P. Aird, W. and Sinclair, S. "A New System for Better Employment and Social Outcomes – Report of the Reference Group on Welfare Reform to the Minister for Social Services" (Department of Social Services, 2015)

<sup>10</sup> Meadows, P. (2008) Local initiatives to help workless people find and keep paid work. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation

<sup>11</sup> Feeny, S., Ong, R., Spong, H. and Wood, G. (2011) 'The impact of housing assistance on the employment outcomes of labour market programme participants in Australia', *Urban Studies: an international journal for research in urban studies*, vol. 49, no. 4, pp. 821-844

# Overcoming barriers to work

Research suggests that barriers to employment are varied but include:

- A need for more education, training or work experience
- Concern over withdrawal of benefit payments or increase in rent
- Insecure and unstable employment conditions
- Low levels of affordable housing
- Lack of secure tenure in the private rental market

The 2014 National Social Housing Survey (NSHS)<sup>12</sup> reported that the main barrier to employment for social housing tenants who are of working age but who are unemployed is a need for more education, training or work experience. This is also a key message in a recent UK based report 'Delivering Change: What Housing Associations can tell us about employment and skills'<sup>13</sup>.

The NSHS survey also found that financial disincentives such as withdrawal of payments, subsidies and increase in costs, and perceived loss of social housing eligibility all act as significant barriers to employment. Social housing tenants are more likely to limit their own employment and earnings to retain social housing eligibility. A study commissioned by Pacific Link Housing<sup>14</sup> to better understand the barriers that may prevent or dissuade their tenants from taking on paid work, found that most tenants were aware of the interaction between of various rules on earned income and

“...if the return from working is marginal, and employment leads to either a real or feared loss of eligibility for social housing, some tenants may reasonably choose not to pursue employment, not to take on extra hours if they are working and ensure social housing eligibility is maintained.”

This trend was also identified by AHURI in 2014<sup>15</sup>, reporting when in-work incomes are insufficient to encourage people to take up paid work and is linked to the loss of rent subsidy it can present an unemployment trap. AHURI research shows that if the link between rents and assessable income was removed, one quarter of tenants would avoid the unemployment trap.

Disincentives to work impact on more than social housing eligibility. The current economic climate of casual and contract employment leads to insecurity and unsustainable employment. This coupled with low levels of affordable housing availability and lack of security of tenure in the private market means that tenants who lose their employment status will have to re-join the 59,500 approved applicants on the NSW Housing Register<sup>16</sup>. In addition to this, relative to affordability, the quality of community housing properties exceeds what could be obtained in the private market.

At a policy level, employment outcomes for social housing tenants can be improved by removing the work disincentives, in particular policies which strongly discourage tenants from increasing their incomes beyond a

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<sup>12</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2015) National Social Housing Survey: detailed results 2014. Cat. no. HOU 278. Canberra: AIHW

<sup>13</sup> Williams, M. (2015) Delivering change What Housing Associations can tell us about employment and skills. London: Centre for Cities

<sup>14</sup> Darcy, M. and Blunden, H. (2015) Determining the Financial Barriers moving from Welfare to Work for Pacific Link Housing Ltd. Sydney, UWS Urban Research Centre

<sup>15</sup> Lovering, M. (2014) Public housing rules limit employment, AHURI Evidence Review 051, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute

<sup>16</sup> FACS website, media release dated 23 October 2014 (accessed October 2014)

low level. The NSW Government has committed to removing work disincentives in Future Directions for Social Housing which includes an independent review of different social and affordable housing rent models.

Tenants looking for work, whatever their age, background or housing situation need to be treated as individuals. One size does not fit all when it comes to linking tenants to employment, training and education opportunities. We need to be careful and not make the assumption that what will work in one community will necessarily work in another, even if the two communities share certain social, political or cultural characteristics<sup>17</sup>. CHPs that first identify disadvantaged groups of tenants are then able to offer targeted support that meets local needs. This also involves working with unemployed individuals to develop and co-design training and employment programs to help ensure programs address the specific needs of the target group.

Removing disincentives to work for community housing tenants is only part of the solution. It needs to be recognised that job availability, including what types of jobs are available, will play a key role in determining whether unemployed individuals find employment opportunities. Enhancing tenants' employability will only get them so far and their capacity to move to an alternative tenure will be heavily dependent on their ability to find and sustain paid work. A recent report by Anglicare Australia<sup>18</sup> called Positions Vacant? When The Jobs Aren't There, identified two areas of concern. Firstly, the report showed a total of 732,000 Australians were registered as unemployed and an average 168,896 jobs are advertised each month. This means that there was just one advertised position for every four people who were unemployed. A second concern is that only 13 per cent of all advertised jobs were at the entry level with more than 37 per cent jobs now requiring a bachelor degree or higher qualification.

## Summary and recommendations

- Low skills are a major barrier to employment and adult skills interventions are critical
- Better information for tenants about other tenures available and how they can access them
- More flexibility in the current housing system to support the housing continuum
- More affordable housing
- Increased security of tenure for private renters
- Need to deliver a local and personalised service for individuals
- More work needs to be done at a Government level to grow the jobs market and invest in people so they can develop the skills and experience they need

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<sup>17</sup> Evans, M. (2010) New directions in the study of policy transfer. Oxford, Routledge / Taylor and Francis

<sup>18</sup> Anglicare Australia (2016) Positions Vacant? When the Jobs Aren't There. State of the Family Report 2016

# Homelessness and employment

The relationship between unemployment and homelessness is complex, as homelessness is a multi-dimensional problem<sup>19</sup>. A number of different personal and social factors can contribute towards a person becoming homeless<sup>20</sup>. This can include individual factors such as; poor physical and mental health, drug or alcohol addiction; relationship breakdown; domestic and family violence; issues around family background such as childhood abuse or other trauma; lack of qualifications; or having an institutional background such as having been in care, the armed forces, or in prison.

These factors are often interrelated with more than one factor contributing to a person being or becoming homeless<sup>21</sup> and often these underlying issues need to be addressed before employment can be considered. It is also important to recognise that whilst these issues may act as significant barriers to employment for some individuals, for others they may only limit the type of employment, education or training that is appropriate.

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation report *Tackling homelessness and exclusion: understanding complex lives*<sup>22</sup>, discusses the interaction between homelessness and other support needs. It reinforces that there is an overlap between homelessness, mental health problems, drug and alcohol dependency and experience of institutions such as prisons. In complex cases, at best, services work in parallel, without properly addressing the acute overlap of needs; at worst they work in conflict with one another.

New innovative methods of dealing with chronic homeless have shown that certain support models can be successful in linking homeless clients to employment, training and education. These include:

- The 'Housing First' approach which adopts the policy that permanent housing is the first step and only then can other issues which contribute to an individual's homelessness status can be addressed<sup>23</sup>. This can only be achieved through coordinated support from multiple service delivery partners at a local level.
- The 'Youth Pathways Program' which is an integrated and place-based early intervention program which aims to present pathways to social housing through helping clients engage in education, training and employment. A key objective is to support young people within the family before conflict leads to Homelessness.

In order to prevent homelessness, specialist homelessness services (SHS) and social housing providers need to provide wraparound services for clients to address their range of needs. This means that most programs are delivered by a partnership of service providers including collaborative case management.

A report on Homelessness and Employment in NSW by Homelessness NSW<sup>24</sup> identified four distinct but connected pathways for job seekers to find employment opportunities and potentially reduce their risk of homelessness, or find the stability and security necessary to exit homelessness; Job Services Australia providers (now Jobactive); vocational education and training; social enterprises; and social procurement. These pathways are explored in more detail in the later section 'Going forward'.

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<sup>19</sup> Steen, A., Mackenzie, D. and McCormack, D. (2012) *Homelessness and unemployment: understanding the connection and breaking the cycle*, Swinburne University

<sup>20</sup> Morris, A., Judd, B. and Kavanagh, K. (2005), *Marginality amidst plenty: pathways into homelessness for older Australians*. Australian Journal of Social Issues, 40, 2, 241–250.

<sup>21</sup> Shlay, A.B. (1994), *Running on empty: Monitoring the lives and circumstances of formerly homeless families with children*, Journal of social distress and the homeless, 3, 2, 135 -162.

<sup>22</sup> McDonagh, T. (2011) *Tackling homelessness and exclusion: Understanding complex lives*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation

<sup>23</sup> Mason, C & Grimbeek, P 2013, *A Housing First approach to homelessness in Brisbane: Sustaining tenancies and the cost effectiveness of support services*, Micah Projects Inc,

<sup>24</sup> Unpublished report, 2015, available from Homelessness NSW

Support services play a key role in supporting clients as well as linking clients to job pathways. The potential for positive employment outcomes for the client is greatly improved with interagency collaboration and joined up case management, particularly with employment service providers.

It is important to recognise that many individuals experiencing homelessness do have jobs and that it is the lack of affordable housing, not lack of employment, which is the primary reason for their homelessness. It is estimated that around 44% of low-income households experience affordability issues due to rental stress (paying more than 30% of their gross income on rent)<sup>25</sup> which places them at constant risk of homelessness.

## **Summary and recommendations**

- To achieve real outcomes for homeless people, SHS and CHPs need to make use of a wide range of links and referrals outside of their service
- Linkages need to be identified, formalised and coordinated
- Employment service providers should be involved in collaborative case management
- Often an individual's employment situation cannot be supported without first addressing the underlying causes of their homelessness

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<sup>25</sup> ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics) (2013) Housing and occupancy costs, 2011–12. ABS. Cat no. 4130.0. Canberra: ABS

# Partnership working

CHPs cannot deliver employment opportunities as silos and need to work in partnership to boost the opportunities for pathways to independence and build tenant's capacity to move into or sustain their tenancy in the private market. Often the challenge of addressing long-term unemployment is complex and outside the primary role of the CHP.

Strong local networks are vital in creating better outcomes for tenants and addressing complex needs. CHPs that are looking to improve client outcomes need to ensure they can deliver a local and personalised service for individuals. Partnership-working is the key to providing a holistic service which offers a more effective and more integrated local service system. Through partnership working, CHPs can also act as a catalyst to address gaps in funding and/or failures in other programs to meet either the needs of the organisation or their tenants.

Partnerships need formal service level agreements and protocols to govern and lead how they work together. In the case of individual projects, partners will vary according to the nature of the project and the geographic location. However typical partners in social housing employment initiatives include:

- Other social landlords
- Local authorities
- Social enterprises
- Jobactive providers
- Contractors and suppliers
- Youth services
- Universities or vocational colleges such as TAFE
- Private sector/employer partners
- Schools
- Charities

Evidence from the UK suggests that taking a community-based approach to employment ensures the greatest potential for partnership-working through placing the housing provider in a position to act as a catalyst for greater change<sup>26</sup>. It also found that:

“In comparison with other sectors, social housing is unusually collaborative. It is this ethos of collaboration, the desire to share best practice, adopt and adapt models that work well.”

Communities Plus, as outlined in Future Directions for Social Housing, will involve integrated housing developments to be delivered in partnership with the private, non-government and community housing sectors. There are 7 main Communities Plus sites with additional smaller sites throughout NSW. Many of the new social housing units will be used to support innovative programs that link housing assistance to participation in education, training and local employment opportunities. It is expected that Communities Plus will establishing new and innovative partnerships and this partnership-working will be key to delivering improved social outcomes for social housing tenants.

Another Future Directions initiative is to introduce Personal Support Plans for social housing tenants. This will involve the tenant agreeing to work towards agreed and realistic goals in exchange for tailored support and services that build their capacity to work. It is not clear whether CHPs, employment service providers or other

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<sup>26</sup> Rallings, M and Coburn, J (2014) Strategic approaches to employment: Responding to change in the sector. Lessons from an action-learning programme, HACT.

stakeholders will take the lead in developing these personal support plans but partnership-working will be vital if CHPs are to achieve a 5 per cent increase in positive social housing exits. If CHPs are to successfully address tenants' employment issues and goals they may want to consider creating an 'Employment Specialist' position within their organisation who can advise tenants and other staff about employment-related options and procedures.

It is to be noted that there was little evidence in compiling this report of strategic partnership-working between CHPs and established Commonwealth funded Employment Service Providers. The Federation was unable to establish a connection with any Employment Service Provider when researching for this report, and was also unsuccessful in trying to find an Employment Service Provider willing to take part in the Federation's Employment seminar 'Linking Community Housing Tenants to Employment, Training and Education' in July 2015.

## **Summary and recommendations**

- Partnership-working can bring in additional funding for employment projects
- Due to the complexity of issues surrounding unemployment, CHPs cannot work alone
- Collaboration and flexibility are key themes to successfully supporting individuals furthest away from the job market
- Partnership-working involves setting up formal service level agreements and protocols
- Further work is required to establish links with Employment Service Providers
- CHPs may want to consider creating an 'Employment Specialist' position within their organisation

# Going forward

When planning projects aimed at improving employment outcomes for tenants, CHPs should consider the below pathways<sup>27</sup> as the four principle pathways that job seekers can find employment opportunities. These pathways are intrinsically linked to one another and the process of seeking employment would most likely require two or more categories acting either simultaneously or in series.

1. Jobactive providers
2. Vocational education and training
3. Social enterprises, and
4. Social procurement

Jobactive is an Australian Government program which provides recruitment services for employers at no cost to their business and provides job seekers with a tailored service to assess their needs and employment requirements. Jobactive providers have a strong understanding of local labour markets which makes them a vital component of the system that connects unemployed people with training and employment. Job seekers are assessed and placed into one of three streams to indicate their job readiness. Stream C is where many social housing tenants are placed that display complex or multiple barriers to employment. What is clear is that stronger relationships between CHPs and the employment sector need to be built. What is not clear is the role CHPs should play in connecting and brokering access to employment services, and who will provide the intensive case management required for high needs job seekers.

Vocational education and training increases a person's job readiness and can often be the first step towards gaining paid employment. When making links to vocational education or training services, CHPs should adopt place-by-place planning, however localised design requires a lot of work and needs resourcing. There is also a need to ensure projects are aligned with existing programs such as the NSW Government Smart and Skilled Smart, Skilled and Hired program and other Department of Industry programs. Specialised services that offer concurrent support with education and training are more likely to achieve positive results.

Social enterprises provide economic and social benefits to local communities and provide much-needed local jobs, training opportunities and services. Social enterprise is being increasingly used as an education and employment pathway and as the social enterprise sector grows, so too should the opportunities to link unemployed social housing tenants with their services. Social enterprises can provide localised solutions to localised social issues and CHPs should prioritise building strong relationships with these organisations as a way to boost the opportunities for pathways to independence. Because social enterprises still need to be financially sustainable, it is worth noting that they cannot always successfully address social issues, particularly in remote or disadvantaged areas where economic opportunities are limited.

Social procurement involves using procurement processes to generate positive social outcomes such as training and pathways to employment. The industry audit showed that social procurement is not widely implemented by CHPs (25% use procurement to promote employment and training initiatives); however examples of these activities are documented in the following section. CHPs that have been able to incorporate social procurement into their maintenance and development processes can provide direct tenant employment opportunities, although at a relatively small scale. Where social procurement and social enterprise link, there is greater potential for widespread benefits and positive employment outcomes.

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<sup>27</sup> Unpublished report, 2015, available from Homelessness NSW

# Sector approaches to tackling employment, training and education

To document this emerging area of housing plus activities within the community housing sector the Federation carried out extensive research which involved:

- Auditing 20 CHPs<sup>28</sup> through a self-assessment survey and reporting the activities undertaken in relation to: employment support services; training and education-based services; and employment creation services (Appendix 1)
- Collecting 38 case studies from 13 different CHPs covering areas such as social procurement; youth mentoring; education scholarships; and budgeting skills
- Holding a focus group with 12 members of staff from 10 different CHPs

## Summary of Results

The ways in which CHPs are tackling unemployment are wide ranging. Key findings of those surveyed from the industry audit are that:

- 50% directly offer education bursaries or scholarships
- 50% directly provide volunteer work placements
- 50% directly provide training for tenants to be actively involved with their housing provider (e.g. governance and meeting skills training)
- 30% directly provide IT equipment or access to an IT suite
- 30% directly support social enterprise in the local community
- 30% employ staff with responsibilities for tenant/community employment, training and education
- 25% of directly provide financial assistance to help tenants transition into work

The research uncovered a number of positive elements of the community housing sector's approach to boosting employment and tackling unemployment. All CHPs audited are offering some help, advice, services or work opportunities to residents. Some may deliver all or a selection of these activities depending on the nature of their service, and services may be offered either directly or through partnership-working. They may also progress from one activity to the next as their experience and skills increase.

CHPs displayed an evolving approach to tenant employment initiatives, with some more developed than others. For example, some CHPs are primarily identifying and referring tenants to employment support agencies, whilst others are developing evidence-based delivery plans which include local strategic partnerships. Mission Australia uses impact measurement to strengthen communities through measuring their impact against their outcomes hierarchy<sup>29</sup>. This is also able to be mapped against other frameworks, such as funding frameworks. Developing tenant outcomes frameworks is a priority area for the future of social housing and the Federation is planning a program which will focus on social outcome events.

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<sup>28</sup> Audit carried out in December 2014 with 20 NSW based community housing providers; 14 Tier 1; 5 Tier 2 and 1 Tier 3.

<sup>29</sup> Mission Australia presentation "Practicing impact: Mission Australia's experience in using impact measurement to strengthen communities" to NSW Federation of Housing Associations' Shared Outcomes Workshop on 25 May 2016

The research shows that CHPs are not tackling unemployment in isolation, and programs are often delivered in partnership with other specialist providers. These activities suggest that CHPs are continuously looking at the challenges around employment, thinking creatively, and critically exploring different responses. It also suggests that some providers recognise that they do not have the resources, skills or experience to provide employment support directly, but provide access and pathways to opportunities through localised partnership working.

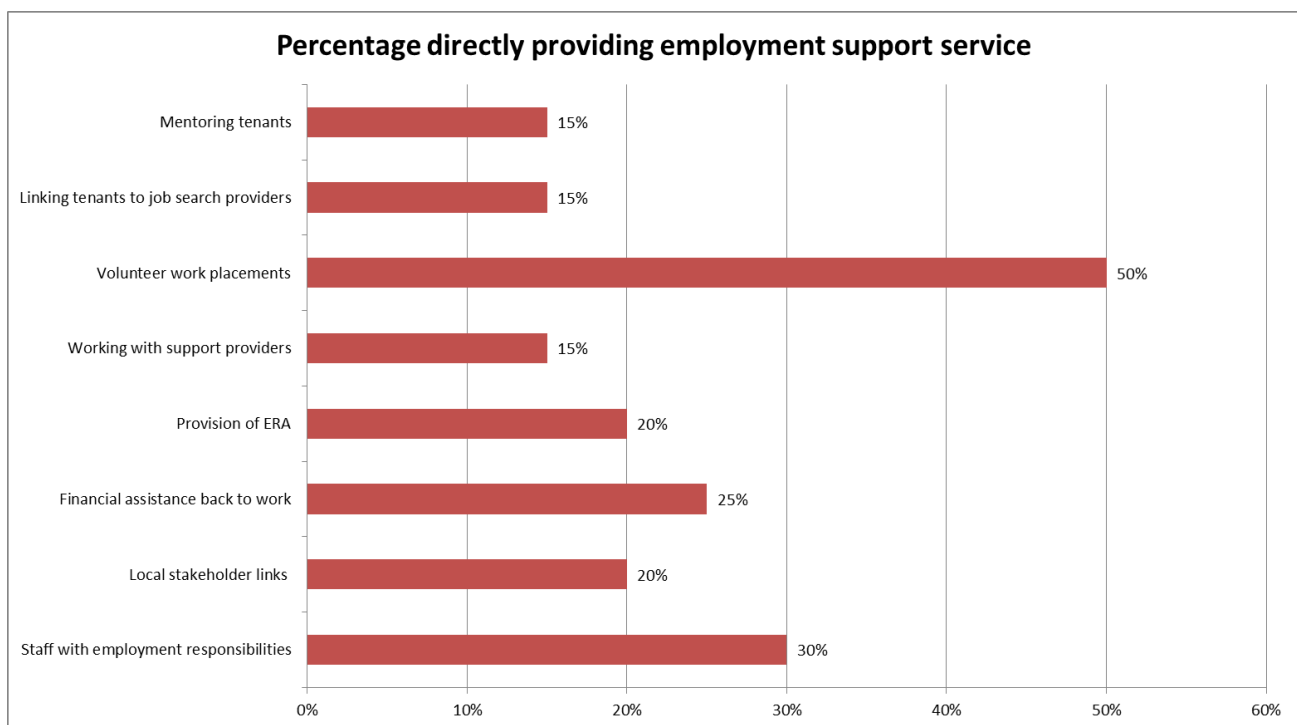
The following section showcases some of these housing plus activities and the resources that CHPs have invested into supporting tenants into employment. It aims to provide a glimpse into the broad array of activities delivered within the sector and is not intended to provide a thorough account of all initiatives undertaken. The section is broken down into three main areas: employment support services; training and education-based services; and employment creation services.

# Employment support

Employment support activities aim to support the transition for tenants entering employment. This assistance includes work placements, mentoring tenants and employment ready initiatives (CVs and interview training etc.) The industry audit revealed that this is an area of high activity for providers.

For example, of those audited:

- Half directly offer volunteer work placements for tenants
- Just under a third have staff in their organisation with responsibilities for tenant/community employment support initiatives
- A quarter of providers directly offer financial assistance to help tenants transition back to work with a further 20% offering this service through partnerships
- 20% of providers directly provide employment related accommodation



**Chart 3: Percentage of community housing providers audited that directly provide employment support services**

The audit also showed that there were several activities such as childcare provision and employment ready initiatives (e.g. CVs and interview training etc.) that providers were not engaging in but instead opting to refer to partners. Table 1 shows a breakdown of employment support activities collected from the industry audit.

A quarter of providers audited provide financial assistance to help tenants transition back to work. This assistance was wide ranging, including a grace period of non-adjustment of their rental subsidy to a learner driver program to aid mobility and improve employment opportunities.

**Table 1: Community housing providers delivering employment support services collected from the industry audit**

<b>Employment support services</b>	<b>Directly provide this service</b>	<b>Provide in partnership - help fund</b>	<b>Provide in partnership - do not fund *</b>	<b>Refer to partners</b>	<b>Considering this service in the future</b>
Collecting information on tenant employment & training status	9	0	0	1	3
Help tenants learn to drive	0	0	1	2	1
Mentoring tenants/community members around work	3	1	0	1	2
Linking tenants to job search/job network providers	3	3	1	4	2
Volunteer work placements	10	1	0	2	0
Child care provision	0	0	1	1	1
Working with support providers to promote employment, training & education in tenant case plans	3	4	1	4	1
Provision of employment related accommodation	4	0	1	2	0
Employment ready initiatives (e.g. CVs & interview training etc.)	1	1	2	2	4
Financial assistance to help tenants transition back to work	5	0	1	3	2
Local stakeholder links (e.g. schools, employers & councils etc.) for tenant/community employment, training & education initiatives	4	3	0	2	2
Staff with responsibilities for tenant/community employment, training & education etc.	6	0	1	2	2

The industry audit revealed that half of the providers directly provide volunteer or other work placements. For example;

- Southern Cross Community Housing operates a successful volunteer work placement program called Yard Assist. Yard Assist is a gardening and mowing service assisting frail-aged tenants or tenants with a disability to maintain their gardens and sustain their tenancies. The program was established with grants from various sources including: Shoalhaven City Council, Clubs NSW, Illawarra Forum and Bendigo Community Bank, totalling approximately \$5,800.
- Community Housing Limited (CHL) also run a volunteer program whereby tenants are offered work in their local offices with a view to progress into permanent roles. They have had three tenants volunteering in their local offices in Coffs Harbour, Port Macquarie and Taree and two have progressed onto permanent roles.
- As part of their Aboriginal Employment Strategy, The Housing Trust provides an entry career pathway into housing for young Aboriginal people. They have established 3 trainee positions across the business in maintenance, tenancy, and administration.

Housing provider staff that come into frequent contact with individuals experiencing unemployment should be trained and educated about the employment services sector. When questioned on what factors enabled providers to successfully offer and deliver these initiatives, the industry focus group agreed that 'the whole organisation needed to be on board and that early intervention needed to be promoted across the organisation'.

Proactive CHPs with the resources to address tenant employment issues and goals could consider creating an 'Employment Specialist' position within the service to advise clients and other staff about employment related options and procedures. However it is worth noting that many individuals are not employment ready and for those tenants, living skills training is a crucial and necessary step to moving towards labour force participation. This is an area identified by some CHPs as an opportunity to help tenants move towards independent living (Box 1).

### **BOX 1: LIVING SKILLS**

#### **Argyle Community Housing – Claymore Living Skills program**

*Delivered and funded in partnership with the University of NSW, the program provided participants with information and practical advice on matters ranging from finance to cooking, cleaning and acceptable property care. The program aimed to improve self-esteem, confidence and general living skills for those who participated.*

#### **Evolve Housing – Money Management Training**

*Evolve Housing has partnered with Wesley Mission Financial Literacy Program 'In charge of my Money' to deliver workshops on financial matters to Evolve Housing residents. The training provides participants with information about saving, planning and budgeting through trained financial counsellors. An evaluation of the service has shown a significant reduction in rent default among the residents that participated in the training. The training was funded by Evolve Housing receiving a subsidy from Wesley Mission.*

### **BOX 1: LIVING SKILLS (continued)**

#### **Hume Community Housing – Breaking Brick Walls**

*Funded by Parramatta Council's crowdfunding campaign "Start some good", Hume Community Housing and True Quest have formed a partnership to develop a youth engagement and employment program. The \$20,000 raised through crowdfunding was matched by Parramatta Council which was then targeted at assisting unemployed young people residing in the Parramatta Local Government Area.*

*The program helped young people develop employment skills, access vocational guidance and mentoring, and empowered them to transition into employment through a range of activities including intensive workshops, one-on-one mentoring, goal setting, interview skills, resume and cover letter writing, and finance management.*

Many providers use routine home visits to identify tenants with support needs. In addition to property inspections for the purpose of identifying repairs or maintenance issues, tenancy visits are carried out on a 6 monthly basis by tenancy or community development workers for the purpose of assessing tenant support or training needs. Referrals can then be made to a tenancy specialist or another support agency as required.

#### **CASE STUDY: FIRST AID TRAINING**

*Southern Cross Community Housing (SCCH) has partnered with Supported Accommodation & Homelessness Service for Women (SAHSSI) and TAFE Illawarra to run a series of fee-free taster courses for residents and clients in Nowra.*

*The two day course covered practical first aid skills, casualty management such as asthma attacks, allergic reactions and basic life support skills. Six tenants from SCCH completed the first round of training as well as an additional 21 service users from partner agencies.*

*"I would like to do a traineeship in Aged Care or as a Teacher's Aide, so I thought having this qualification would really help"*

*Course participant*

*The success of the course has meant that over 30 registrations (mostly from SCCH tenants) have been received for further qualification-based training to receive RSA and RCG certificates. This will also be delivered by TAFE and SAHSSI.*

*Critical success factors in this scheme were:*

- *TAFE delivered the training at SCCH venues and locations*
- *Free childcare was provided by Nowra Family Support Service*
- *Free meeting facilities were provided by Nowra Family Support Service*
- *The training courses were free, provided by TAFE NSW through their 'fee-free' courses currently on offer*

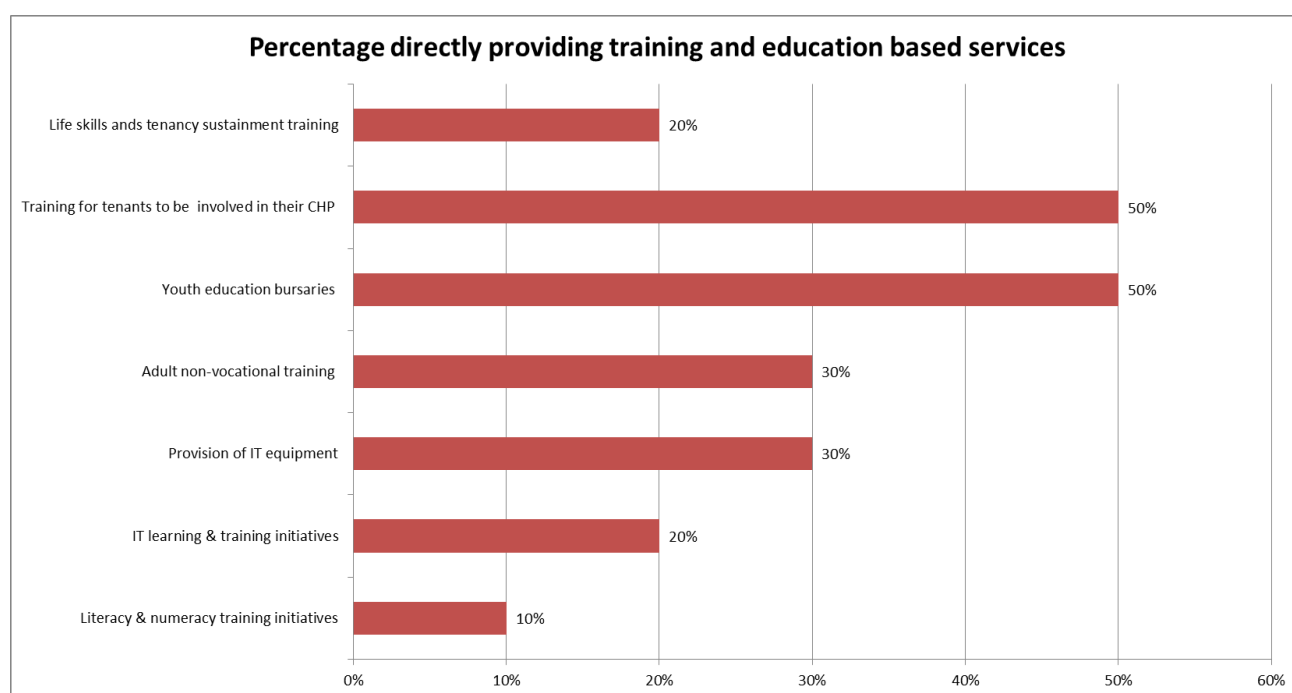
*Whilst it is too early to evaluate the success of the scheme, a SCCH tenant who completed the training and had not worked for 9 years has recently been offered employment.*

# Training and education

CHPs have access to many hundreds of people who may not access mainstream training and education services and therefore it is not surprising that the audit revealed that more activity is being undertaken in this area than any other.

For example, of those surveyed:

- Half directly provide training for tenants to be actively involved in their organisation
- Half directly provide youth education bursaries or scholarships
- Just under a third directly offer adult non-vocational training
- Just under a third directly provide IT equipment or access to computers



**Chart 4: Percentage of community housing providers audited that directly provide training and education-based services**

One reason put forward by a participant of the industry focus group into the activity in the training and education field was that:

“Community Housing Providers find it easier to get into training and education as it is State funded.”

On 1 July 2015, the NSW State Government introduced Smart and Skilled fee-free scholarships for young people (aged 15-30). Those who meet the scholarship criteria will be eligible for a Government subsidy which covers their Smart and skilled course fee for higher-level courses including reduced TAFE fees for social housing tenants. To be eligible students must study a Smart and Skilled subsidised Certificate I to IV level qualification on the NSW Skills List, and eligible applicants living in social housing, or on the waiting list for NSW social housing, are guaranteed a scholarship to start training. In addition to Smart and Skilled fee-free scholarships, CHPs have been offering educational bursaries and scholarships to tenants and their household members for many years (Box 2).

## **BOX 2: BURSARIES AND SCHOLARSHIPS**

### **SGCH – Strive Scholarships**

*Through the Strive Scholarship Program, eligible SGCH residents can apply for a scholarship to put towards educational costs such as school fees, textbooks, computing equipment or school uniforms. Strive Scholarships are available for students from primary school age through to University. Tutorial scholarships are also available through SGCH's partnership with Kip McGrath. Since SGCH's Educational Bursary program began in 2005, SGCH has directly provided \$630,000 in scholarships to 714 tenants. In August 2015, SGCH announced that \$50,000 from The Adolph Basser Trust will add 10 new scholarships (each valued at \$5,000) to their Strive Scholarships Scheme. The Adolph Basser Trust was established in 1953 to promote education, provide assistance to public hospitals and help relieve poverty in NSW. SGCH has recently appointed a research institute, the Social Policy Research Centre, to undertake a three year longitudinal study to independently evaluate the outcomes of the Strive Scholarships Scheme.*

### **Southern Cross Community Housing – Educational Scholarships**

*Delivered in partnership with TAFE and local schools, Southern Cross Community Housing presents Educational Scholarships every year to encourage children of tenants and/or tenants to pursue education to improve their personal circumstances by furthering their education. The scholarship can be used for course fees or any other costs related to education e.g. textbooks, home computer or laptop, childcare provision. Applicants are assessed on academic results, attendance, contribution to the school and community and individual aspirations. Southern Cross Community Housing presented just over \$8,000 worth of self-funded scholarships for 2014/15.*

### **Pacific Link – Sheila Astolfi Education Scholarship**

*The Sheila Astolfi Education Scholarships, established in 2010, encourage eligible tenants and/or their children to achieve their educational objectives and fulfil their potential. Since it began, more than 63 scholarships have been awarded to Pacific Link tenants ranging in age from primary school to mature age students. Pacific Link awarded \$27,927 in scholarships in the 2015/16 financial year.*

Many CHPs have partnered with education institutions and other agencies to offer training opportunities. For example:

- Link Housing has formed support partnerships with organisations such as TAFE NSW, Steps Employment and 2 Realise which provide free or subsidised training to tenants and specific target groups such as youth and people with a disability.
- As well as promoting TAFE's Smart and Skilled fee-free training initiatives to tenants, The Housing Trust held a breakfast seminar with their contractors to link them with TAFE's Smart and Skilled fee-free training program and to encourage employment of tenants as apprentices and trainees.
- Evolve Housing works with registered training provider Astute Training to provide free vocational and educational training for community housing residents. The Training People for Life program encourages and enables residents to make economic contributions to their community, equipping individuals to break cycles of unemployment and re-enter the workforce. Emphasis is placed on practical and interesting programs with strong employment prospects, such as aged care. Evolve Housing also partnered with Parramatta College to deliver iPad training to their tenants.

**Table 2: Community housing providers delivering training & education-based services collected from the industry audit**

<b>Training &amp; education-based services</b>	<b>Directly provide this service</b>	<b>Provide in partnership - help fund</b>	<b>Provide in partnership - do not fund</b>	<b>Refer to partners</b>	<b>Considering this service in the future</b>
Life skills/tenancy sustainment/financial awareness training (e.g. rent it keep it etc.)	4	2	2	6	4
Training for tenants to be actively involved in their CHP (e.g. governance & meeting skills training etc.)	10	1	0	0	1
Youth education bursaries / scholarships (e.g. school & university etc.)	10	1	2	5	2
Adult vocational/work related training (e.g. TAFE etc.)	2	1	4	3	0
Adult non-vocational training (e.g. healthy living, arts & crafts etc.)	6	1	0	3	0
Provision of IT equipment/IT suite (either free or loan schemes etc.)	6	0	0	2	3
IT learning & training initiatives	4	2	0	5	4
Literacy & numeracy training initiatives	2	1	1	5	3
After school activities (e.g. sporting & education etc.)	1	1	0	0	2

Digital inclusion is a key area where CHPs can play a vital role. Australia, with the rest of the developed world, has become a fundamentally digital place. A computer is critical for basic tasks such as writing resumes or sending emails and the internet is a portal to crucial information about current events or job opportunities, yet these tools for living are by no means universally available. This has a negative impact on the communities it affects, by limiting their access to information, employment and social networks. Employment and education benefits are driven by improved education, general upskilling, and better job searching. It is essential that social housing tenants have access to technology to ensure affordable and equal access, together with ICT and skills development. As said by an industry focus group participant:

“You only have to look at the technology world to see how many more avenues this opens up.”

#### **CASE STUDY: DIGI HOUSE**

*In February 2016, SGCH hosted the launch of a new program, Digi House, which aims to improve the digital skills of 20,000 people living in public and social housing.*

*Working in partnership with Infoxchange and Google, SGCH's tenants living in Washington Park, Riverwood were able to get familiar with using YouTube, apps, voice search and smart phones through live demonstrations. To apply their newly learnt skills in a practical way, residents learnt how to use technology to assist them with cooking a meal, translating recipes into another language and finding out nutritional information.*

*Through teaching tenants these skills, Digi House allows them to experience the benefits of digital inclusion in the areas of health and wellbeing, education and learning, accessing employment opportunities, social connectedness and saving money.*

*Digi House will be rolled out across New South Wales and Victoria with the aim of expanding into Queensland and other states. The program is funded through a \$500,000 grant from Google.org.*

*SGCH will develop a range of digital events and programs over the next few months to help tenants improve their digital literacy, using Digi House support materials.*

Hume Community Housing has converted its Shortland Street community room into a modern and dynamic learning space. The Learning Centre which is part of the Telopea Community Hub offers a range of education, arts and cultural programs. The Learning Centre hosts Hume Community Housing's computer drop-in sessions which are held weekly.

Other activities offered include:

- TAFE courses
- Employment preparation classes
- English tutoring
- Financial literacy
- Social activities like exercise groups, creative arts workshops and supported playgroups



Photo: Telopea Community Hub Learning Centre. Taken in 2014

Just under a third (30%) of providers audited also said they directly provided IT equipment, and this can range from loan purchase schemes to providing access to IT suites (Box 3).

### **BOX 3: PROVISION OF IT EQUIPMENT AND SUPPORT**

#### ***Pacific Link Housing – Laptop Loan Purchase Program***

*Pacific Link Housing allows tenants with a good tenancy history to purchase laptop computers with communications software at favourable rates. The Laptop Loan Purchase Program provides tenants with brand new, state-of-the-art laptop computers at a cost of \$499, available on loan agreements for a minimum of \$20 per fortnight. More than 100 laptops have been purchased since the scheme was introduced.*

#### ***SGCH - Digisupport***

*SGCH has partnered with Newleaf communities in Bonnyrigg to offer iPad, laptop, smartphone and internet support to help users understand and become proficient in new technology. The support is free and users are asked to bring their phone, iPad or laptop with them. The training started in March 2016, and is continuing on the 1st and 3rd Thursday of every month.*

#### ***Link Housing – free WIFI***

*As part of Link Housing's FormingLinks strategy they offer free WIFI to visitors at Link Housing office, including tenants who visit their reception.*

### **CASE STUDY: EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING WORKSHOP**

*In June 2016, Bridge Housing ran a workshop for tenants who wanted to learn more about how to prepare for and access employment and training opportunities. Job placement and training providers were present on the day which included;*

- *TAFE Outreach staff*
- *MTC Australia - a social enterprise that has been helping people to gain employment, skills training, work experience*
- *WorkVentures - a not for profit social enterprise offering low cost computers, traineeships and community services*

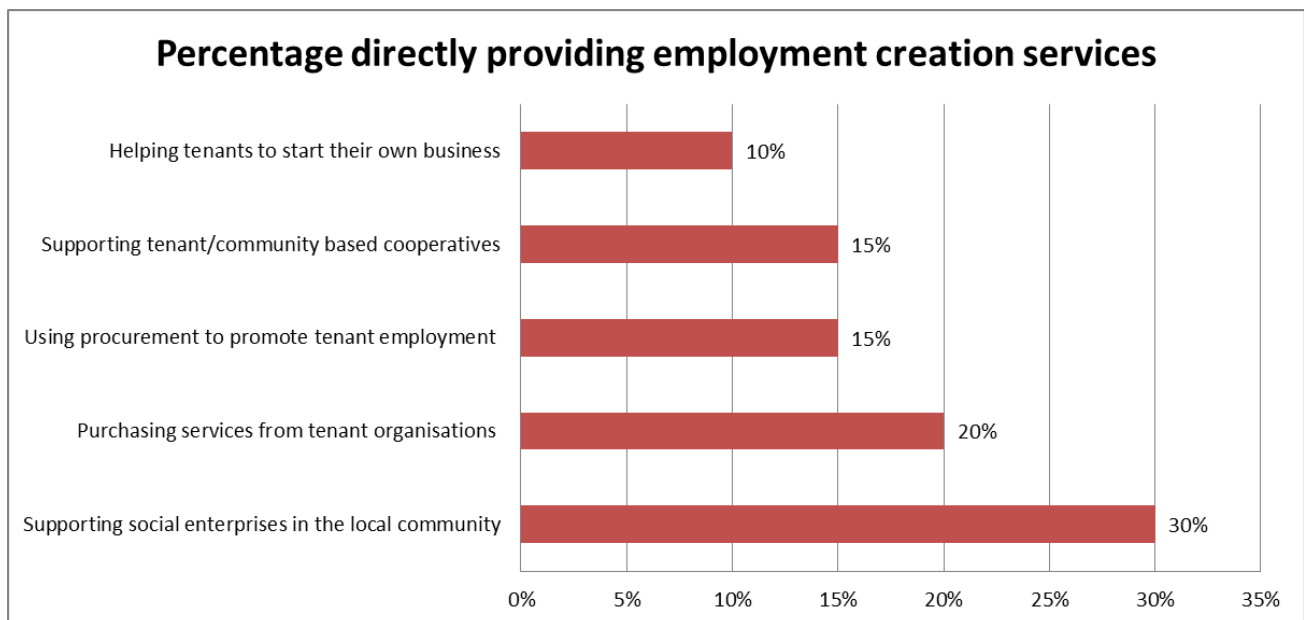
*It has been reported that tenants were particularly interested in MTC's Skills for Education and Training (SEE) English language course; WorkVentures' 12 week Kickstart "work ready" program; and TAFE courses including Horticulture; as well as the TAFE Disability Careers Counselling service. Most of the tenants who attended took their first steps to learning more about job and skills opportunities and were able to talk one-on-one with job placement and training providers. They were also able to talk to Bridge Housing about their upcoming volunteer and work experience program with five tenants signing up to the volunteer and work experience program on the day.*

# Employment creation

Generally speaking, less than a third of providers audited engaged in any direct employment creation services (Table 3). The most popular activity in this area was supporting social enterprise in the local community with just under a third (30%) of providers audited directly providing this service.

Other examples include, of those audited:

- 20% directly purchase services from tenant organisations (e.g. lawn mowing)
- 15% directly use procurement to promote employment and training initiatives (or 25% including delivering in partnership)
- 15% directly support tenant or community-based cooperatives
- 10% directly help tenants to start their own business



**Chart 5: Percentage of community housing providers audited that directly provide employment creation services**

CHPs engaging in employment creation activities are likely to be working in partnership with a number of service delivery partners. Partnerships are often made possible due to the geography of providers' housing stock and the concentration of established and reputable service delivery partners in the area.

Examples of areas where CHPs have been referring tenants to partners include:

- Helping tenants to start their own business
- Procurement in planned maintenance projects, grounds maintenance or development
- Supporting community based cooperatives

CHPs need to make links to local employers and business-based networks to utilise existing resources if they are to tackle unemployment at scale.

**Table 3: Community housing providers delivering employment creation services collected from the industry audit**

<b>Employment creation services</b>	<b>Directly provide this service</b>	<b>Provide in partnership - help fund</b>	<b>Provide in partnership - do not fund</b>	<b>Refer to partners</b>	<b>Considering this service in the future</b>
Helping tenants to start their own business	2	0	1	0	1
Supporting tenant/community-based cooperatives	3	0	2	0	2
Using procurement (e.g. repairs & estate redevelopment etc.) to promote tenant/community employment & training initiatives	3	2	0	3	2
Purchasing services from tenant organisations (e.g. lawn mowing etc.)	4	1	0	1	0
Supporting social enterprises in the local community	6	0	0	0	3

Self-employment can be seen as an alternative option for tenants who may have been out of the labour market for a long time. Many community housing tenants have great ideas for new businesses but often lack the confidence and belief to make it happen. A number of CHPs have recognised these opportunities for tenants and are working with enterprise support organisations such as Many Rivers Microfinance Limited who help tenants access start-up finance as they are often unable to obtain business loans from high street banks (Box 4).

#### **BOX 4: SOCIAL ENTERPRISE**

##### ***Mission Australia Housing – Many Rivers Microfinance Limited***

*Mission Australia (MA) has partnered with Many Rivers, a not-for-profit organisation that supports aspiring business owners with microenterprise development support and access to finance to provide small business loans to eligible clients. The strategic partnership between MA and Many Rivers includes MA offering Many Rivers access to their corporate, financial, and IT services, including office space where appropriate. MA will refer their clients to Many Rivers and some of the small businesses set up include mowing, gardening and maintenance services. MA has also engaged several small businesses set up through Many Rivers to do maintenance work at their sites.*

##### ***Pacific Link Housing – JobQuest Program***

*Pacific Link Housing has an agreement with training group JobQuest to provide award wage training and employment for young tenants seeking Certificate qualifications in property maintenance through work programs. Through JobQuest's 'lawns and grounds' social enterprise program Pacific Link Housing provides work in property maintenance and the possibility of a traineeship after a probationary period for eligible tenants. Pacific Link Housing used the JobQuest program to complete their \$400,000 refurbishment program of the 100-home Dunbar Way and Kendall estates in North Gosford.*

##### ***Compass Housing – Work Wear for Women***

*The Work Wear for Women program is a joint initiative by the Hunter Business Women's Network (HBWN) and Compass Housing which supports women starting in or returning to the work force to have suitable attire. The founding concept is that a library of good-quality corporate clothes would benefit marginalised women and that communities could rally together when having a wardrobe clear out. It aims to help women who have been out of the workforce due to homelessness or domestic violence or other issues to gain suitable work wear attire.*

A UK report 'Delivering change: What Housing Associations can tell us about employment and skills'<sup>30</sup> examined several case studies of how housing associations are improving the skill levels of their tenants and the communities they live in. One of the most effective practices identified in the report is creating employment and training opportunities for residents by negotiating with contractors and developers to obtain work placements in construction, electrician and gas fitter roles. This is an area where a growing number of CHPs are starting to explore, and where some providers have been very active for a number of years (Box 5).

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<sup>30</sup> Williams, M. (2015) Delivering change What Housing Associations can tell us about employment and skills. London: Centre for Cities

## **BOX 5: SOCIAL PROCUREMENT**

### **Hume Community Housing – Assets4Life**

*'Assets4Life' is a Youth Employment Program whereby Hume Community Housing established a social procurement relationship with SR Construction that facilitates an employment pathway for young people living in Hume Community Housing's properties. The young community housing residents will participate in an accredited training program and gain a nationally recognised qualification, which could lead to jobs in the property and maintenance areas of the Community Housing sector. The program was also delivered in partnership with Marist Youth Care, a specialist youth welfare agency, and YC Industry Link.*

*Hume Community Housing's \$7 million residential development in Sydney's Warwick Farm also includes a social procurement relationship with developer, Mono Constructions.*

### **Mission Australia Housing – Maintenance Contracts**

*Mission Australia Housing's maintenance contracts stipulate requirements for contractors to provide workplace training opportunities for their tenants each year. For example, Mission Australia Housing contract out their concierge service in Common Ground, Camperdown and each year the contractor provides two weeks work experience for two Mission Australia Housing tenants. As a result of this experience, one of the tenants gained ongoing employment with the concierge contractor.*

### **SGCH – Partnership with BoysTown on Development Sites**

*SGCH has partnered with BoysTown, a national youth welfare organisation which helps young people improve their quality of life. Through this partnership, 12 unemployed young people will be given an opportunity for paid employment on nine of SGCH's developments across Sydney, where they will undertake completion of soft landscaping and gardens. In addition to learning practical work skills these young people will be mentored to develop general work ready skills such as time keeping, team work and organisational skills. To measure the outcomes and learnings from this project, SGCH and BoysTown will complete an evaluation which fits within SGCH's Social Impact Framework.*

*This project builds on a previous project in Western Sydney where BoysTown partnered with SGCH to build a community garden. The project gave young people experience in landscape construction, irrigation, shed construction, planting and general site works. It transformed an unused space into a productive vegetable garden area.*

Community Housing Limited (CHL) has a social procurement strategy whereby incentives are provided to contractors with proven success in providing employment opportunities to CHL tenants, indigenous people or people with a disability. The strategy has been hugely successful creating a significant amount of work placements and leading to permanent employment:

- Macleay Options is a not-for-profit community-based organisation that provides support services to people with a disability who live in the Macleay Valley area of NSW. In partnership with CHL, they have employed 44 people with a disability (3 of these are CHL tenants and 4 are refuge accommodation tenants)
- Valley Industries has created a range of support and employment opportunities for people with a disability in the Taree region. In partnership with CHL, they employ 25 community and public housing tenants in areas such as mowing/grounds care and document shredding. This includes 6 indigenous workers within the mowing team.

# Employment related accommodation programs

The Employment Related Accommodation Program (ERAP) provides eligible Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in social housing support to enable them to engage in opportunities for employment, higher education and vocational training. As well as providing affordable housing, the program aims to provide better links to training, education and employment opportunities and strengthen the sustainability of employment, education and training outcomes. The ERAP has been developed by Indigenous Housing Programs and is funded by the Australian Government through the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing.

Community Housing Limited (CHL) operate an ERAP to assist eligible Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who live in remote areas to relocate to regional or metropolitan areas to access employment, education or training opportunities. Successful applicants are offered housing support for the duration of their employment or training activity. For example, an applicant with a six month apprenticeship will be provided with housing for a six month period.

CHL worked closely with partners to deliver this ERAP including: SA Government (Housing SA: Remote Indigenous Housing) and Uniting Care Wesley Port Adelaide. CHL has a memorandum of understanding with Uniting Care Wesley Port Adelaide to deliver case management and support services to assist tenants in their transition from remote lands to the metropolitan environment. CHL and their partners are currently supporting five families/individuals on the ERAP, with another 4 to be contracted.

Homes North Community Housing also provides an ERAP in Armidale and Tamworth in NSW specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are undertaking training or employment. TAFE New England and the University of New England support the ERAP managed by Homes North on behalf of the Aboriginal Housing Office. To be eligible for the program, individuals must come from a community or area classified as remote under the Accessibility and Remoteness Index of Australia.

Partners involved with the ERAP in NSW are:

- Aboriginal Housing Office
- NSW Department of Human Services
- Participating community housing providers
- Participating education and training organisations and/or
- Participating employers.

It can be difficult for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to access accommodation in the private rental market and the ERAP provides access to affordable housing in areas tied to employment and higher education opportunities. A typical ERAP will require an applicant to first source employment, training or education and then provide evidence of this to the ERAP accommodation provider. They will then be placed on a register and contacted once a suitable property becomes available.

# Concluding statements

This report gives an overview of the employment activities undertaken by the community housing sector and showcases some of the innovative ways CHPs support their tenants in achieving better social outcomes. The amount of work already being undertaken by the sector reflects the importance that many CHPs place on addressing employability. It is clear that CHPs are taking a more active role in helping residents into employment so, what's next for housing providers?

If the community housing sector is to increase successful transitions out of social housing by 5 per cent, then a collaborative and cross-sectoral approach is required to create sustainable pathways out of disadvantage. CHPs will need to build stronger relationships with the employment sector; in particular Commonwealth-funded Employment Service Providers, as these linkages form a vital pathway to connecting unemployed tenants to the job market. This report has documented the difficulties in engaging with Commonwealth funded Employment Service Providers and identifying examples of strategic partnership-working. Other pathways to employment also need to be fully explored including vocational education and training, social enterprises and social procurement.

Funding for employment activities is limited as it falls outside core housing management services and is primarily being generated through rental income. Data regarding the funding of these activities was also difficult to access. 'Personal Support Plans' announced in Future Directions will require CHPs to case manage social housing tenants towards job-related goals. This may involve recruiting 'Employment Specialists' within their organisation. If CHPs are to be successful in improving long-term tenant outcomes without compromising the delivery of high quality housing services then CHPs will need to access additional resources. It is recommended that a further piece of research be carried out into establishing the cost to the sector in delivering the additional services to achieve the 5 per cent target.

Some of the key learnings identified in this report are that to successfully address barriers to employment the needs of tenants and communities must first be identified and understood. One size does not fit all and employment strategies or programs must be developed to reflect the unique background or housing situation of the people to which it is targeted. Programs developed in partnership with tenants that identify local needs yield greater opportunities to improve their social and economic well-being.

Many case studies identified in this report have been output driven and there is limited data available that demonstrates the social impact of these employment or training initiatives. New Government initiatives have seen a change to the approach to quantitative and qualitative evaluations, shifting the focus from reporting outputs to measuring outcomes. The Federation is recommending the outcomes from these new initiatives are evaluated after being delivered for a period of time to be able to measure the impacts. It is worth noting that there is a risk that focusing too heavily on performance measurement may place an emphasis on quantified elements of performance (e.g. transitions out of social housing) at the expense of other aspects, and may divert resources away from place management activities.

Disadvantaged job seekers experience a number of barriers to employment, not least the lack of jobs advertised for low-skilled job seekers. However there are many disincentives to work for social housing tenants and these disincentives need to be addressed if tenants are to be successfully transitioned into employment. The main disincentives include a withdrawal of benefit payments or increase in rent, or loss of social housing entitlement with no affordable alternative.

The challenge is finding housing pathways that will support the housing continuum and transition out of community housing into affordable alternatives. Without housing choice the fear is that the possibility of losing social housing eligibility may act as a disincentive to tenants taking action to improve their individual situation. Despite the best efforts of CHPs, specialist homeless services or employment agencies to improve employment outcomes, other factors may be discouraging tenants from taking the opportunities presented to

them. Housing affordability is a particular problem in Sydney and more Government intervention at a National level is required if the problem is to be successfully addressed.

# Reference material

For further reading on any of the areas discussed in this report, a list of reference material has been provided:

ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics) (2013) Housing and occupancy costs, 2011–12. ABS. Cat no. 4130.0. Canberra: ABS <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/4130.02011-12?OpenDocument>

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# Appendix 1: Industry audit self-assessment form

		Directly provide this service	Provide in partnership - help fund	Provide in partnership - do not fund	Refer to partners - do not fund	Considering this service in the future
Employment support service	Collecting information on tenant employment & training status					
	Help tenants learn to drive					
	Mentoring tenants/community members around work					
	Linking tenants to job search/job network providers					
	Volunteer work placements					
	Child care provision					
	Working with support providers to promote employment, training & education in tenant case plans					
	Provision of employment related accommodation					
	Employment ready initiatives (e.g. CVs & interview training etc.)					
	Financial assistance to help tenants transition back to work					
	Local stakeholder links (e.g. schools, employers & councils etc.) for tenant/community employment, training & education initiatives					
	Staff with responsibilities for tenant/community employment, training & education etc.					
Training & education based services	Life skills/tenancy sustainment/financial awareness training (e.g. rent it keep it etc.)					
	Training for tenants to be actively involved in their CHP (e.g. governance & meeting skills training etc.)					
	Youth education bursaries / scholarships (e.g. school & university etc.)					
	Adult vocational/work related training (e.g. TAFE etc.)					
	Adult non-vocational training (e.g. healthy living, arts & crafts etc.)					
	Provision of IT equipment/IT suite (either free or loan schemes etc.)					
	IT learning & training initiatives					
	Literacy & numeracy training initiatives					
	After school activities (e.g. sporting & education etc.)					
Employment creation services	Helping tenants to start their own business					
	Supporting tenant/community based cooperatives					
	Using procurement (e.g. repairs & estate redevelopment etc.) to promote tenant/community employment & training initiatives					
	Purchasing services from tenant organisations (e.g. lawn mowing etc.)					
	Supporting social enterprises in the local community					