Community Housing Tenant Support Program

Review

December 2016

Contents

Acknowledgements

Summary of key findings

- The Community Housing Tenancy Support Project (CHTSP), a 12 month program due to end in February 2017, was designed to prevent homelessness by supporting vulnerable tenants living in community housing in the City of Yarra, whose tenancies are at risk.

- Funding for the CHTSP was provided by Yarra City Council; this enabled the appointment of a 0.5 staff member to deliver support to a caseload of six tenants at any one time; resourcing for CHTSP was further enhanced by the availability of $20,000 brokerage.

- Undertaken by the Launch Housing research team, this review was conducted in November 2016 to explore the effectiveness of the CHTSP and the outcomes achieved to date.

- Between February to November 2016, a total of 15 tenants were referred to the CHTSP, of whom 8 (53%) had their tenancies stabilised, meaning homelessness was prevented – this is a significant positive outcome and a key measure of the project's effectiveness.

- The main referral issues related to rent arrears and hoarding/squalor but the evidence showed that clients experienced a range of complex and interrelated issues.

- The project's flexibility meant that the length of support and the amount of brokerage spent in each case was determined by the individual level of client need.

- The complexity of need experienced by clients necessitated a case management response with periods of support lasting around two or more months; in a couple of cases, support had extended to several months.

- This illustrates that a two week brief intervention response is not an appropriate approach for this cohort.

- The level of rental arrears accumulated by clients was substantial; clients were under enormous financial hardship; apart from one client receiving an income from paid work, all were reliant on income support, mostly the Disability Support Pension.

- The use of brokerage funds to repay the rental arrears was a key mechanism to addressing this financial hardship and stabilising tenancies – without this immediate and practical financial assistance, preventing homelessness would have been impossible.

- The amount of brokerage needed to cover the rental arrears was considerable – more than $10,000 was paid to prevent the loss of six tenancies – this also includes the cost of having a property cleaned which, in one case, cost more than $1,100.

- Clients interviewed also reported improvements in their health and wellbeing, relationships with friends and neighbours, and connections to their community, as a result of the support they received from CHTSP.

- The assertive outreach model delivered timely and effective support to where clients felt most comfortable - the investment of time, care, and compassion of the CHTSP staff was highly valued and respected by clients - many were unaware of the support available, not only from the CHTSP but more broadly; collaborative relationships and referrals to a range of services further maximised positive outcomes for clients.

- The advocacy work undertaken by the CHTSP was equally important – it resulted in a housing provider making a change to a key policy statement that reduced financial hardship for community housing tenants.

Recommendations:

1. That CHTSP be funded as an ongoing program playing a critical role in preventing homelessness among vulnerable community housing tenants.

2. That funding be sourced to secure, at the very least, another 0.5 staffing position that will enable outreach to more vulnerable community housing tenants, and to collaborate with a range of community housing providers.

3. Access to more brokerage funds, which was so critical to stabilising tenancies, would ensure that the CHTSP can continue to provide a timely and practical response to clients' large rental arrears and expensive cleaning of properties.

4. That an early warning strategy be developed when rent is not paid, to prevent the accumulation of rental arrears – all rental arrears were in excess of $1,400, this is a significant amount of money, particularly for anyone reliant on income support.

5. That data collection processes be improved to ensure the ongoing and effective monitoring of the CHTSP.

1.   Introduction

This report presents a summary of the findings from a review of the Community Housing Tenant Support Program conducted over November 2016, by the research team at Launch Housing. The findings will be used to report back to the key funder of the Program and to assist with informing the development of future funding applications.

1.1.   Purpose of the Review

The purpose of the review was to explore the effectiveness of the Community Housing Tenancy Support Program (CHTSP) in stabilising tenancies for vulnerable people in community housing. Three broad questions informed the review:

- What outcomes is the program achieving for the client group?
- Do the Program outcomes match the Program objectives?
- In what ways could the Program be improved?

1.2.   Approach

The review occurred during November 2016 and included the following main components:

- Document analysis – this included the initial funding application and agency referral forms;
- Program Logic – the funding application, and Program staff consultation, was used to inform the development of the program logic, an essential step in order to understand how the Program works;
- Data files – these were available via the Service Record System, an online client management system that provided demographic details and information on support needs;
- Stakeholder consultations – occurred via an online survey emailed to six stakeholders; three surveys were completed;
- Client interviews – from a total list of 15 former and current clients of the CHTSP, seven were contacted and asked to take part in a 30 minute telephone interview; four clients agreed, one declined, and despite a number of attempts, two clients were not contactable. Telephone interviews were completed over several days and each participant received a gift voucher.

1.3.   Limitations of review

A key limitation of the review related to the availability of client data. The Program appeared to be set up well with potential data available from several client forms. But gaps in the data exist, mostly because the level of support provided to a very complex client group overshadowed the data requirements for the Program.

Additionally, there was limited time in which to undertake stakeholder consultations and interviews with clients, which may have impacted on data quality. Ideally, these tasks should have happened over a couple of weeks, rather than a number of days.

2. About The Community Housing Tenancy Support Program

Launch Housing has been delivering the Social Housing Advocacy Support Program (SHASP) in Melbourne for more than a decade. In 2010, the state government cut funding to SHASP, which meant that SHASP could only focus on public housing tenants. Significantly, the SHASP could no longer provide tenancy support to vulnerable tenants in community housing, which increased the risk of these tenancies breaking down.

Community housing providers are not able to deliver tenancy and additional support on current levels of funding. As a result, in 2015, Launch Housing applied for funding from the Yarra City Council to run a Program that would fill the breach. Yarra City Council provided funding of $50,000 for the Program.

This Program, known as the Community Housing Tenancy Support Program (CHTSP), aims to prevent homelessness by supporting people living in community housing whose tenancies are at risk, to maintain safe, appropriate and sustainable housing (refer to Appendix 1 for Program Logic).

2.1. Program objectives

The specific objectives of the CHTSP focus on:
- Stabilising tenancies by addressing issues that place the tenancy at risk;
- Improving clients' health, wellbeing, social and economic circumstances;
- Improving clients' capacity to manage their tenancy.

2.2. Target group and referrals

The target group for the CHTSP is any tenant living in community housing that is located in the City of Yarra, who is experiencing housing stress or is at risk of homelessness.

Referrals to CHTSP come mainly from a community housing provider but referrals are also accepted from a range of agencies, as well as self-referrals from tenants. An overview of the intake process is included as Appendix 2.

2.3. Resources

The CHTSP resources included:
- A 0.5 EFT position for 12 months, enabling a case load of six clients at any one time; and
- Brokerage funds of $20,000 (internally funded by Launch Housing).

2.4. Services provided

Support to the target group is provided through case management that is delivered via a flexible outreach model. Key services include:
- Provision of advice and information;
- Advocacy and support with legal/VCAT matters;
- Addressing rent arrears and develop payment plans;
- Delivering tenancy skills and financial counselling;
- Referring to other health and community services.

3. Review Findings

3.1. Profile of clients referred to CHTSP

Between March and November 2016, a total of 15 community housing tenants were referred to the CHTSP. Nearly all of these referrals were made by one community housing provider; however, one person was referred by a community legal centre and another by a community nursing service.

Household type and cultural background

Figure 1 highlights the most common characteristics for the client group. It shows that every tenant referred to the CHTSP was a single person household. Nearly all were Australian born; only two people were born in a non-English speaking country. No client identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

Gender and age

Almost all were men (n=12); only three were women. Most of the tenants (n=8) were older, aged between 46 to 55 years (the average age was 48.5 years); the youngest tenant was just 23 years old and the oldest 73.

Labour force status and income

Many were not in the labour force (n=10), that is, they were neither in paid work nor looking for paid work. Of the remaining five people: three were unemployed and looking for paid work, and two were employed. One of these people, however, lost their job just prior to receiving support from the CHTSP.

The main source of income for this group of tenants was the Disability Support Pension (n=9). Of the remaining tenants, two received the Newstart Allowance, one person was on Youth Allowance and two people had income from paid work. At the time of writing, one person, aged in their 70s, had no income.

Figure 1: Most common characteristics of CHTSP client group (N=15), March to November 2016
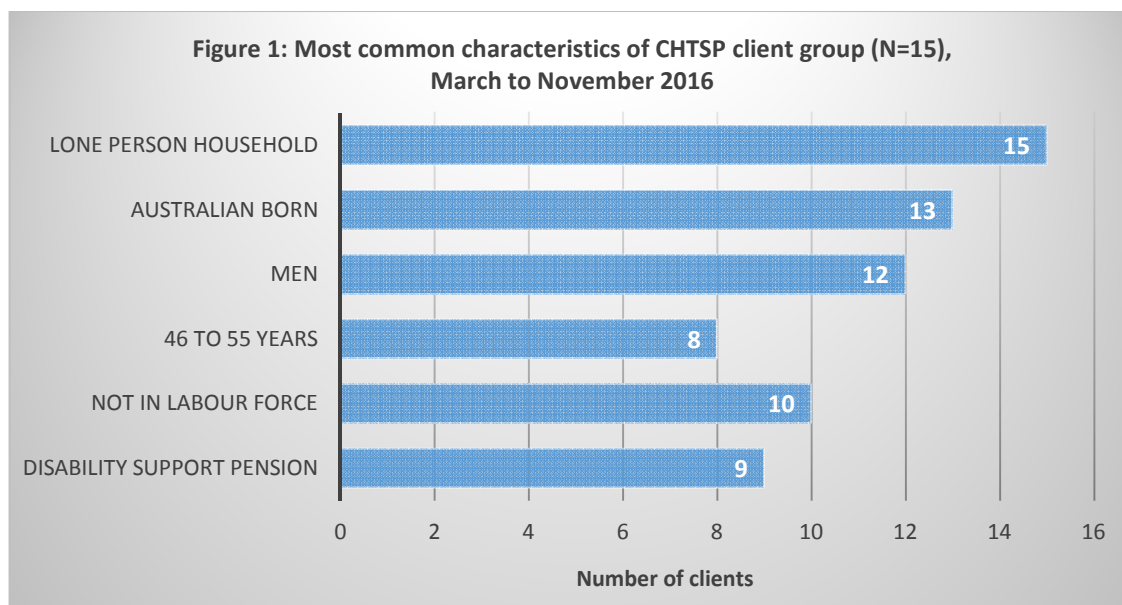
3.1.1. Primary reason for referral

This group of tenants was referred to the CHTSP because for all 15 of them, their tenancies were vulnerable. As shown in Figure 2, the two common issues threatening people's housing were rent arrears (n=7) or hoarding/squalor (n=5).

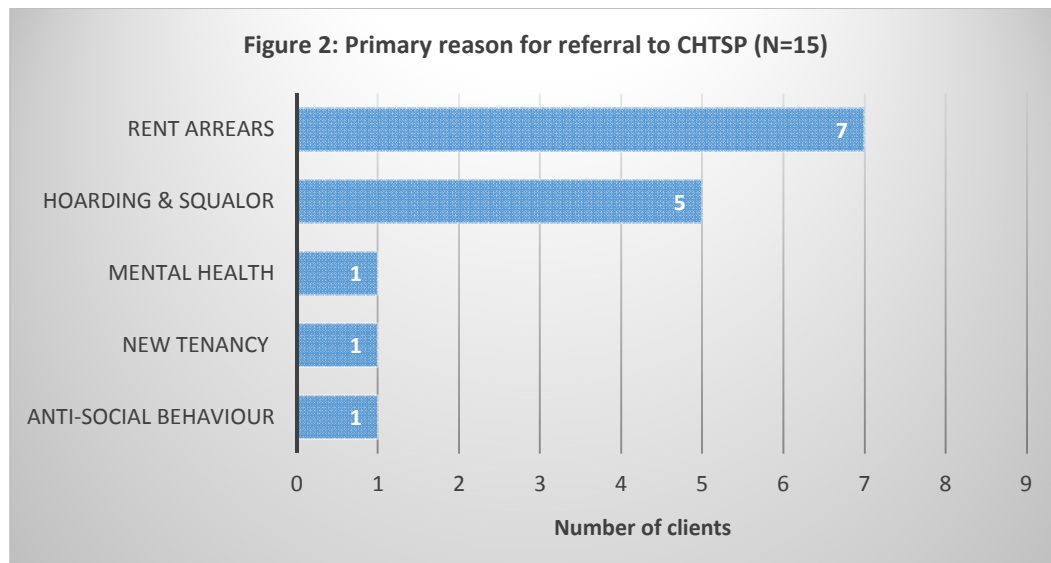The extent of hoarding/squalor has been severe; for example, in one case, the property was defined as 'uninhabitable', and in another an industrial clean was necessary:

> '[The tenant is] physically frail [and] has difficulty with day to day cleaning…an industrial clean is required… council assistance [is needed] to maintain'.

In both of these cases, clients experienced mental health issues, substance misuse and had acquired brain injuries.

The financial response needed to address these two common issues was considerable. Based on rental data that was available for only five tenants, the amount of rent that was overdue totalled $8,682.00; this is an average of $1,736.40 per client. Amounts ranged from $1,407.17 up to a maximum of $2,375.00. And, the cost of an industrial clean was $1,172.00. These are substantial sums of money especially for tenants who rely on income support.

Figure 2: Primary reason for referral to CHTSP (N=15)

Category	Number of clients
RENT ARREARS	7
HOARDING & SQUALOR	5
MENTAL HEALTH	1
NEW TENANCY	1
ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR	1

3.1.2. Multiple and complex needs

As shown in Figure 3, the most common presenting issues were financial difficulty (n=10), mental health (n=9), medical issues (n=8), housing crisis (n=8) and problematic drug/alcohol use (n=8).
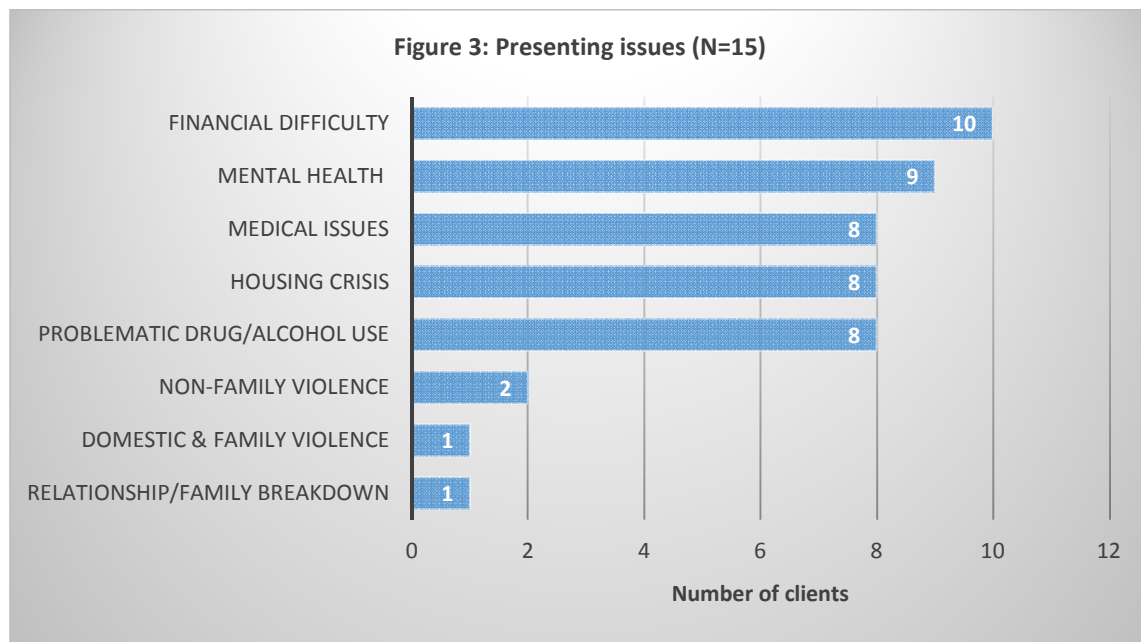
These figures mean that clients did not have a single difficulty to deal with; rather, they were dealing with multiple and complex difficulties. The data, in fact, indicate that each client was dealing with around six issues. It is likely that these interrelated and complex issues heightened the risk of a client's tenancy breaking down.

When asked how they would describe the client group, *complexity* was a recurring theme in stakeholder feedback (staff involved in referral or service delivery):

> 'Very complex client group, with a variety of presenting issues; the group were at risk of losing their tenancies…due to issues ranging from [alcohol and other drugs] (AOD), mental health and behavioural issues…'

> 'So far, all CHTSP clients have been single with the majority of referrals being for rent arrears followed by hoarding/squalor; most clients have multiple support needs and would be described as complex'.

> '[They are] often people who fall through the gaps of other services; presenting with complex needs, having a detrimental impact on their housing stability'.

Figure 3: Presenting issues (N=15)

Presenting issue	Number of clients
FINANCIAL DIFFICULTY	10
MENTAL HEALTH	9
MEDICAL ISSUES	8
HOUSING CRISIS	8
PROBLEMATIC DRUG/ALCOHOL USE	8
NON-FAMILY VIOLENCE	2
DOMESTIC & FAMILY VIOLENCE	1
RELATIONSHIP/FAMILY BREAKDOWN	1

3.1.3. Length of support (in months)

As shown if Figure 4, the most common length of support two to three months (n=7); the average length was 2.7 months. At one end of the range, four clients had received up to one month of support, while at the other end, fours clients had received four or more months of support.

Figure 4: Length of support (N=15)

Length of support	Number of clients
4 OR MORE MONTHS	4
2 - 3 MONTHS	7
UP TO 1 MONTH	4
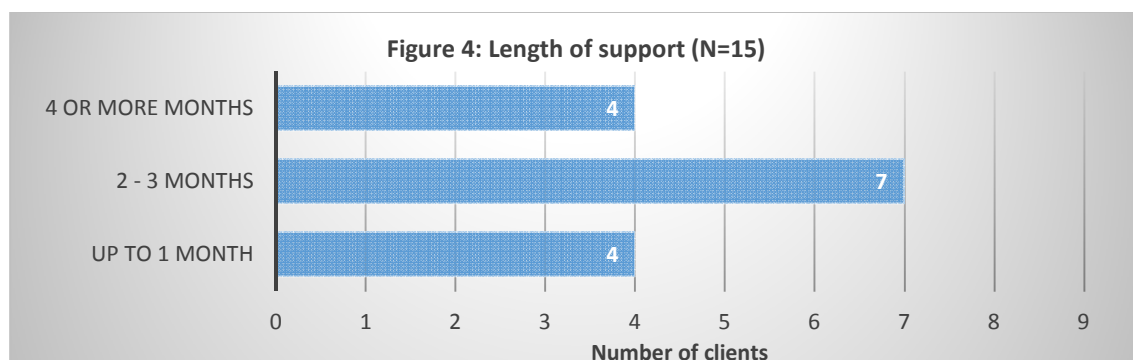
3.2. What outcomes were achieved for the client group?

3.2.1. Tenancies stabilised

As an overall goal, the analysis confirms that preventing tenancies from breaking down has been achieved by the CHTSP. The range of outcomes for clients was summarised by one stakeholder as follows:

> '[CHTSP has] assisted in maintaining tenancies. For example, Client A has [issue with] extreme hoarding and is at risk of losing their tenancy - CHTSP were able to support Client A to reduce [the] clutter and accept further support. [In another case], Client D struggles with living in a rooming house and controlling anger - CHTSP assisted in helping to build on resources and helped financially to clear [their] rental arrears; [this means that Client D will]…be eligible for a transfer to a self-contained property [soon]. Also, with Client E, [CHTSP] supported them in a VCAT hearing to understand the ramifications of [their] behaviour and the [meaning of a] VCAT compliance order'.

This was also reflected in the telephone interviews completed with four current clients; they agreed that their tenancies were stabilised as a direct result of the support provided by the CHTSP. They were generous with their feedback and candid about their circumstances. One person was living in a rooming house and had been receiving support from the CHTSP for the past eight months, explained:

> 'I suffer from depression and post-traumatic stress [disorder] which impacts on me holding on to my tenancy…the way things have been going, things are slowly working in my favour with help from [CHTSP worker],…helped me financially, pay off my rental arrears and to move out of the rooming house; I'm hopefully going into a self-contained [social housing] unit soon, only because [CHTSP] has paid off my arrears; that's been a big thing…it's given me a big step in the right direction with my accommodation, I feel I'll be a lot more stable when I get my own space'.

Another had been a ward of the state and had spent several years in jail, said:

> 'I came very close to taking my own life this year, spent three weeks in hospital and [then] I was confronted with a rental debt, [CHTSP worker] helped pay my arrears in rent, it helped me a lot…at that particular time I had no-one to turn to, I would have been homeless and [CHTSP worker] coming along the way they did and paying $1,400 debt, them doing that and how they conducted themselves helped me from day one; without programs like this there'd be a lot more people on the street'.

And yet another person, who had lost their job due to ill-health, and had experienced family breakdown was struggling to pay rent, said:

> 'Before [CHTSP], I was behind in my rent and was almost going to be evicted, [CHTSP worker] stepped in and advocated for me to be on a hardship program with [social housing landlord], now I've nearly paid back my arrears'.

3.2.2. Worker/client relationships

The nature of the support worker-client relationship is an important factor to delivering positive outcomes. It was the relationship with the CHTSP worker that was highlighted by this group of clients when they were asked to comment on the best thing about the Program:

> '[The worker] didn't make me feel like an idiot, I felt respected'.

> '[My worker] coming over to see me in my place and talking to me where I feel comfortable , or taking me out for a coffee, because I don't go out much so I feel isolated a bit…[my worker] was an absolute diamond, very caring and compassionate, sat down and listened to me'.

> '[My worker] rings me twice a week…just someone giving a shit about me, I don't have the words, [my worker] has been so incredible,…saved my life…makes me feel so looked after…it's been such a humbling experience for me because asking for help is not easy and they don't make me feel like a charity case'.

3.2.3. Tenant/landlord relationships

Other relationships were equally important, especially between tenant and landlord. As one client explained:

> 'I was so embarrassed because of the rent arrears, I felt really, really terrible and I thought there was no other way but to leave the tenancy…now I feel like I have a better relationship with [social housing landlord], thanks to my worker, I didn't know anyone there before, I now know they're approachable, and for them to be so understanding blew my mind…[my worker] became the bridge between [landlord] and me'.

Another client similarly said:

> '[My worker's] bridged the gap so I don't feel nervous about talking to [the landlord], they taught me that it's better to communicate than not'.

Stakeholders also underlined improved relations between landlord and tenant and how this contributes to stabilising tenancies:

> 'CHTSP have assisted clients who live in squalor and exhibit hoarding behaviours; this has resulted in an industrial clean taking place and VCAT action being averted, thus sustaining the tenancy. When tenants engage with CHTSP around property condition this drastically reduces the pressure they receive from [the social housing landlord]'.

> 'Evictions [have been] prevented; tenancy has been made safer and more secure; relationships with [social housing] landlords made more productive with a positive impact on security of housing'.

> 'Open communication with services; the CHTSP worked as the core contact for people's support, they were consistent, responsive and followed through with what was required'.

3.2.4. Referrals/links to services

An important aspect of CHTSP was linking clients to other community services. Before being referred to CHTSP, clients were unaware of the support available. Indeed, it was the case that clients were not aware of other services, or as already highlighted above, felt embarrassed or unable to contact support services.

As illustrated in Table 1, Program data indicated that a total of nine clients were referred to a range of other external services, which included financial counselling, health, and property cleaning.

Table 1: Type of service clients linked into by CHTSP (n=9)	
Service	**Number of clients**
Financial counselling	3
Royal District Nursing Service Homeless Persons Program	3
Royal District Nursing Service HIV Team	1
General Practitioner	1
Mediation	1
Hoarding support/cleaning	2

One client said:

> '[CHTSP] contacted me and have linked me in to other services…they put me in contact with a financial counsellor so that's my next step'.

This referral and linking in to additional services was greatly appreciated; but equally valued was that the actual contact with an external service was facilitated by the CHTSP worker, as explained by one client:

> '[My worker] referred me to so many services that I didn't know about – I would have had no idea about those services…I was having a lot of trouble getting referred to services but the way [my worker] linked me in was seamless, [they] linked me in to many services and [my worker] would call ahead and tell them about my case so I wouldn't have to and that made me less anxious…the nature of [my worker's] knowledge and feeling of support, it blows me away'.

As noted in the stakeholder survey, referring clients to other services benefitted them in terms of their health and financial circumstances:

> '[Clients experience] health improvements – physical and mental; financial improvements as a result of being referred to and engaged with financial counselling'.

> '[Clients] linked in with physical and mental health supports, linked in with financial counselling; referred to community education program; [clients] motivated to engage in other supports unassisted'.

3.3. Do the Program outcomes match the Program objectives?

In this section, the CHTSP's outcomes are presented according to each of the Program's three stated objectives: stabilising tenancies; improving health, wellbeing social and economic status; and improving the capacity to self-manage a tenancy.

3.3.1. Objective 1: Stabilise tenancies by addressing issues that place the tenancy at risk

Model of support

An important aspect of support is the underlying framework or model used to deliver that support or service. The service delivery model underlying the Social Housing Advocacy and Support Program (SHASP) provided a template for the design and implementation of the CHTSP:

> *'CHTSP takes well established tenancy support practices from SHASP and implements them quickly and effectively with community housing tenants; co-location with [community housing provider] helps to build and maintain a healthy and collaborative relationship'.*

As summed up by one stakeholder, communication, consistency, a nd responsiveness strengthened the CHTSP:

> *'Open communication with services; the CHTSP worked as the core contact for people's support, they were consistent, responsive and followed through with what was required'.*

As illustrated in the program logic (Appendix 1), CHTSP was designed to provide support through a flexible assertive outreach model, one that would target two distinct groups of eligible tenants. One group would need only a brief period of support; the other, a more intensive case management approach.

Stakeholders agreed that an outreach model that delivers flexible, case management support is effective, and indeed, is far more effective and appropriate for this cohort than a two week brief intervention response:

> *'Case management delivered through an outreach model works well for this group. Clients' lives can be chaotic so having a worker that has some flexibility to meet with them in the community is useful. A medium term (three months) case management model has been proven effective in both CHTSP and SHASP to sustain tenancies, although the ability to extend this is useful if progress is being made. For hoarding clients I would argue that a longer term case management approach would be appropriate…People's tenancy problems and underlying issues cannot be addressed through short-term support and there is a shortage of long-term support options in the community for complex clients'.*

> *'CHTSP's was flexible, person-centred, holistic and intensive. They worked to build a strong rapport with people which was crucial…CHTSP worked closely with other services to provide well informed and relevant approaches. They required a referral and assessment which meant the goals were specific and individual. CHTSP was clear with how they could work with the person and provided updates'.*

As shown in Table 2, It was anticipated that 50 eligible tenants would be referred to CHTSP for brief intervention (defined as two weeks of support), and that this would subsequently result in 35 tenancies (70%) being stabilised. With longer-term case management (defined as three to four months), the target was 24 referrals of which 17 (70%) tenancies would be stabilised.

Officially starting in February 2016, referrals to CHTSP began in March 2016. Between then and November 2016, a total of 15 eligible tenants have been referred to the CHTSP, of which 8 (53%) have been stabilised. Figure 5 shows that of the remaining seven tenancies referred, two were still vulnerable; but support for these clients is ongoing and it is highly likely that this will result in positive outcomes before the Program ends in February 2017.

In a further two cases, the outcome for tenants was unknown due to lost contact, yet they had received some level of support. Another two tenants did not want to engage with the Program, despite having given consent for the referral to be made, and one tenant had relinquished their community housing property.

Table 2: Program targets and outcomes achieved	
Target - support 74 eligible tenants	**Outcome**
50 referrals for brief intervention/advocacy	Nil referred
Stabilise 35 tenancies (70%)	*NA*
24 referrals for medium term case management	15 tenants referred
Stabilise 16.8 tenancies (70%)	*8 tenancies stabilised (53%)*

Excluding these five cases (no contact/did not engage/left property) from the final analysis means that eight out of the 10 'active' tenancies were stabilised, which is an outcome of 80%; this rate is above the original target of 70%.

Figure 5: Status of client tenancy (N=15)
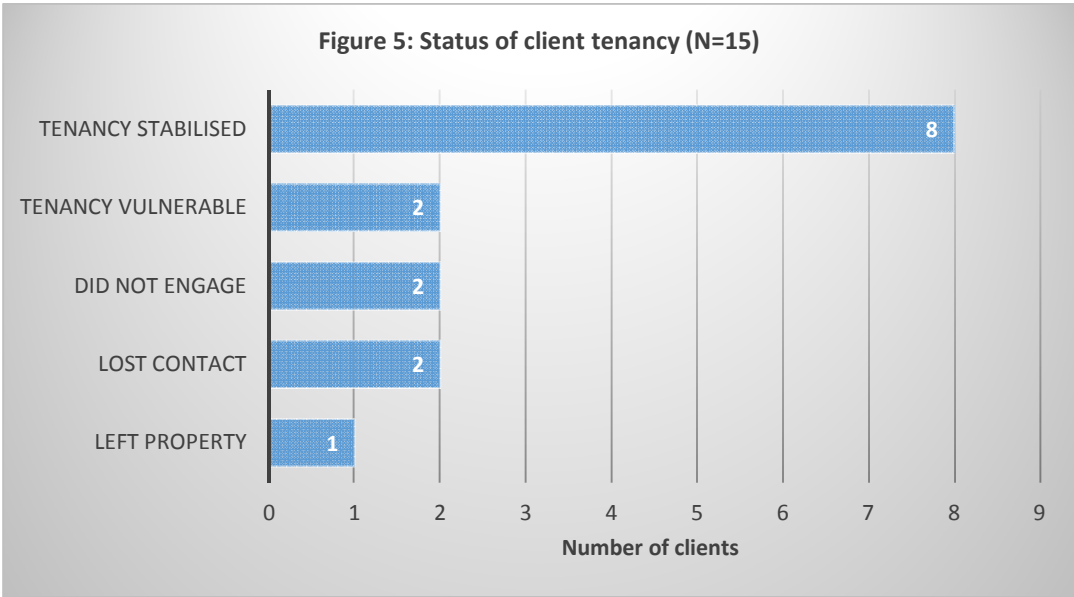
Brokerage

One of the main mechanisms used to stabilise these tenancies was availability of brokerage funds. With a total of $20,000 in brokerage available to assist clients, this equated to around $833 for each of the 24 potential tenants that were anticipated to be referred to the program.

- Since March 2016, a total of $10,434 has been spent, most of which has been used to cover rental arrears for five clients, while in one case, it was used to have a property cleaned;
- Based on these six cases, an average of $1,739 has been spent per client.

According to stakeholder feedback, the financial support that was available was a crucial component of the CHTSP because it ensured an immediate and practical response:

> 'CHTSP has been funded well in its first year allowing clients to access money to assist with sustaining their tenancy through rent assistance and cleans for example. Not having to refer on for financial assistance has meant that support can be delivered more quickly'.

Relationships/partnerships and advocacy

Relationships/partnerships were another mechanism central to effective service delivery:

> 'Good relationships with [community housing provider] – it makes advocacy easier around rent arrears and property condition issues; flexible outreach support – [this] enables engagement from clients who are typically hard to reach and hesitant to leave their home or have trouble remembering appointments'.

Indeed, the advocacy that was enabled through such relationships/partnerships yielded some exceptional outcomes. As described by one stakeholder, the important advocacy work undertaken by CHTSP lead to a change in housing provider policy that effectively reduced tenants' risk of eviction and possible homelessness. As explained by one stakeholder:

> 'A number of tenancies that were at risk due to rent arrears have now been stabilised through a combination of financial assistance and advocacy [and] support to establish a payment plan. CHTSP has managed to advocate for a tenant to be put on an indefinite hardship plan due to mental and physical health concerns. Through conversations with [social housing] management, CHTSP have successfully advocated for the hardship policy to be reviewed…tenants previously were eligible for [only] three months reduced rent if they lost their job [and were living] in [what is termed] an "employed property" – [but the change in policy means] they can now apply for indefinite reduced rent if they cannot find employment or are unable to work'.

3.3.2. Objective 2: Improve participants' health, wellbeing, social and economic outlook

The extent to which clients experienced positive outcomes in health, wellbeing, social and economic circumstances was difficult to ascertain from Program data. However, based on feedback from the four client interviews, these areas did improve.

The four clients who were interviewed were presented with a list of specific items, as detailed in Table 3, and asked whether there was an improvement in each, as a result of the support received from CHTSP.

The snapshot provided in Table 3 shows that for this group of clients:

- Overall, improvements were noted across a range of health and wellbeing indicators;
- Improvements were noted in relationships with friends but only one client reported improvements in relationships with neighbours;
- However, there were no improvements in family relationships although three clients noted that it was not applicable.

Table 3: As a result of the support you receive from the Program, do you feel…(n=4)			
	Yes	No	N.A
You are better able to manage daily activities (cooking & cleaning)?	4	-	-
That your mental health has improved?	3	-	1
There has been a change to your alcohol &/or drug use?	3	-	1
That your sense of safety has improved?	2	1	1
That your relationship with neighbours has improved?	1	1	2
That your relationship with friends has improved?	3	-	1
That you are more connected to your local community?	3	-	1
That your life as a whole has improved?	3	-	1
That your relationship with your family has improved?	-	1	3

3.3.3. Objective 3: Improve participants' capacity to manage tenancy

- As shown in Table 4, the clients who were interviewed reported being in a better position to manage their tenancies, and
- They also agreed that their financial situation was better as a result of the support received; one client said it was not applicable.

Table 4: As a result of the support you receive from the Program, do you feel…(n=4)			
	Yes	No	N.A
That you are better able to manage your tenancy (pay rent on time)?	4	-	-
That things are better for you financially (debt repaid, budgeting in place)?	3	-	1

3.4. In what ways could the CHTSP be improved?

If there were any shortcomings, gaps or things that could be improved about the Program, it was not obvious to the clients who were interviewed. For them, the Program functioned well and there was nothing that they would change about it. One client remarked: *'I feel 100% supported by [CHTSP]'*; this sums up the overall sentiment among this group of clients.

Without the support of the CHTSP, clients noted that their futures would have been especially bleak:

> *'I'd be pretty cold…homeless, I wouldn't be in nearly the same mental and physical state of mind'.*
> *'I would probably be in jail'.*
> *'[CHTSP worker] saved my life'.*

3.4.1. Improved resourcing

According to stakeholder feedback, resourcing is the central weakness of the Program, particularly in relation to the staffing level which impacts the number of tenancies that can be supported:

> *'So far CHTSP has only supported tenants from [one community housing provider], [this provider] indicated that they have no shortage of tenants that they could refer to CHTSP…this is supported by the number of [their] clients that we see on the VCAT lists. CHTSP is currently funded at 0.5 EFT which carries a case load of six [clients] - there are 1,003 community housing tenancies in the City of Yarra managed by [this community housing provider] alone...a 0.5 position is clearly not enough to provide support to this many tenancies'.*

> *'What was put in place was great, but we could have [supported] many more [clients]. The case load seemed to be okay, but more workers would be needed to [support] the client base at [community housing organisation]'.*

> *'There are clients who have to be waitlisted when they would benefit from immediate support…'.*

The limited EFT meant that collaborating with more than one community housing provider was also restricted, and brief intervention was highlighted as an unsuitable response for the client group:

> *'[CHTSP] needs more time for relationship building with various community housing organisations…only [one community housing provider] really embraced the program. Funding model needs to be more focussed on medium term support (case management) rather than brief interventions, as this is the client group that needs [a level of ongoing] assistance'.*

3.4.2. More brokerage

Given the critical role of brokerage in providing an immediate practical response to extremely vulnerable tenancies, analysis of available data suggests that the current level of brokerage may not be adequate. Table 5 shows that:

- On average, the actual amount of money spent per client was $1,739, almost double the original amount of $883.
- Based on available data, overall, more than half (52%) of the $20,000 in brokerage was needed to prevent six tenants from losing their accommodation.
- Put another way, a quarter (n=6) of the originally anticipated clients (n=24) required more than half of the available financial support to save their tenancy.

Table 5: Brokerage available for CHTSP clients		
Total $ available	**Number of clients**	**Average $ per client**
$20,000	N = 24	$883
Actual $ spent Mar to Nov 2016		
$10,434	N = 6	$1,739

- This implies that in order to assist more vulnerable tenancies, the overall brokerage amount would need to be doubled.
- Alternatively, tenants would need to be referred to the CHTSP a lot sooner, before their rental arrears increase to such dramatically high levels.

3.4.3. Improved data collection

According to the CHTSP's program logic (Appendix 1), the range of documents dealing with the intake and progress of participants suggested that the administrative data would be extensive.

The amount of work being undertaken by a 0.5 staff member working with a caseload of six clients, all of whom have had difficult and complex histories, is extraordinary. Within this context, client circumstances have necessarily demanded priority over data reporting requirements. The resulting data gaps have been a challenge to this review.

The CHTSP would benefit from improved and streamlined data collection measures; this would greatly assist with ongoing monitoring and future reviews.

Appendix 1: Community Housing Tenancy Support Program – Program Logic

Overall aim/vision:
- The program aims to prevent homelessness by supporting people living in community housing whose tenancies are at risk, to maintain safe, appropriate and sustainable housing.

Specific aims/objectives:
- Stabilise tenancies by addressing issues that place the tenancy at risk
- Improve participants' health, wellbeing, social and economic outlook
- Improve participants' capacity to manage tenancy

Resources/Inputs (context)	Service Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Overall Goal
Funding • $50,000 from City of Yarra for 12 mths Brokerage • $20,000 Staffing • 0.5 EFT Facilities • Office space • Use of pool car • Phone, stationery, postage Participants • 50 eligible tenants for brief intervention / advocacy • 24 eligible tenants for medium term case management	Program planning & development • Service promotion • Assertive outreach model providing brief intervention or case management Referral/intake • Eligibility reviewed • Allocation Assessment • Support needs reviewed • Case plan developed • Monitor/review case plan Service provision • Advice & information • Advocacy with legal/VCAT • Address rent arrears & make payment plans • Deliver tenancy skills training & financial counselling • Refer/link to other health & community services (AOD, RDNS, MH, HACC)	Number of eligible participants supported Case plans developed Amount of brokerage per participant Amount of time spent with participant Number of participants who took part in training/skills development Number of participants referred/linked to external agencies Number completed Wellbeing Index	70% tenancies stabilised • Medium term case management clients • Brief intervention clients Health improved • Mental health • AOD use Wellbeing improved Social improved • Relationships with family & others • Anti-social behaviour decreased • Daily living skills (cooking, cleaning) • Connected to local community networks Economic • Rent paid • Debt repaid • Budgeting improved Participants empowered • Skills to manage tenancy	Tenancies stabilised & sustained & homelessness prevented

Contd:

Resources/Inputs (context)	Service Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Overall Goal
Documents • Referral form • Assessment • Client Case Plan Form • Closed File Summary Form • Wellbeing Index • Complaint Information Sheet • Exit interview Policy & Guidelines	Exit planning • Exit interview with participant • Exit letter to participant • Case closed • File summary to community housing provider Monitoring/evaluation			

Program assumptions (context)
• Without tailored support for vulnerable tenancies, community housing tenants are at risk of experiencing homelessness. • Intervening before a tenancy breaks down achieves better outcomes for tenants than intervening after a tenancy is lost. • Intervening before a tenancy breaks down is more cost-effective than intervening after a tenancy is lost.