

## Rapid Re-Housing

Rapid re-housing is premised on a 'housing first' philosophy, which prioritises getting people into housing as soon as possible, so they can address the issues that contributed to their homelessness. Rapid re-housing works for individuals and households who are experiencing homelessness and need temporary assistance to find and secure a tenancy. It is primarily aimed at households that have maintained tenancies in the past, and works with them to secure new tenancies, mainly in the private rental market. This requires both financial assistance to set up a tenancy and time limited rent subsidies.

The longer people are homeless, the harder it is to turn their situation around, as existing health and financial issues compound. It also becomes harder to maintain the relationships and support that keep people in housing.

This section of the paper discusses dealing with households that are newly homeless or have maintained a tenancy in the past.

### What works?

Rapid re-housing programs have proven to be effective overseas, particularly in the United States, and there is a growing body of evidence to suggest they are working in Victoria. Predominantly focused on housing families, the programs help households secure and maintain housing as well as deal with related issues that could put the new tenancy at risk. They also operate in the knowledge that most families have the skills needed to live independently.

An example of a Victorian rapid re-housing type program is Accommodation Options For Families (AOF). Between July 2010 and September 2011, four services in the AOF assisted 175 families that had all moved multiple times in the 12 months prior to AOF intervention. Following AOF assistance, 65 percent of the families were in accommodation with medium or long term tenures.

### Key Features of Rapid Re-housing Programs

- **Targeted:** programs target households that are recently homeless and have held a tenancy in the past
- **Fast:** the focus is on 'rapid' not immediate re-housing – depending on the local market it can take days or weeks, but the priority is getting people into permanent housing rather than getting them 'housing ready'

- **Securing housing:** helps households secure tenancies by building relationships with landlords, negotiating with landlords and encouraging them to take part through incentives such as increased bonds and guaranteed rent repayment
- **Rent subsidies:** having flexible rent subsidies to keep the property affordable for the household are essential to rapid re-housing programs. Guidelines in the United States provide up to 18 months of subsidies, but many programs have success with shorter durations
- **Assistance to retain a home:** support is a necessary, but temporary, part of the program. The aim of providing support is to give households the time and space to address the issues that lead to homelessness. This includes establishing links to mainstream services where there is an ongoing need for support.

Research from the United States shows that subsidised housing is enough to end the cycle of homelessness for most families. It should be noted that the United States has a different social security structure to Australia; however, the success of rapid re-housing in the U.S means that how these programs can be adapted in Australia should be explored further.