

# Housing for Mental Health

## 2008 - 2012



STATEMENT BY THE MENTAL HEALTH COALITION OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA



# Safe, affordable and stable housing is essential to recovering from mental illness and maintaining mental health.

The growing housing affordability crisis requires specific focus on support initiatives for people already disadvantaged in the housing market for reasons other than affordability.

There is growing evidence that the lack of affordable housing is a serious and worsening problem for people with mental illness.

Many people with mental illness in SA cannot access the accommodation or supports they need and this reduces their ability to recover and maintain their mental health and limits the effectiveness of public spending on mental health.

The default accommodation options for people with mental illness are increasingly prisons and hospitals which goes against the broadly accepted social policy of deinstitutionalisation.

The Mental Health Coalition of SA calls on the Commonwealth and the South Australian governments to work together on a five-year 'Housing for Mental Health Plan 2008 -2012' that invests on a sufficient scale to provide long term, coordinated housing and support options for people with mental illness in SA who are currently in severe housing stress.

A successful five year Housing for Mental Health Plan 2008-2012 in South Australia will:

- Recognise that access to safe, affordable and stable housing and an appropriate level of support is a critical building block of our mental health system
- Set the goals of providing access to appropriate housing and support options for all people with mental illness
- Invest \$50m per year in South Australia to create 500 new units per year of public and/or community housing for people with mental illness as a core component of the solution
- Ensure that timely, coordinated and targeted programs deliver housing and supports for people with mental illness including for people exiting hospital settings
- Monitor and report to the community, progress towards achieving the goals of providing appropriate housing and support options for all people with mental illness.



### Current evidence of housing need for people with mental illness includes:

A snapshot survey of inpatients in mental health beds across Australia showed that around 50% of patients were still in hospital because they lacked either accommodation or support

Three of the larger community housing providers in SA report over 500 people with mental illness on their waiting lists

There are over 2100 people on the public housing waiting list in South Australia with self reported mental illness (as at 30 June 2007)

During 2006/7 only 59% (442) of the people with self-reported mental illness who applied for public housing were successful

Over 1000 people with mental illness are reported to be in Supported Residential Facilities and boarding house type accommodation

The Social Inclusion Board Report **Stepping Up** stated that 2000 people in public housing who are also clients of the public mental health system are likely to require additional support.

## The average recurrent cost of providing one:

mental health hospital bed (2002/3 figures) = **\$150,000** per year

prison bed (2005/6 figures) = **\$65,000** per year

unit of public housing (2006/7 figures) = **\$5,990** per year