



Response to the

***Draft Tasmanian Homelessness Charter,
Version 2 (30 November 2011)***

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Introduction

Anglicare considers the Second Draft Homelessness Charter a refinement from the First Draft. Whilst improvements have been made, including a clarification of the aims and purpose of the Charter, the Second Draft is in need of further work.

If a primary objective of the Charter is to encourage a more 'user-focused and needs-based service provision culture'ⁱ in the homelessness sector in Tasmania, and a 'foundation for preventing homelessness and developing opportunity rich pathways from homelessness to active participation in the social and economic life of the Tasmanian community'ⁱⁱ, then consumer input into the language and format of the Charter is required. To ensure the document has relevance for those people intended to be supported by the Charter, Anglicare considers consumer input a necessary priority – and a noticeable gap in the current Draft.

Mentioned in our response to the First Draft Charter, Anglicare believes the Second Draft Charter falls short of providing a clear vision for improving homelessness services in Tasmania, and misses an opportunity to provide strong leadership in reducing and preventing homelessness in Tasmania. From our perspective, the Homelessness Charter would be strengthened by an overt ultimate aim 'to house all Tasmanians', and a clear first priority 'to support people out of homelessness services into housing, with support where needed'. Provision of a high quality homelessness service system is inadequate if isolated from the predominant goal of 'exiting' people from the homelessness service system into housing. We believe the purpose and aims of the Charter will be strengthened by making this goal explicit.

Due to the severe negative health and wellbeing impacts of homelessness, Anglicare believes a Homelessness Charter should have a wider target audience than homelessness services, service users, and a few mainstream services. Whilst mention is made of mainstream services, in its current form, the Draft Charter misses an opportunity to enlist the support of the whole Government and Tasmanian community to assist people experiencing homelessness and to reduce homelessness.

To Anglicare, the difference between this Second Draft Charter and the intentions of the original Discussion Paper circulated by Youth Development Australia in May 2011ⁱⁱⁱ suggests 'purpose drift' – the original aims, including the importance of

consumer engagement in the process of developing a Homelessness Charter, appear to have been forgotten. In addition to the above feedback, this submission raises three questions, provides a brief response to the five questions posed by Youth Development Australia, and makes five additional recommendations.

The Second Draft Charter: Questions raised

Like the First Draft of the Tasmanian Homelessness Charter^{iv}, the Second Draft reads like a set of principles, and expected behaviours. Anglicare questions what differentiates the Charter from existing homelessness service provider policies developed for specific operating contexts (already embedded within existing funding and service agreements), from the National Quality Framework (to support quality services for people experiencing homelessness), and from the proposed National Homelessness Charter. In its current form, the Charter does not add a great deal to the aims of services delivering quality support for people experiencing homelessness. Anglicare asks *'What differentiates the proposed Tasmanian Homelessness Charter from these other documents, and what uses will the Tasmanian Charter serve that these other documents will not serve?'*

The Second Draft Charter refines the list of principles presented in the First Draft, and further develops the list of rights and responsibilities of both service users and service providers. We appreciate inclusion of a preamble in the Second Draft that explains the purpose and limitations of the Charter. Whilst more comprehensive than the First Draft, the Second Draft still has inconsistencies and gaps. From Anglicare's perspective, the language of the Second Draft comes across as inconsistent, authoritarian, and at times patronising. We ask *'How does Youth Development Australia intend to refine the language and content of the Second Draft Charter, in order to produce a consistent, respectful and comprehensive document?'*

Anglicare understood that the development of the Tasmanian Homelessness Charter was to be undertaken alongside a Consumer Engagement Strategy, and that the latter would inform the former. As stated by Youth Development Australia in the Discussion paper circulated in May 2011, 'Consumers can benefit from a Service Charter and a Consumer Engagement Strategy by being involved in and engaged with the homelessness service system'^v. From Anglicare's

perspective, it appears that the Charter is being prioritised over the Consumer Engagement Strategy; this Second Draft has appeared before the culmination of the Consumer Engagement Strategy. Anglicare questions this order of priority, and believes the Second Draft Homelessness Charter is in need of consumer input to ensure relevance for the people intended to benefit from the Charter. Anglicare asks *'How does Youth Development Australia intend to consult consumers and embed their voices and advice within the Tasmanian Homelessness Charter?*

The Second Draft Charter: A response to 5 questions

This section addresses the five questions posed by Youth Development Australia.

- 1. Are the draft service delivery principles consistent with your organisation's existing service delivery principles?*

Anglicare accepts the refined set of seven principles: Dignity & Respect; Health, Safety & Welbeing; Privacy & Confidentiality; Fairness & Equity; Non-discrimination; Choice & Self-determination; and Social Inclusion. However we find the content within each principle in need of further refinement. Inconsistencies exist, along with incomplete lists, and unequal weighting. For example, not all service principles have both a 'right' and a 'responsibility', and some descriptions appear potentially patronising to service users. One example is found in the Social Inclusion Principle, 'Wherever possible, people experiencing or at risk of homelessness should be supported to participate in 'normal' community activities'^{vi}. By implying that people experiencing homelessness are not 'normal', we imply that homelessness only occurs for people who are 'not normal'. This statement risks perpetuating misconceptions about the circumstances of people experiencing homelessness held in the wider community. Hence, whilst we support the list of principles, we are not satisfied with all of the content provided within each principle.

- 2. Are there any principles that should be added?*

The list of principles is comprehensive; however we believe the content and descriptions for each principle could be strengthened. We recommend more explicit statements be made about safety, and that safety be added to various sections. For example, within 'Health, Welbeing & Safety', the following could be added: *'Accommodation for people experiencing homelessness must be safe,*

secure, healthy and respectful. Violence, threats, abuse, coercion and exploitation are not tolerated'. In a similar way, within the section entitled 'Health & Wellbeing, Service Principle 6^{vii}, we would appreciate a more comprehensive explanation relating to policies to manage aggressive and threatening behaviour. For example, we would like a statement such as the following added: *'Violence of any kind is not acceptable in services. Staff must be trained to identify and prevent violence of all kinds in their settings. Services must ensure they have rigorous protocols in place for both preventing and managing violence of all kinds*'.

Anglicare appreciates the inclusion of a section relating to developing a 'culture of respect' within homelessness services (within Dignity & Respect Service Principle 3)^{viii}. We believe this section could be strengthened by changes that imply 'everyone' has a role to play in creating a respectful culture. For example, *'Services are encouraged to nurture a culture of respect between staff, between staff and service users, and between service users. This includes not tolerating violence, abuse and threats, and aiming to achieve safe and healthy reciprocal relationships, based on encouragement, care, empathy and collaboration. A 'culture of respect' requires respectful attitudes, behaviours and conversations at every level of service provision*'. Or another clear and comprehensive statement that involves everyone in the creation of a culture of respect.

For the intended purposes of the Charter, we believe language with an emphasis on respect and care (including empathy for the difficult circumstances that service users face) will be useful alongside a focus on rights. As well as an emphasis on respect and care, Anglicare requests consideration of an emphasis on safety and mental health and wellbeing throughout the Charter. For example, within the section entitled Health & Wellbeing, Service Principle 4^{ix} the following might be added: *'People... should have access to safe environments that support mental health and wellbeing*'.

In several places within the Charter, specific lists are included. Anglicare finds these lists are often incomplete. We recommend either removing the lists altogether, or making sure they are complete. For example, in a list of safety procedures in the section entitled Health & Wellbeing, Service Principle 4^x, no mention is made of mental illness, drug and alcohol misuse, or aggressive behaviours. In the next point, in a list of safety equipment, no mention is made of emergency procedures or syringe deposits. Within Service Principle 5 of the same

section, staff professional development is mentioned, but no mention is made of practices that maintain the health of service users (for example specific training in trauma inclusive care or contemporary therapeutic approaches). From our perspective, a more exhaustive approach and further examples would strengthen the usefulness of lists provided.

3. Are there any principles that your agency or agencies that you represent could not subscribe to?

Anglicare Tasmania does not disagree with the sentiment expressed within the principles. Our preference is for a more solutions-oriented focus, with an encouragement of respect and care, and a more detailed coverage of certain topics, but overall, we are comfortable with the principles.

Two examples of what we mean by our preference for a more 'solutions-oriented' focus are provided. The first example is from the section entitled 'Health & Wellbeing, Service Principle 6'. The service principle currently states 'Service users should not act in a way that would make others feel unsafe'. As an alternative, the same sentiment could be expressed in a way that points towards the desired outcome. For example: '*Service users have a responsibility to help others feel safe*'. Similarly, the Draft Charter states that service users have a responsibility to 'Respect the right of others to have a safe environment'. We suggest something like the following sentence would better to point towards the desired outcome: '*Service users have a responsibility to take an active role in creating and maintaining a safe environment for themselves and others*'. We believe these sorts of refinements to the Second Draft will assist to meet the intended purposes of the Charter.

4. Should any of the draft principles be deleted? If so please say why?

Anglicare sees some overlap between the Fairness & Equity and Non-discrimination principles. We also find the content of these two sections a little weak and repetitive. The same is true for the Privacy & Confidentiality principle, which repeats a service principle found in another section, and includes a Service user responsibility in the Service provider section.

From Anglicare's perspective, the section entitled 'Responsibilities of Service Users'^{xi} comes across as slightly patronising (especially #9). Whilst not against a list of responsibilities that service users must meet, we believe this section in

particular is in need of service user input. The language requires refinement; we believe the wording would be strengthened if drafted by service users by means of the intended Consumer Engagement Strategy.

5. Are there specific comments or points of explanation that would usefully expand on the present document?

From Anglicare's perspective, quality service provision in the area of homelessness requires more than 'fair treatment'. In the case of homelessness, quality service provision requires care and empathy by service providers for the incredibly difficult, humbling, stressful and traumatising experience of being homeless – an experience that no one would wish to find themselves in. From this basis, Anglicare believes the Second Charter would benefit from providing a basic grounding for readers in the stresses, hardships and traumas associated with being homeless or at risk of homelessness, in order to build understanding, care and empathy for the circumstances of people experiencing homelessness. We believe the Second Charter would be strengthened by inclusion of an addition to the existing preamble, to help build understanding about the experience of homelessness. To illustrate this intention, we provide a 'Letter to service providers' at the conclusion of this submission. The Letter is written by a service user, to service providers, in order to improve services for people experiencing homelessness^{xii}.

The Second Draft Charter: Key recommendations

This section provides further feedback in the form of five key recommendations. These recommendations constitute a summary of our response to the Second Version of the Draft Homelessness Charter.

As stated in our previous submission relating to the First Draft, Anglicare requests that the Homelessness Charter begin with a vision statement that explicitly states an ultimate aim of 'housing all Tasmanians', followed by an explanatory preamble that sets a higher aim for the Tasmanian community to better support people experiencing homelessness.

Recommendation 1. That alongside an aim of providing high quality homelessness services, that the Charter include an ultimate aim to house all Tasmanians.

Based on the stated aims of the Discussion Paper circulated in May 2011 (to engage consumers in developing the Charter), and on our understanding that a key aim of the Charter is to ensure high quality service provision for people experiencing homelessness, Anglicare believes the voice of the service user needs to be better heard within the Charter. We believe that a use of language that has as much relevance for service users as service providers would better meet the intended outcomes of a Charter. Towards this aim, Anglicare believes the Second Draft Charter would be improved by inclusion of a preamble from a service user. We believe such an addition would assist to build understanding, respect, care and empathy between service users and service providers.

Recommendation 2. That the Charter articulate the difficult experience of homelessness, including stresses and risks relating to physical, mental and social wellbeing, and that the Charter be used to enlist the support of Government and the whole Tasmanian community to support people who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

In its current form, the Tasmanian Homelessness Charter appears to be a 'Services Charter' or a 'Principles and Standards of Care Charter' for homelessness service delivery. Due to the many severe impacts of homelessness, the Charter needs to be broadened to include rights and responsibilities relating to *all services* and *all Tasmanians* – not just those directly engaged in the homelessness service sector. Where rights and responsibilities are mentioned, the Charter needs to ensure they have relevance for *all* services that homeless people come into contact with, including emergency services, educational and vocational settings, and the full range of health services - not just homelessness services and token mainstream services.

Recommendation 3. That the Charter be targeted to a wider audience, including making it relevant for *all* mainstream services and *all* Tasmanians.

Refinements could be made throughout the Second Draft Charter. Clearly need of attention is the list of service user responsibilities. In their current form, these appear tokenistic - sometimes mismatched with a given 'right', sometimes patronising. We recommend either dropping these altogether, or gaining service

user feedback on a more detailed list of service user responsibilities for each principle.

Recommendation 4. That the proposed Consumer Engagement Strategy be utilised to gain service user feedback and input to develop detailed content for each service principle including articulation of the rights and responsibilities of Service Users and Service Providers.

Whilst we believe the target audience should be *all* services and *all* Tasmanians, (requiring a refinement of the Draft Charter), we recognise that homeless people and homelessness service users are the key intended audiences for the Charter. From this perspective, we believe the content of the Charter needs to be refined both in language and format by service users. As already mentioned, we believe the Second Draft lacks a consumer voice, and is in need of service user input. We believe the best means of achieving this is via participation in the proposed Consumer Engagement Strategy.

Recommendation 5. That the next version of the Charter be developed by service users themselves, and that dissemination of the final version of the Charter be planned via the previously proposed Consumer Engagement Strategy.

Conclusions

Anglicare believes that a Tasmanian Homelessness Charter must state a clear upfront 'upstream' ideal such as: *'In Tasmania, people have the right to be adequately housed'*.

Anglicare agrees with the Tasmanian Government - that 'Homelessness is everybody's responsibility'. As such, Homelessness Charter should highlight everyone's responsibilities in relation to housing and homelessness not just those of homelessness service providers and service users. Homelessness is of such serious concern with such negative consequences for individuals and the community that principles of service delivery within a Homelessness Charter should be relevant for all government and community services - not just homelessness services, and not just token mainstream services.

In summary, Anglicare welcomes development of a Tasmanian Homelessness Charter. We recognise that the proposed Tasmanian Charter may be superseded by a national Charter, but that if a Tasmanian Charter is to be of use, the Charter must have been closely examined by Tasmanian service users as well as service providers. The current Draft lacks a service user perspective and voice, and would be strengthened by service user consultation. We believe the best mechanism for gaining such input is via the previously proposed Consumer Engagement Strategy.

As included in our previous submission on the First Draft Charter, Anglicare proposes that the current Draft Charter be adapted to reflect the following:

- *All Tasmanians have the right to adequate housing.*
- *The provision of adequate housing is a whole of government and community responsibility.*
- *Tasmanians at risk of homelessness or experiencing homelessness have the right to be supported towards secure adequate housing (i.e. provided with 'exits' from the homelessness service system).*
- *The provision of quality services to people experiencing homelessness requires well-connected service systems and ongoing quality improvements within homelessness services.*

In addition to a Homelessness Charter, Anglicare proposes that the Tasmanian Government embed housing rights within the 'Tasmanian Charter for Human Rights' (under development). We also encourage the inclusion of 'housing rights' within the Charters of other sectors (for example the 'Tasmanian Charter of Health Rights and Responsibilities').

To conclude, we offer the advice of a service user who has direct lived experience of homelessness, including extensive 'inside' experience of the homelessness service system. She offers her advice generously, in the hope that it will help improve the circumstances of people who are homeless. She hopes to see improvements in support for people experiencing homelessness, including greater care and respect for homeless people.

Letter to service providers

Dear service providers,

Contacting a service provider is difficult. Making an appointment with the service provider is also difficult, and keeping to the appointment is hard.

[a] The person may not have any funds to travel to and from the service provider appointment. This person might be on foot and distance to travel may be long and hard.

[b] The person health may be in question and travelling from and to the service provider may prove to be of difficulty.

[c] Weather may play a role in the person travelling to and from the service provider.

Suggestions:

Maybe IF the service provider would travel to this person. This would be of great assistance to this person. An arrangement can be made between the service provider and the person to be picked up and dropped off at a particular time and destination. Preferably from where the person may be residing temporarily.

This person/s may not have slept, showered or eaten. The engaging service provider Must be tolerant, Must be patient and Must have empathy towards this person/s.

Perhaps offer some food and drink; a couch to rest their weary heads with blankets and pillows wouldn't go astray.

IF there is accommodation on offer to this person/s, the news would be welcomed.

- Treat them with Respect*
- Treat them with Dignity*
- Show Empathy towards them and Keep all of their records confidential.*
- Do Not laugh or Joke at this person/s. Take them seriously.*
- IF they cry, Cry with them. Provide as much assistance as you can for this person/s.*
- Do Not let this be a waste of Time, Do not come up Empty. This will only exasperate their current situations.*
- Provide something, anything. You could even offer to take them to the hospital for a check up.*
- It is Important to Help them in anyway possible. Give them feedback and as many options as possible.*

Thank You.

Theresa.P.Martin

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Endnotes

- ⁱ Youth Development Australia 2011c, *V2 Tasmanian Homelessness Charter*, p3.
- ⁱⁱ Youth Development Australia 2011c, *V2 Tasmanian Homelessness Charter*, p4.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Youth Development Australia 2011a, *Homelessness Charter and Consumer Engagement Strategy Discussion Paper*, pp25-29.
- ^{iv} Youth Development Australia 2011b, *V1 Tasmanian Homelessness Charter*.
- ^v Youth Development Australia 2011a, *Homelessness Charter and Consumer Engagement Strategy Discussion Paper*, p28.
- ^{vi} Youth Development Australia 2011c, *V2 Tasmanian Homelessness Charter*, p8.
- ^{vii} Youth Development Australia 2011c, *V2 Tasmanian Homelessness Charter*, p15.
- ^{viii} Youth Development Australia 2011c, *V2 Tasmanian Homelessness Charter*, p11.
- ^{ix} Youth Development Australia 2011c, *V2 Tasmanian Homelessness Charter*, p13.
- ^x Youth Development Australia 2011c, *V2 Tasmanian Homelessness Charter*, p13.
- ^{xi} Youth Development Australia 2011c, *V2 Tasmanian Homelessness Charter*, p9.
- ^{xii} This letter was recently published in *Well and at home, 'It's like a big mental sigh': pathways out of mental ill health and homelessness* (Pryor 2011).