

FACT SHEET



RECOGNISING AND RESPONDING TO HOUSING-RELATED DISTRESS

A practical guide for Community Engagement Points

OVERVIEW

- Safe, stable housing is essential for wellbeing — it affects health, relationships, work, family life and a person's sense of security.
- When housing is unstable, unaffordable or unsafe, it can create significant emotional and practical stress.
- Distress may stem from rental insecurity, overcrowding, sudden relocation, unsafe living conditions, or difficulty paying rent and utilities.
- Housing challenges can impact sleep, concentration, motivation and daily routines.
- People may feel ashamed, overwhelmed or fearful of losing their home.
- Because housing struggles can feel private or stigmatised, many people avoid talking about them until pressure becomes severe.
- Housing-related distress can build gradually and may not be spoken about directly.
- Not all housing challenges require a formal service response.
- Sometimes the most powerful support is simply being noticed, listened to and met with compassion.

WHO THIS IS FOR

This fact sheet is for any Community Engagement Point that may come into contact with people experiencing distress due to housing pressure.

This includes, but isn't limited to:

- Community housing providers and tenancy officers
- Neighbourhood and community centres
- Schools, childcare centres and family services
- Local cafés, shops and frontline service staff
- Libraries and community hubs
- Financial counsellors and emergency relief services
- Sporting clubs and recreation groups
- Faith communities and volunteer organisations
- Health clinics, pharmacies and reception teams

As a Community Engagement Point (CEP), you may be in a unique position to notice early signs of housing-related distress.

We are building a Network of Community Engagement Points (local people and places) who can offer a compassionate first response and, when needed, connect people with further support.

Anywhere people naturally spend their time — and naturally share what's going on in their lives — may become a moment of support.



Network of Community Engagement Points (NetCEP) is a program that enables trusted people and places, like community centres, sports clubs, and local businesses — to offer a compassionate first response when someone is having a tough time. Read more at www.netcep.com.au.



WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR

Not everyone will speak openly about housing challenges, but there are signs that may suggest someone is under pressure.

As a Community Engagement Point, you might notice:

- Increased anxiety, irritability or low mood
- Expressions of hopelessness such as “I don’t know how much longer I can keep this up”
- Mention of difficulty paying rent or utilities, or having to move frequently
- Signs of fatigue from managing complex housing situations
- Reduced participation in usual activities or social groups
- Concerns about safety at home, overcrowding or instability
- Stress about children’s routines being disrupted by housing changes

HOW CAN YOU HELP

You can’t solve someone’s housing situation — but you can play a vital role by being a steady, compassionate presence.

You can:

- Listen with empathy and without judgement
- Acknowledge the real stress that housing challenges create
- Reassure them that they’re not alone in facing this issue
- Keep the conversation simple — you don’t need details about their tenancy
- Offer options, not advice
- If they’re open to it, connect them with the local Short-Term Support Team (STST) for free, confidential, short-term support
- Remind them that seeking support is a positive step

Early recognition and a warm response can help someone feel less overwhelmed and more supported as they navigate their housing situation.

IN PRACTICE

AT A COMMUNITY HOUSING PROVIDER

1

Jasmine, a tenancy officer at a community housing provider, notices that Kelly — a tenant she sees regularly — seems overwhelmed during a routine check-in.

Kelly mentions she’s struggling to keep up with rent and is worried about managing her kids while facing possible relocation.

2

Jasmine acknowledges how stressful housing pressures can be and reassures Kelly she’s not alone. Rather than trying to solve the issue herself, she listens without judgement as Kelly explains what’s been weighing on her.

Jasmine gently lets her know that extra short-term emotional support is available through the Short-Term Support Team (STST) at the Mareeba Community Centre.

3

With Kelly’s consent, Jasmine makes the referral. The STST meets Kelly at a familiar local location and supports her to explore her options, navigate next steps, and connect with additional community services.

The short-term support helps Kelly feel more grounded and able to plan her way forward.

