

Sector Feedback – SHS Program Documents

Draft Program Guidelines, Draft Program Logic and Draft ASES Policy Framework

Thank you for providing feedback on the Specialist Homelessness Services program document review facilitated by the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ). This document gives an overview of the feedback received from homelessness peak bodies and service providers.

How we got here

- Between October and December 2019, service providers submitted feedback on key program documents for the specialist homelessness services program, including the draft Program Guidelines, draft Program Logic and draft ASES Policy Framework.
- DCJ received feedback from 32 organisations. Submissions were sent via email (16) and an online survey/form (ASES 9, Guidelines 10, Logic 8 = 27). The three homelessness peaks (Homelessness NSW, DVNSW and Yfoundations) also provided a submission and some service providers were cited in this submission.
- While the representation could be considered small (approximately 30% of lead service providers), the feedback overall was comprehensive. Organisations also represented contracts across the state. The highest representation was from Western Sydney Nepean Blue Mountains District (WSNBM). Organisations represented SHS contracts, Homeless Youth Assistance Program (HYAP), Domestic Violence Response Enhancement (DVRE), Inner City Restoration (ICR) and Service Support Fund (SSF).
- DCJ will consider the feedback in the next iteration of the program documents. In some instances, the feedback has indicated where DCJ will be required to focus efforts when engaging the sector in future information sessions, training and communication.

Next steps

January – February 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DCJ consider feedback from this process and integrate where applicable. • Publish ASES Policy Framework
April – May 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DCJ to release refined draft Program Guidelines and draft Program Logic for further consultation. • Release draft Outcomes Framework for consultation. • DCJ to update sector on readiness approach and key expectations following consideration of feedback.
April – June 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service providers to review documents and provide comment via email submission, online survey. • DCJ to incorporate elements of the Outcomes Framework into the Program Guidelines.
June – July 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publish program documents and distribute
July 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program Guidelines, Outcomes Framework go-live.

What we heard

Program Guidelines

Overall the document was considered an improvement and more person-centred, however providers submitted detailed feedback on sections that require further clarification, information or refinement, including:

- Changing client categories from low, medium and high. It is a broadly welcomed change, but some providers have raised clarification questions on implementation, such as how this will be captured in the Client Information Management System (CIMS).
- Service providers asked how the Premier's Priority on reducing homelessness applies to services and clarification of 'where relevant'.
- Request for further clarification on working with children aged 12-15 years/under 16s.
- Service providers have sent requests for further clarification and refinement of sections:
 - No Wrong Door (6.2)
 - Goals and housing needs within support plans (6.5)
 - Aboriginal cultural competency (6.7).
- Further refinement of appendices has been requested for the following:
 - inclusion of DCJ responsibilities for appendix on Persons on temporary or spousal visas
 - additional information on transitional accommodation processes
 - HYAP requirements
 - subcontracting guidance updated to reflect recent advice
 - questions regarding the current Brokerage appendix.

Additions for DCJ to consider:

- Peaks and some service providers are interested in how the Program Guidelines will be monitored and contracts managed. A 'program framework' is suggested as a helpful addition.
- Reference to the Industry Partnership Learning & Development in the Guidelines.

Suggestions from service providers:

- Review appendices and how they are presented
 - reduce the length
 - publish online
- Review the structure and order to group relevant appendices together.
- Some service providers and the Peaks raised whether the Case Management Kit online would be updated.
- Further considerations to capturing post crisis support (5.1).
- Consider including 'rapid rehousing' and encouraging partnerships for housing first models.

Further questions raised by providers included:

- Are the guidelines moving towards a generalist approach to service delivery?
- How requirements and reports in the guidelines will be monitored.
- How to categorise clients that might belong in two categories, such as youth or Domestic Violence, and the impact of this.
- Questions relating to outcomes.
- If there will be updates to CIMS to reflect the guidelines.

Program Logic

Overall service providers found the document clear, easy to follow and provided detailed feedback, this included:

- Client need and situation
 - Updating the data to reflect recently released Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) figures.
 - Provide further reasons people seek assistance from the program.
- Evidence
 - Inclusion of other structural factors and individual factors.
- Program activities
 - Some providers have found this comprehensive while some suggest additional activities, such as adding more on accessing housing support, and a domestic and family violence focus for some activities.
- Mechanisms of change
 - A provider raised that organisational culture can be integral to these mechanisms being able to take place.
 - Other providers raised housing as a requirement for change.
- Outputs and implementation outcomes
 - A provider requested a review of this section to consider phrasing and to consider whether some of these activities describe inputs.
- Outcomes
 - Some providers had a brief commentary on phrasing.
 - Some concerns were raised about the inclusion of education and employment outcomes.
- Goals
 - Providers have requested a clearer link between the mechanisms of change and goals.
- Development of Program Logic
 - The peaks commented on the process of how the Program Logic was developed.
- The purpose of the tool
 - There were diverse views on the purpose of the logic as a tool with providers commenting that it was useful, did not state anything new, and did not situate the program in the broader context of housing and homelessness.
- Program related questions and concerns
 - Service providers commented in different sections of the logic on the issues of housing availability and the private market.

Readiness Checklist

The Peaks and six service providers submitted questions and comments on the readiness checklist activities. These include:

- Expectation 1 – ASES
 - Adding hyperlinks to resources, considering exempting providers already accredited
- Expectation 2 – Outcomes
 - Further consideration of Personal Wellbeing Index activities and implementation timeframes
- Expectation 3 – Premier's Priority
 - Further clarification of Premier's Priority activities such as the District Assertive Outreach plan, concern from a smaller provider about the interpretation of their contribution to the Premier's Priority, clarity about 'where relevant'
- Expectations 4 – Governance
 - Suggestion that this is titled 'local service participation and coordination'.
 - Concerns about providers not currently involved in District Homelessness Implementation Group.
 - Raised point regarding placed based coordination in rural locations.
 - Peaks have suggested this could be integrated into ASES accreditation.
- Expectation 5 – Aboriginal service delivery
 - Peaks have suggested this could be integrated into ASES accreditation
- Checklist format
 - More space for qualitative data and clarity about what could be included, a compact and workable document.
- Assessment
 - Further details about how the checklist will be applied.

ASES Policy Framework

- Overall the document was considered clear and easy to follow.
- Service providers want clarity on milestone dates such as the removal of 'submitting the certificate by March 2023', so the focus is on June 2023.
- Further information and clarification is needed within the document that covers what will take place for services that are subcontracted and in Joint Working Agreements (JWA), such as:
 - Adding information on what will take place if a subcontracting lead does not complete accreditation.
 - Clarify the role of a lead provider to ensure subcontracts and JWAs are accredited.
- Service providers questioned how ASES accreditation will be paid after June 2023 for reaccreditation.
- The Peaks commented on where sections of the document could include resources developed during the ASES pilot, such as the new modules available online.
- The Peaks mentioned that support may be required to ensure that the ASES assessor is culturally safe as well as the timing of the processes and staging.
- Some service providers mentioned the process of other accreditations and ASES (equivalencies).