A Guide to Supported Housing Partnerships

2015-16
Introduction

North Coast Community Housing Company Ltd (“NCCH”) currently works in a range of formal partnerships with support services providers (“support providers”) in order to ensure that those most vulnerable in our community have access to local social housing. The partnerships, where NCCH deliver tenancy and property management services (generally from properties within its existing portfolio) whilst the support provider delivers ongoing support/care services to the tenant, are conducted according to management and service arrangements that best promote the sustainability of each tenancy.

This Guide:

- Provides a background to the role and work of NCCH
- Outlines the objectives of supported housing agreements under our Housing Partnerships Program
- Explains the basic partnership model used and how services are delivered under that model
- Provides information for providers in relation to participating in the annual Expression of Interest process and completing the Registration Form

1. North Coast Community Housing Company Ltd

NCCH is a non-profit housing Company providing social and affordable, community-based rental housing for people in housing need and on low or moderate incomes. We provide housing in the local government areas of Northern NSW including Clarence Valley, Richmond Valley, Kyogle, Ballina, Byron, Lismore and Tweed Heads.

NCCH is a registered community housing provider under the Housing Act 2001 and is fully accredited against the national community housing standards.

All tenants must be eligible for public housing at the time of selection and they will pay subsidised rents, generally up to a maximum of 25% of their household income. The current tenant profile reflects highly diverse and multicultural local communities.

The organisation is managed by a Board of Directors and the day-to-day operations are carried out by permanent paid staff.

Housing portfolio

As at August 2015, NCCH provides housing to almost 950 local households.

These are subject to a range of different housing projects and funding arrangements but are primarily comprised of properties for which NCCH has full management responsibility. The company also operates a ‘headleasing’ program, where more than 150 properties are leased from private landlords and local real estate agents.

The property portfolio of the company seems set to continue to grow. NCCH has developed and built new social housing dwellings and has also delivered its first homes under its Affordable Housing Program (aimed people who may not be eligible for social housing and are unable to afford accommodation located close to their place of employment).
Part of the NCCH development program included three purpose-built group homes, providing accommodation for 12 single adults, supported by the Department of Family & Community Services (Ageing, Disability and Home Care)

**Target Groups for Assistance**

The company has agreed upon the following target groups for housing provision.

1. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People

Our Aboriginal communities continue to identify the lack of affordable and appropriate housing as an issue for their people and their culture. Overcrowding due to large extended families and the lack of viable housing options is one example of the problems being experienced. The private rental market remains difficult to access due to the lack of appropriate housing and discrimination by private rental landlords.

2. People Living with Disabilities

People with a physical and/or intellectual disability have significant difficulty accessing appropriate and secure affordable housing. There is a very limited amount of modified, accessible housing in the private rental market and people with disabilities continue to report discrimination. Whilst identified as a priority group for social housing for some time, there still remains a shortage of appropriate accommodation.

The north coast region includes a significant population of people with psychiatric problems and complex needs. The region has a noted inadequate level of appropriate local services and supported housing options for this group, in comparison to metropolitan and other regional areas of NSW. NCCH has a demonstrated history in delivering and sustaining the tenancies (in conjunction with local support service providers), e.g. through the Housing and Support Initiative Program (HASI) of some of the most vulnerable people in our communities.

3. People at risk of homelessness

A clear obligation for all community housing providers is to respond comprehensively and effectively to issues of regional homelessness. This includes developing strategies to prevent exits of people into homelessness, shifting from crisis responses to long term solutions and ensuring that tenancies for our people are sustainable.

For the north coast region this will includes (but is not limited to):

- Assisting tenants with exit-points from supported and crisis services
- Responding to the needs of people at risk of harm in their current environment, including women escaping violence
- Developing appropriate responses to the high rates of youth homelessness in the region
- Addressing issues of our homeless indigenous people in integrated partnerships with local ATSI groups, crisis providers and other appropriate government and non-government services.
4. Older people

The increasing housing needs of lower income older people, particularly single income households, are well identified. NCCH will continue to offer priority to those older people in high housing need.

2. Supported Housing Partnerships

2.1 Selecting the Tenants

Generally, tenants for the majority of general housing properties managed by NCCH are drawn from the common social housing waiting list, i.e. the NSW Housing Register. The relative priority needs of tenants eligible for social housing are assessed and housing allocations are then made according to a matching of the tenant’s need with the available property.

However, our properties managed through formal supported housing partnerships with service providers are generally allocated “outside” of the requirements of NCCH to use the NSW Housing Register. Whilst tenants must still be eligible for social housing and must be listed on the register, the housing allocation process works differently. Essentially, each tenant is nominated for the property by the support provider for those properties subject to a formal agreement.

Whilst NCCH must still maintain a final approval role of tenants for its properties, the tenant nomination process is conducted by the support provider.

2.2 The Partnership Model

The basic partnership model used by NCCH for the development of new formal partnerships arrangements in relation to medium term and long term housing is shown in Diagram 1.

Diagram 1: Standard NCCH Partnership Model
The general principles of the model are:

- The tenant will be eligible for social housing and have demonstrated needs for ongoing support in order to sustain a tenancy.

- The tenant will be nominated to each project by the support provider (and is therefore generally exempt from the usual procedural requirements for the selection of tenants by NCCH from the NSW Housing Register).

- NCCH will have a direct, legally binding relationship with the tenant under residential tenancies legislation (or a licensee agreement where the supported housing arrangement includes full-time residential care services for a group of residents). The clear separation of the rights of the clients with NCCH (as our tenant or licensee) and their rights as a user of the Support Provider's services is considered one of the strengths of this support housing model.

- Tenure lengths can vary according to the needs of the tenant and the aims of each approved project/proposal. However, NCCH is committed to providing long-term housing solutions for its community and does not generally favour the provision of transitional housing for clients.

- The management agreement with the Support Provider may cover a range of separate tenancies (or projects); however the aims, specific terms and protocols for each tenancy will be detailed in a single broad agreement between NCCH and the Support Provider.

2.3 Encouraging Flexibility and Innovation

The standard model (see Diagram 1) will be flexible. Innovative projects, that may require arrangements that vary from the standard model, will be encouraged where the arrangements may:

- further promote the sustainability of each tenancy;

- make more efficient use of resources;

- are generally more applicable to the needs of the tenant or the target group identified for housing;

- add to the continuing piloting and trialling of new ways of promoting tenancy sustainability;

- do not undermine the standards, principles or policies of NCCH, including the agreement terms policies outlined in section 5.2.4 below.
2.4 Current Partners

Current supported housing partners of NCCH include:

- The Accommodation Network
- House With No Steps
- FSG
- NRSDC Connecting Home
- CASSI
- New Horizons Enterprises, including HASI and Community Justice programs
- Multitask
- OTCP
- On-Focus Casino
- Lifebridge Australia

3. Housing Partnerships Program

3.1 HPP Principles

In 2010, NCCH established its Housing Partnerships Program (HPP), in order to progressively increase the total number of properties being managed under formal agreements with support providers. In addition to assisting more people who required ongoing support to sustain a tenancy, the program would also ensure that:

- There were clear criteria for the approval of new projects (including criteria for expanding arrangements with existing partners)
- There would be improved forward planning, in relation to the number of properties being allocated to the HPP each year, so new projects could be more strategically developed with both existing and new partners
- The HPP would be more heavily promoted in the community, in order to ensure access to partnerships included all local agencies who had an interest in (and the resources required to commit to) a supported housing partnership with NCCH
- An open, transparent and informed process would be used as the basis for the selection of new supported housing projects
- Greater flexibility by NCCH would be shown when developing the terms and conditions of new projects in order to (both) produce more appropriate tenancy management and also to encourage new innovative ideas of service delivery
• Greater emphasis would be put on the development stage of the partnership process, particularly on relationship building between those employees of both partner organisations who would carry the day-to-day management responsibility for each project

3.2 Expressions of Interest

In order to improve its planning (and the planning needs of the participating Support Providers) for future supported housing projects, NCCH conducts an open Expression of Interest (EOI) process for all agencies in the community seeking to develop supported housing agreements with NCCH. This EOI process was first used in 2011.

All registrations received will be assessed according to the agreed selection criteria for supported housing projects.

Projects will be further assessed according to priority and NCCH will commence project and agreement negotiations for those proposals on the basis of relative priority. The commencement of priority projects can be “staged” according to the likely availability of properties and the needs of the Support Providers.

The outcome of each EOI process will set the foundation for the majority of future partnership arrangements. However, NCCH also acknowledges that support providers will need to be able to continually access our service and seek new opportunities for working in partnership on an ongoing basis. NCCH will remain open to these approaches for community agencies, outside of the EOI process.

Support providers will need to complete the Registration form and are encouraged to contact NCCH to discuss their proposal prior to lodgement (see Section 5 for contact information)

Whilst the majority of new housing projects will be developed as an outcome of this annual Expression of Interest process, NCCH will accept proposals from support service providers at any time.

3.3 Selection Criteria

All registrations will be assessed through use of the following criteria:

• The client group for the project has been identified a target group for assistance by NCCH

• The Support Provider has previously demonstrated a capacity to provide the type and level of services required and will have the resources to meet the levels of client support required in a partnership with NCCH

• The Support Provider has established a reputation for professionalism and in achieving high outcomes for its client group

• The organisational and cultural values of the Support Provider are in line with the NCCH values of professionalism, compassion, accountability, respect and safety

• NCCH has, or is most likely to be able to in the future, the number, type and location of properties required for the project

• The project is financially responsible and does not pose an undue or substantial risk to NCCH
• The proposed management model meets the principles and policy requirements of NCCH, as stated in this section.

• The selection process for clients used by the support providers is open and transparent and targets those households with the highest housing needs

• The Support Provider agrees to enter into a formal written partnership with NCCH and meaningfully participate in ongoing reviews of the partnership.

NCCH will highly consider projects that provide for an innovative approach to supported housing provision;

4. A Guide to the Registration Form

4.1 Overview

All service providers wishing to establish a formal supported housing agreement with NCCH must complete the standard Registration form.

The registration form establishes:

• General organisation details, including contact information, history and general services provided;

• Proposed project details, including number and type of property/s required, identified target group, support required and expected tenure lengths

• A needs assessment of the identified target group, including housing support needs

• Capacity to deliver the services required

• Proposed supported housing management model, where it may differ from the standard NCCH model

• References from other groups currently working with the Support Provider

Those Support Providers, subject to an existing supported housing management agreement with NCCH, will be encouraged to register new projects using the standard Registration form. However, where it is considered that the Support Provider has already clearly established need and (have addressed relevant criteria, the requirement for registration can be waived.

4.2 The Registration form

Sections 1 & 2: Your organisation

Organisational details and a single contact person (to further discuss the proposal) are required.

The NCCH is able to establish agreements with unincorporated services/organisations or can work with a coalition of more than one service. For unincorporated organisations, NCCH will need to be satisfied that the service will meet the required legal and financial standards, particularly in relation to WHS and employee and operational insurance coverage.
**Section 3: The Project**

Outline the proposed project.

The proposed length of tenure for each client is at the discretion of the Support Provider and may differ for each client group.

See our comments in section 2.2 of this information package, concerning the clear preference of NCCH to offer long term housing solutions to clients.

If your proposal is not for long term housing, you will need to clearly explain how a fixed-term transitional housing arrangement will benefit your client/s. You will also need to detail the proposed exit-points from the fixed-term tenancy and outline other strategies that will be in place to prevent the tenant from becoming homeless.

Given the limitations on the number of vacant or new properties that become available with NCCH, we will rarely agree to provide a property for the initial supported tenancy and then also an alternate property as an "exit-point" for that client. It is generally the responsibility of the support provider to locate alternative housing, although NCCH will work in partnership with the provider on a transition plan for each client where required.

Continuing tenancies can be offered in situations where either the tenant will need support on an ongoing basis or where the support services provided may be gradually reduced until the tenant is able to sustain the tenancy independently. At that point, the support agreement will lapse and the client will remain a tenant of NCCH.

**Section 4: The Clients**

NCCH targets its housing to those members of the community considered in the highest need. Each project will need to be able to demonstrate how the proposed client group meets the targets set by NCCH.

The "general needs/issues" of this group will generally relate to the difficulties of your clients in meeting their housing needs through the private rental market.

*Section 4.4 asks for provision of information about the availability of other housing options for your clients. This should include any other supported housing or crisis housing options that are available locally.*
Section 5: The Service

NCCH works in partnership with organisations that provide varying levels of support. NCCH need to be satisfied that:

- The services proposed for this client group are appropriate and will be of a minimum likely to sustain each tenancy for your client group over the specified tenure length
- The organisation has expertise in delivering the type of services required.
- Funding for the services is secure and ongoing.

Section 6: The Properties and the Management Agreement with NCCH

Varying property types and sizes may not be available in certain locations and therefore we suggest you discuss your property type and locational needs with NCCH prior to specifying your needs. We also suggest that wherever possible, you select the broadest range of sizes, types and locations available. In short, if we consider your project to be the highest priority but we believe we will not be able to provide the accommodation requested, the project will not proceed.

In deciding the number of bedrooms required for each household type, NCCH is guided by its clear occupancy standards. A copy of the standards is included as an Appendix to this guide.

“Share housing” or housing individuals in a group tenancy will be considered and can be a very effective use of available resources. However, we also understand that such situations can be problematic for some clients groups with ongoing support needs. For those groups wishing to provide share housing for its clients, NCCH will want to discuss the arrangements with the provider (as part of the project development stage) to ensure that all contingencies are considered.

Section 6.4 asks for your required commencement time for the project. It may be that the actual commencement date is determined by property availability more than by the needs of either NCCH or the support provider. However this information provides us with a guide and assists us with making some early decisions about staging the commencement of priority projects.

Section 6.5 relates to the standard agreement between NCCH and the support provider. A copy of the standard agreement is available from NCCH. This standard agreement is considered the starting point for more detailed discussions about project management arrangements between NCCH and the Support Provider. However if there are terms and conditions in our standard agreement that you feel may need to change in order to achieve better outcomes for your clients, please outline them in this section.
A model agreement is also available for the operation of group homes, where residential care services are to be provided on a full-time basis. This agreement contains additional information and guidance in relation to the unique circumstances of these supported housing arrangements.

Section 7: References

We require the name and contact details of two referees for your service.

It is preferred that these referees have worked in collaboration with your service previously (or are currently doing so). You should not nominate anyone who currently has direct involvement in your organisation, e.g. a current Director or Management Committee member.

Section 8: Additional Information

Use this section to provide any additional information not already covered in the Registration form. You can attach as much additional information to your Registration form as you consider is necessary. This can include service brochures, annual reports, service reviews, etc.

5. Further information

All questions about the program, registration form or the expression of interest process should be directed to:

Colin Jones
Housing & Communities General Manager, NCCH
Tel: (02) 6627 5312
colin.jones@ncchc.org.au
Appendix A

CURRENT OCCUPANCY STANDARDS OF NCCH

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household Type</th>
<th>Dwelling Size Required</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single Person</td>
<td>1 Bedroom*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple with no children</td>
<td>2 Bedrooms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sole parent or couple with one child</td>
<td>2 Bedrooms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sole parent or couple with 2 or 3 children</td>
<td>3 Bedrooms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sole parent or couple with 4 or more children</td>
<td>4 Bedrooms +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group: 2 people or more</td>
<td>Minimum 2 Bedrooms, plus an additional bedroom for each independent occupant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Single people are often housed in 2 bedroom units due to the lack of availability of single unit accommodation

PROPERTIES MANAGED BY NCCH (BY TYPE & LGA)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LGA</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Unit 1br</th>
<th>Unit 2br</th>
<th>Unit 3br</th>
<th>House 2br</th>
<th>House 3br</th>
<th>House 4+ brs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ballina</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Byron Shire</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarence Valley</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyogle (Tabulam)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lismore</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richmond</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tweed Shire</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above information is included as a guide for applicants to the current location and type of accommodation managed by NCCH. It should be noted that the vacancy rates for areas will vary.