Inquiry into the Adequacy and Future Directions of Public Housing in Victoria

LOMA Network Submission

Vision Statement

LOMA is a network of agencies. Homelessness in our society is unacceptable. Our vision is affordable, safe, sustainable housing for everyone in the Loddon Mallee Region. Home can mean a sense of belonging, security, comfort, warmth, control and intimacy.

The Loddon Mallee Accommodation Network (LOMA Network) is one of eight homelessness networks in Victoria, made up of homelessness assistance and social housing services. LOMA is an independent forum for member agencies to work collaboratively within a Human Rights framework on issues of homelessness. This submission particularly reflects public housing in relation to rural areas and people who have experienced homelessness.

Public Housing and the Right to Adequate Housing

As stated by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, States should not interpret the right to housing narrowly or restrictively as “merely having a roof over one’s head or … as a commodity. Rather it should be seen as the right to live somewhere in security, peace and dignity” (paragraph 7 of general comment No. 4). It is of prime importance that the Government of Australia acknowledge this fact. To this end, the Special Rapporteur believes that it could benefit from an integrated human rights approach to the problem and use the various elements that constitute adequate housing, including security of tenure; public goods and services; environmental goods and services (including land and water); affordability (including access to finance); habitability; accessibility (physical); location; cultural appropriateness; freedom from dispossession; information, capacity and capacity-building; participation and self expression; resettlement; safe environment; and, security (physical) and privacy.1

Public Housing has an important and permanent role to play in providing housing that is safe, secure, affordable, accessible and appropriate in our society. The development of such a serious housing crisis and the lack of a coordinated approach to address it is not acceptable in Australia, one of the wealthiest developed nations. The steady decrease in public housing funding levels has had devastating consequences for people on low income. Re-direction of funds to community or social housing providers does not adequately facilitate access to housing for highly disadvantaged households including those who have experienced homelessness.

Public Housing Waiting Lists in Victoria and the impact on individuals and families of waiting times to access public housing and how this varies by each segment

The LOMA Network supports the Office of Housing (OoH) Improving Public Housing Responses Strategic Project: New Segmented waiting list proposal. We believe the Inquiry Committee should be cognisant of this simultaneous project and we attach our feedback to the new segmented waiting list proposal (Attachment A).

The safety and location of Victorian public housing and public housing estates

This is a complex issue and one which people in the homelessness and housing sector have given a lot of thought. We believe that the Office of Housing should seek information from other professionals involved in housing, homelessness assistance, child protection and other sectors to genuinely address these questions. There are benefits and disadvantages to both concentrating public housing in a street or estate and distributing properties throughout an area. Overall, the benefit of public housing being more varied and spread out with a greater attention to geographic mix of public and private housing is greater than the disadvantages created by concentrations of public housing. There is a value in both options being available, though smaller blocks of units or houses are preferred over larger housing estates where an entire street is Office of Housing stock. For example, at times there are benefits to people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds from the same country living together. The OoH should more actively seek information about holistic support requirements of housing applicants. Where public housing estates do exist far more careful consideration needs to be given to allocations.

The overwhelming feedback of professionals in homelessness assistance in the LMR is that drastic problems and a lack of safety arise through having a concentration of public housing in one area. It leads to a range of social problems, disadvantage and increased marginalisation. For example, when Indigenous people are housed in public housing in one street in a town, the local community discriminates against them and associated stigma is high. This also applies to people with mental health and substance abuse issues. It is important that this group is not placed in areas where there is a high concentration of people with similar issues and that they are linked with local services where they get to know and have the support of their worker. There are many painful examples of suffering for tenants placed in housing estates. These include exposure to violence, drug culture and anti social behaviour as the norm. Children are particularly disadvantaged in these situations on a range of levels including educational. Anonymity is a benefit of ‘spot purchase’ properties, where people in public housing can be more easily included in mainstream society.

The adequacy, quality and standards of Victorian public housing

The Australian and Victorian Governments are failing to ensure every Victorian has adequate and appropriate housing at a price within their means by encouraging the provision of well-maintained public housing of suitable quality as per the Housing Act 1983. The Office of Housing does not manage and maintain properties in an efficient or flexible way. Maintenance budgets are too low to maintain or improve housing stock and the processing of properties takes far too long. For example, it can be twelve months from when a house becomes vacant to it becoming available. In addition, old housing commission properties are demolished and it takes a very long time for a replacement unit or house to be built.

Compounding the housing affordability crisis is the absolute decline in the availability of low-cost rental housing in both public and private sectors. One of the major contributors to this is the decline in Australia’s public housing stock, driven by the federal, state and territories governments’ declining financial support. There were about 30,000 fewer houses in the public housing stock between 1996 and 2004. Although public housing has decreased over the years, the demand has steadily increased. Numerous concerns have been expressed on the lengthy waiting lists.
There is a shortage of properties in rural towns for people with disabilities. It currently takes a long time for a property to be modified and to come on line. Communication with disability services and Community Health services may assist in identifying type and quantity of stock required for people with disabilities and support available.

The lack of flexibility in policy approaches is frustrating for people living in public housing. For example, the need for air conditioning in the Mallee region is clear yet they are not automatically installed in public housing properties. An example of a tenant purchasing and installing an air conditioning unit themselves, only for it to be removed by the OoH in preparation for the next tenant, highlights the inflexibility of policy and practice.

**The impact of public housing need on specific groups**

This submission largely addresses specific groups who have experienced homelessness. Therefore, it does not address the homeless as a specific group separately as the Terms of Reference for the inquiry states. This submission talks about public housing in relation to rural areas.

**Indigenous**

Indigenous communities in Victoria face a severe housing crisis, incorporating a lack of affordable and culturally appropriate housing, lack of appropriate support services, poverty and underlying discrimination. More public housing stock needs to be put on the ground and within that a range of options needs to be available to address the needs of Indigenous Victorians. Housing should be provided through both Aboriginal Housing Victoria and the Office of Housing. Housing and child welfare are closely connected and there are many examples of Indigenous women’s poor housing circumstances (including allocation of inappropriate public housing) leading directly to child protection involvement in the family’s life.

Key to the public housing system better targeting the needs of Indigenous Victorians is support. The issues facing Indigenous people experiencing homelessness are complex and multi-layered. Indigenous people need a range of programs to assist them in establishing sustainable tenancies and to achieve a reasonable standard of living. Housing and homelessness assistance staff in Indigenous communities are burdened by an at times unbearable load. They belong to the community in which they work and are often sole workers with a lack of resources, training and support. They are often personally targeted and blamed for the problem of lack of housing or for allocating one family over another to a house; when the power to make those decisions is actually beyond their control. Programs such as the Indigenous Tenants at Risk program, greatly assist Indigenous tenants and provide greater support to solo workers in homelessness assistance. More of these types of programs are needed.

Research and experience in Victoria and other parts of the country clearly indicates that the provision of culturally appropriate housing makes a difference. There are a range of ways in which different housing options can be designed and built, including programs that involve the local community. This is an area of desperate need to which Governments in Australia need to make a more genuine commitment.

---

CASE STUDY ONE

An Aboriginal man was a single father of four children living in public housing when he passed away. After his death, the children were removed from that home and split up to live in different housing situations. They ranged in age with the eldest being eighteen. The older two female children remain in limbo two years on, with no stable accommodation and are seen to be at risk. These children not only lost their father but their home and all associated care that went with that. An Indigenous community member states ‘That was the only solid home that they ever really knew’. Local people feel that the system totally let these children down and that some options for keeping them housed and cared for together should have been available.

Women experiencing domestic/family violence

Domestic and family violence are primary drivers of homelessness and a significant reason for women accessing public housing is a direct consequence of family violence. When we speak of women in this situation, we are also speaking of children, a very important group to consider in relation to housing. The system would better support people if it allowed them to remain in the areas that they choose to live in and limited re-location. Flexible, integrated management of programs which allows households to move between programs as in ‘A Place to Call Home’ rather than moving repeatedly are important. Women are often forced to re-locate when they escape domestic violence; the option of their transitional housing property becoming their public housing property if they choose would make a tremendous difference. Children would not be forced to change schools as frequently, one of the major reasons children who have experienced family violence suffer poor educational outcomes.

Many women living in public housing who have escaped domestic violence feel unsafe and continue to be exposed to violence in areas of concentrated public housing. The concentration of public housing in particular streets and well known areas also makes it easy for perpetrators to find ex partners who have escaped in regional towns. Once again, people have a right to housing that is appropriate and for these women and children spot purchase housing means women feel far safer in the neighbourhood and location.

CASE STUDY TWO

A woman with two children has been living in a THM for two years and is being supported by a domestic violence service. She was previously in public housing but needed to leave due to events of one night when her ex-partner turned up in desperate need of accommodation for one night. She tried to say no and negotiated him staying one night on the couch under pressure from him. Two women and children (neighbours on the housing estate) came looking for him, threw bricks through windows and ‘trashed the house’. When she asked him to leave she was physically and sexually assaulted. She had to leave that house.

Whilst living in the THM, the OoH offered a house that she liked due to its location; the house was in poor condition but she felt safe about the neighbourhood. This house was actually condemned and no longer available, it was a mistake of the OoH to offer this particular property. The OoH apologised for making this mistake and offered a different house that the client went to inspect. This was in a street of OoH tenants with complex and high needs, several of whom she recognised immediately as the people she was trying to get away from. She had applied for exemptions in her Segment housing application but did not include this particular street as it has only recently become problematic and she was not aware of this. As she has not
accepted this offer, she has been informed that she is no longer at the top of the list and the transfer will take longer.

CASE STUDY THREE

A new client is seeking help from a domestic and family violence service. She lives in public housing in one of the estates and the perpetrator of violence against her knows exactly where she is. She needs to re-locate and has no means of getting out. Transfer applications take two years or more. She has tried to access private rental but the rental market is extremely tight and it is too expensive for her. The average rent is $240 per week and her income is $400 per week. She suffers from anxiety and panic attacks. She has two children to consider in her housing decisions and there is a possibility that they will be split up due to her relocation (care arrangements with different fathers).

People with a mental illness, substance abuse issues and/or disability

The barriers to people who have a mental illness and experience substance use disorders accessing housing are numerous, including increasing relationship tensions within families, between neighbours or landlords, financial costs of ongoing addiction and lack of access to support. Whilst these do not automatically go together, the incidence of co-morbid substance use disorders is high, as is the connection between homelessness and mental health issues. As has been discussed, the impact of concentrated public housing in particular areas has a significant impact on people with mental health issues or drug and alcohol addictions. Again, the repeated themes of flexibility and support are relevant here. People with multiple levels of disadvantage must not be excluded from public housing.

The LOMA Network urges the Inquiry Committee to read Home Truths Mental Health, Housing and Homelessness in Australia, Mental Health Council of Australia, March 2009. It articulates the issues and poses solutions that the Inquiry is examining in some detail.

People who have alcohol or drug dependencies need support in accessing appropriate housing. People who are being supported and giving up drugs or alcohol are severely disadvantaged by being placed in housing estates. Often the sub culture of substance abuse in public housing estates means that these people return to drinking or drug taking immediately upon moving there. Applicants for public housing can be better supported by being placed in spot purchase houses. The OoH needs to give realistic consideration in allocating housing to people who are working on ‘being clean’. For example, some smaller housing estates may be appropriate depending on who inhabits the houses at the time.

CASE STUDY FOUR

A forty two year old male named David (not real name) is a participant of Psychiatric Disability Support Services (PDRSS) in the Mallee region area accessing a homelessness assistance model to maximize recovery capacity. David received housing support through the Mental Health Pathways Program at the beginning of March 2008. David was initially referred to the Mallee PDRSS provision of service more than 10 years ago. During this time David accessed a variety of social supports and PDRSS programs to assist being diagnosed with a mental illness. Before receiving referral to the Mental Health Pathways Program in 2008 David demonstrated transient living behaviours for many years due the nature and effects of having to live with schizophrenia.
As part of an individual service plan and recovery strategy David linked into employment with a local fruit packing company. The employment consisted of shift work on a casual basis for an undetermined period. Linking in with part-time employment was a plan David discussed with his PDRSS key worker as an integral component of his rehabilitation & recovery process. David had used similar strategies previously for assisting with well being & independent living plans. Over a three month period David maintained these living routines while accessing housing assistance through the Mental Health Pathways program.

It was during this period that David was notified of the offer approval for permanent housing by the Department of Human Services (DHS). David had put in a segmented application a year earlier which was based upon his referral being accepted into the Mental Health Pathways program. David had also lodged two applications for general housing with DHS previously, none of which he received an offer for. Several days after receiving the approval news David was told that over a thirteen week period his income limit exceeded the threshold for a single person to access Office of Housing permanent accommodation. It was explained to David by DHS that he exceeded the threshold amount by $200. As a result David's offer of segmented housing was declined. David was supported by PDRSS staff to appeal this decision with Office of Housing management in both Mildura & Bendigo areas. Despite this level of support the offer of permanent housing remained withdrawn for David. Through discussion with DHS, it was explained that during David's long term support with PDRSS, his ability to continue in his employment was for only short periods of time before becoming unwell again. David’s behaviours during this time would either cause him to be admitted to the Mental Health ward or to leave the area. This in turn would put his previous housing situation in jeopardy.

DHS stated each time that policy and procedures overrule an identified holistic, individualized support needs & means in regards to a person diagnosed with a mental illness. In the subsequent months since David has experienced recurring issues regarding his mental health & well being evidenced by several risk assessments made by PDRSS staff which have resulted in four separate admissions in a three month span to clinical Mental Health Services in the Mildura area. Attempts by David to seek alternative housing options such as private rental have been hindered by previous transient living i.e. no evidenced landlords referees or real estate history.

David has again been placed on the Segmented 3 waiting list with Department of Human Services.

Disability
There is a chronic shortage of properties in rural towns for people with disabilities. It currently takes a long time for a property to be modified and to come on line. Communication with disability services and Community Health services may assist in identifying type and quantity of stock required for people with disabilities and support available.

Young people
The Inquiry does not name young people and we feel that the housing needs of this group of Victorians is paramount. Young people make up a significant proportion of the homeless population and they are a group with extremely limited access to public housing. Some new models of housing for young people are being developed as part of the new National Affordable Housing Agreement and Victorian initiatives, a step in the right direction. The issue of youth being offered properties in high density public
housing areas is extremely problematic. One local example is a young man whose
OOH property was burnt down by a gang three weeks after he moved in (with all his
belongings lost). It is extremely rare for an offer of a property in a high density
housing area to be successful. All offers in stand alone properties or groups of units
with 2-3 on a block are successful, going over this amount makes it impossible for
young people to control their environment.

Young people need support and alternative models of accommodation as they work
towards independent living. Creating Connections, Youth Homelessness Action Plan
in the Loddon Mallee Region, has identified models that work such as lead tenant or
carer models. A huge amount of research has been done in Victoria with clear
recommendations for the types of housing and support programs that young people
need. The LOMA Network believes that more of these initiatives need to be funded,
trialed and implemented.

Seniors
Older people often have greater support needs, such as medical and social care, and
public housing stock does not adequately cater for this. For example, a two bedroom
property may be more appropriate with the separate room for a carer and/or storage
of additional equipment such as wheelchair or walking frame. The lack of access to
single housing stock greatly impacts upon seniors. Older people need appropriate
houses that have been fitted with rails, ramps and other requirements. Access to
transport and proximity to services and resources such as medical, shopping,
banking, recreational or other support, are crucial. Large numbers of older people are
reliant on social security with no prospects of improving their financial situation.

Single people on a low income
Single people are greatly disadvantaged in relation to accessing any type of housing.
There is very limited or no public housing available for single people under the age of
55 years in rural towns. Access to social housing through Affordable Housing
Associations is extremely rare for a number of reasons. These include a reluctance
on the part of Affordable Housing Associations to build or purchase affordable
housing for single people as there is lack of financial incentive and return on
properties. The criteria for Housing Associations often mean single people who
cannot demonstrate a good rental history in the last 12 months are not eligible.
Housing is least affordable and accessible for single people in the private rental
market. Housing for single people should be spread across towns rather than being
concentrated in rural cities. This would enable people to maintain social relationships
and access to local services and connection with family and other supports. This
would avoid aforementioned concentration of public housing in one area with
associated problems.

The lack of housing options for single people can result in:
- clogging up the small amount of transitional housing currently available for
  single people
- no affordable housing options for single people
- people having to access crisis services in Melbourne or major rural cities thus
  removing them from their local services and social connections
- people becoming increasing transient, therefore not able to access
  employment or receive treatment or support if they have mental health or
  substance abuse issues
- people not being stable long enough to complete housing applications or to
  maintain an ongoing postal address
Families
As in the above, housing should be spread across rural towns rather than concentrated in major cities and high density areas. The majority of housing tends to be three bedrooms with a lack of two and four bedroom properties for small and large families. As with single people, Affordable Housing criteria often precludes families and OOH is their only option for affordable housing. Large families need four bedroom homes to be available and this is a particular need within Indigenous communities. Consideration needs to be given to converting an occupied transitional property to OOH and freeing up OOH property to replace transitional property. This would help reduce the clogging up of transitional housing properties for long periods of time while occupants wait for OOH to become available. It would increase emergency housing for at risk families and enable families to settle into their local community, engage children in education, receive consistent support from services and develop social networks.

Future Directions of Public Housing
We reiterate that public housing has an important and long term role to play in providing housing for disadvantaged Australians. These housing policies should all come under the banner of ‘social housing’ and offer an integrated and coordinated approach, including Government and private sector investments. Housing Associations are very important for the provision of affordable housing to low income households. However, they are not a holistic solution to future housing need and it is rare that clients of homelessness services gain access to these properties. The expectation that Housing Associations take about half of any new tenants for new government funded properties from the public housing waiting list is not being met thus far.

The LOMA Network notes that initiatives such as Neighbourhood Renewal and programs such as Intensive Case Management Support for tenants do help resolve some of the issues outlined in this submission. One successful example is housing workers attending at neighbourhood centres in housing estate areas; this should be increased from one day per week to several days or every day. There is now a tremendous amount of evidence that ongoing support as well as housing is what is needed to help people re-establish and move forward with their lives. Access to a variety of ongoing support is vital for people in public housing.

The Office of Housing, community housing providers, rooming houses, caravan parks, and congregate living providers such as community residential units should establish processes for tenants to be involved and represented in decision-making processes relating to provision, maintenance and management of their housing, and should better support tenants to participate in these processes. 3

A solid evidence base exists that provides information on how the Victorian and Federal Governments can move forward and improve public housing. The LOMA Network urges the Committee to consider some of the reports which have been written in addition to the submissions made through this Inquiry. There is so much we can do as a community to realise the human right to housing in Victoria and Australia.

Contact: Jude Di Manno
Coordinator, Loddon Mallee Accommodation Network
Ph: 03 5434 4114 Mobile: 0422 605 867 E-mail: jude@loma.net.au

3 Little piece of heaven, thoughts from Victorians on housing as a human right, The Housing is a Human Right Project, VCOSS, Rivkah Nissim, 2004, p55
ATTACHMENT A

RESPONSE TO THE NEW SEGMENTED WAITING LIST PROPOSAL PAPER

Introduction
The Loddon Mallee Accommodation Network (LOMA Network) is the Regional Homelessness Network in the Loddon Mallee Region (LMR), one of eight in Victoria. The LOMA Network supports the basic changes proposed to the segmented waiting list system. We believe this is a huge step forward for clients within homelessness assistance and appreciate that the Department of Human Services (DHS) has listened to concerns raised by the sector.

However, we express frustration regarding the task of prioritisation due to the severe lack of public housing availability. We believe Public Housing has an important and ongoing role to play in our society and that it is the responsibility of Australian Governments to provide a range of Social Housing options. The new model does not provide additional access to Public Housing. Whilst the changes will lead to a fairer waiting list, it does not solve the problem of the lack of social housing available during a time of increased demand. This is important to mention even though it is understood that this issue is outside the scope of the Improving Public Housing Responses Strategic Project. How will we meet the needs of General Wait Turn Low Income people, amongst the most disadvantaged in our society?

Compounding the housing affordability crisis is the absolute decline in the availability of low-cost rental housing in both public and private sectors. One of the major contributors to this is the decline in Australia’s public housing stock, driven by the federal, state and territories governments’ declining financial support. There were about 30,000 fewer houses in the public housing stock between 1996 and 2004. Although public housing has decreased over the years, the demand has steadily increased. Numerous concerns have been expressed on the lengthy waiting lists (even in urgent applications where the applicant falls within the primary homeless category) and the conditions of public housing, including safety and security.


Section Two: The New Segment Waiting List Proposal

Overall, the LOMA Network supports the basic changes outlined in this proposal. The alternative model will benefit clients in the LMR by:

- Creating one segment for those experiencing homelessness and domestic violence and making them the highest priority
- reducing the complexity of the application process for workers and clients
- providing an assessment process that avoids unnecessary intrusion and assessment points
What issues need to be considered in the development of the operational policies and procedures for this new system?

*Exclusion from public housing*
Prioritising applicants means some people miss out. Many General Wait Turn applicants, people on low income, will never actually gain access to public housing under this proposal. Where will they access affordable housing and what will happen to them? Who else with significant needs will miss out under the new prioritisation?

*Domestic and Family Violence possible implication*
It is likely that the number of clients considered a priority will increase, so that women escaping domestic violence ‘compete’ with others experiencing homelessness. There is a very real risk that women who seek support to deal with an immediate crisis and choose to return home are removed from the waiting list. These women remain at risk and should remain in the highest priority group on the segment waiting list. Women experiencing domestic violence return home for a variety of reasons including the choice not to remain in emergency accommodation such as motels and caravan parks.

*Funding gap between SAAP and SHASP programs*
As part of the discussion on the changes to the Segmented Waiting List with the policy section within Office of Housing it became very apparent that there is a significant gap in funding for the homeless between the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) and the Social Housing Advocacy and Support Program (SHASP). SAAP programs are only funded to provide case work for clients for a limited amount of time and then there is an expectation that the person/family will be housed. As identified this is rarely the case. The SHASP funding only commences when the tenant is allocated a property. There is a significant gap where the clients are not supported. This needs to be addressed.

*Ongoing Support*
This is vital to assist people who have experienced homelessness to recover and establish sustainable tenancies. People who have experienced homelessness struggle with a huge range of issues after they have secured accommodation which affect their wellbeing and ability to sustain tenancies. Agencies also understand that clients often disengage when they have secured permanent accommodation. A range of measures needs to be implemented so that ongoing support is accessible. This includes changing the culture of DHS as the traditional public housing landlord and strengthening linkages to other supports.

Section Three: The New Segment Waiting List Proposal

A Possible Further Adjustment

The LOMA Network views the adjustment to further improve flow through transitional and crisis accommodation as practical. We support all steps that minimise disruption to people experiencing homelessness and supports them to maintain housing. People accessing homelessness assistance need to be able to stay in a house or area. We support initiatives such as *A Place to Call Home* which allows people to permanently settle in a home and a location.
Would most individuals and families, during their episode of homelessness, at some time be accommodated within crisis or THM stock?

No, most individuals and families, during their episode of homelessness, would not be accommodated within crisis or THM stock in the Loddon Mallee Region. This is true throughout the state of Victoria. The demand for transitional and crisis housing far exceeds the supply. The LOMA Network collects figures on unmet demand for transitional housing via an intranet system and publishes them in *The Housing Crunch*. These statistics under-represent true demand as many agencies are not able to maintain this additional burden of data entry alongside SMART and other systems they utilise.

Demand for transitional housing consistently outweighs supply in the Loddon Mallee, the following provides a snapshot. There are 198 transitional housing properties in the region, some of the vacancies never advertised on the LOMA website as they are specifically linked to certain support agencies. The table below shows the vacancies which became available during a six month period.

**Table 1 Vacant Transitional Housing Properties, June to December 2008.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Property Location</th>
<th>1 bedroom</th>
<th>2 bedrooms</th>
<th>3 bedrooms</th>
<th>4 bedrooms</th>
<th>5+ bedrooms</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Echuca</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maryborough</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mildura</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swan Hill</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Compared to 39 vacancies, there were 328 households requiring transitional housing, More than eight households for every vacancy. The highest number of demands were expressed for 1 bedroom properties (44%), followed by 2 bedroom properties (29%), followed by 3 bedroom properties (24%). The area with the most demand for transitional housing was the City of Greater Bendigo which had 34% of all the regional demands followed by Macedon Ranges Shire with 26%, and Campaspe with 17% of the total demand.

**Table 2 Size of housing required, June to December 2008.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LGA</th>
<th>1 bed</th>
<th>2 bed</th>
<th>3 bed</th>
<th>4 bed</th>
<th>5+ bed</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Campaspe</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Goldfields</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gannawarra</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater Bendigo</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macedon Ranges</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mildura</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mt Alexander</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swan Hill</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>145</strong></td>
<td><strong>94</strong></td>
<td><strong>78</strong></td>
<td><strong>11</strong></td>
<td><strong>0</strong></td>
<td><strong>328</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The Supported Accommodation Support Program (SAAP) assists people experiencing homelessness to secure housing in a number of ways including private rental, financial assistance to remain in current private rental, apply to Affordable Housing Associations, etc...Transitional and crisis housing stock are available only to an extremely limited number of clients accessing the system. Clients who do access*
transitional housing rely on ‘luck’ regarding the timing of seeking assistance and the possible availability of a property. Agencies are forced to determine the most ‘at risk’ of the multiple homeless families they are working with for any vacancy that becomes available.

Research and planning regarding the further adjustment
The LOMA Network suggests that further thought, evidence and research is needed to see whether the further adjustment would achieve the outcomes intended. For example, a detailed analysis of Segment Applications under the current system will tell us how many applicants reside in transitional and crisis housing stock. It would also provide another indication of the number of families without appropriate housing in each particular area. There is some confusion and concern about what the impact of placing people in temporary or no accommodation (due to transitional housing or crisis supported accommodation being unavailable) in category 1B will be. This means that all the people placed in caravan parks and motels or living temporarily with other families are not deemed as high priority as people in Category 1A. It is difficult to tell what impact this will have and how long they will have to wait to be moved up into Category 1A or whether enough vacancies in crisis/transitional will be created.

Contact Details
Jude Di Manno
Coordinator
Loddon Mallee Accommodation Network
Ph: 03 5434 4114
Mobile: 0422605867
E-mail: jude@loma.net.au