

Appendix 6: Listening to the lived experience of clients supported by Launch Housing



To assist the Royal Commission, Launch Housing spoke to a small number of current clients to ascertain their lived experience of navigating the mental health and homelessness systems. Their overall experiences are presented in their own words and reflect the devastating impact of homelessness, especially the extent to which it has destabilised and exacerbated their mental health. Without exception, these clients emphasised the significance of safe and long-term housing to mental health stability and recovery.

Theme 1: Negative experiences with the mental health services system

Homelessness is traumatising and distressing, it leaves people feeling hopeless, stressed and depressed – people feel they are not listened to, they are inappropriately diagnosed, or given incorrect medications.

'I'll go into the system and then come out and just go 'stuff it', it's all just too hard, no-one's listening to me...More people need to listen...I feel [depressed] everyday...the CATT [Crisis Assessment and Treatment] team just wanted to change my medications...but all I asked you for was something to help me sleep...[but] they said, "no, we'll change your whole anti-depressant"...so I just started buying over the counter sleeping pills just so I could sleep when I wanted to'. ('Fran')

Limited access to services

'Need to diagnose people properly first off, and help people more. I know even if you want to see a good psychologist...you can only get so many limited funded sessions'. ('Kym')

Trust and safety are critically important

'It's hard to open up to people, or trust anybody in this world...it all depends on who you get as a counsellor as well. I had this really good one and then she had to go...to hospital...so now I have to start [telling] my whole life story again'. ('Kym')

Inappropriate discharge

'[Supportive accommodation] it's a saving grace. Where do you go after eight weeks of torture, like my whole body was shaking, all morning, I can't believe I was discharged. And, because I was so stressed...you need to be on your own, you need to be in a place where you can feel safe and that everything is going to be okay...to go into other people's houses...is really so bad for you, right after a major hospitalisation'. ('Allison')

Theme 2: Impact of homelessness on mental health

Homelessness is chaotic and time-consuming

*'People don't realise how chaotic it is when you're actually homeless...you can't just cook a basic [meal]...or even going to have a shower, if you're homeless. It's like a complicated task, it takes up so much of your time, looking for housing...you don't really have time to do much else or focus on anything else'.
(Kym)*

Homelessness overshadows everything and mental health becomes secondary

'[Being homeless things went] backwards really, you don't have that stability so you're not able to focus on other things, other than where you're going to sleep...You can't focus on even just getting to a doctor's appointment'. (Leigh)

Housing is paramount

*'You're homeless and that's the most important thing...your mental state, it's just got to be put on hold...you don't want to go and see anybody about your mental state because you need housing and that's all you're really concentrating on: where am I going to sleep tonight?...I was appointed a psychologist and all that. She's great...but she can't even begin to work on my head because I don't want to hear it, you know, why would I want to talk about that, I just want to be housed, that's my main priority'.
(Fran)*

Medications compromised

'You're supposed to be medicating, but who cares about medication, stuff that...you're not even going to the doctor's...the only doctor you see is the drug dealer and that's it'. (Fran)

Mental health deteriorates

'You cannot focus on your mental health if you don't have a place to live. Eventually your mental health will get worse and worse and worse, and eventually, I've heard people literally do kill themselves over it...[Being homeless has] caused a lot of anxiety, depression, lack of self-confidence, [I'm] worried all the time, what's going to happen...I don't want to end up on the streets. It just keeps going right across my mind all the time. Just very worried'. (Janet)

Theme 3: Housing is fundamental to mental health stability and recovery

Housing is the starting point for mental health recovery

'If you've got stability and you've got somewhere safe, somewhere to [live]...housing is really important, it's the beginning of being able to start to work on your mental health'. ('Leigh')

Impact of housing would be immediate

'Basic necessities like homes and stuff in people's lives can make the world of difference with people in every way...otherwise, people just deteriorate...need to build way more houses...that's the main problem, that will solve a lot...I bet you if all of them [people sleeping rough] had stable housing, probably half of them would be normal again...it's just like me, if I had stable housing...I wouldn't be depressed...my mental health would be one hundred times better'. ('Kym')

Hope and aspirations for positive and fulfilling future

'[Housing would] affect my mental health in a very positive way because I'll have stability in my life, I'll have a roof on top of my head and I'll have proper food and I'll have a proper life and hopefully, in the future I do want to get a job...I will be able to move forward in my life and look forward to the life that I want to live'. ('Janet')
