

NSW OMBUDSMAN’S RECOMMENDATIONS DCJ should:	Response	Actions DCJ will:	Timeframe
<p>1. a) within three months of the tabling of this report in Parliament, publish a plan that outlines what DCJ will do, and by when, to implement each of our recommendations below; the plan should extend no further than December 2023, and</p> <p>b) provide the NSW Ombudsman with a final outcomes report on its implementation of the recommendations by no later than two years after the tabling of this report.</p>	<p>Accepted</p>	<p>Publish an implementation plan on the DCJ website. Delivery milestones by December 2023 are outlined for each recommendation, noting implementation of some changes will be complex and extend beyond December 2023.</p> <p>Provide the NSW Ombudsman with a final outcomes report no later than two years after the tabling of the Ombudsman’s report (tabled on 31 August 2022).</p>	<p>Complete</p> <p>August 2024</p>
<p>2. a) map the SHS sector to determine the supply of services by specialisation that are physically accessible to people with disabilities, and</p>	<p>Accepted in principle by DCJ and LAHC subject to identification of properties in scope and confirmation of resourcing required for assessment</p>	<p>Assess accessibility in government-owned crisis properties used in the SHS program. Of the 181 crisis refuges properties currently being assessed under either the Homelessness Property Compliance Audit (LAHC) and/or the Crisis Refuges Insurance Re-valuation Project (DCJ) which include accessibility assessments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 80 have been completed to date • 57 are scheduled to be completed by June 2023. <p>DCJ will then consider the feasibility and cost of potential modifications.</p> <p>Work with accessibility advisors, homelessness peaks and service providers to review the information currently collected and available in the Vacancy Management System (VMS), used by all SHS in NSW, to ensure it includes information to support appropriate referrals to services that are accessible for clients. Implement VMS changes and resources by December 2023. For non-government properties used by SHS, such as access points (i.e. hubs and shopfronts), DCJ will work with providers on a process for self-assessing disability access.</p>	<p>Ongoing, noting an estimated 70 assessments would be completed by December 2023</p> <p>December 2023</p>

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<p>2. b) Assist relevant SHS to undertake necessary modifications to provide physically accessible facilities for people with disabilities.</p>	<p>Accepted in principle by DCJ dependent on scale of potential modifications identified as a result of mapping at 2a) and subject to confirmation of resourcing</p> <p>Accepted in principle by LAHC noting that responsibility for modifications lies with the lessee</p>	<p>Review the information collected in actions under 2a and progress modifications where these are practical and there is an identified source of funding for modifications, noting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are significant cost implications to this action and it will extend further than December 2023. • New Core and Cluster women's refuges are being delivered under the NSW Government's \$484.3 million investment. This also includes \$8 million committed for fire safety and accessibility upgrades to existing women's refuges over four years to 30 June 2026, being delivered by Land and Housing Corporation (LAHC). • Plans to modify LAHC assets require LAHC approval. • SHS properties owned by LAHC are leased to Community Housing Providers and SHS Providers. The responsibility for reasonable adjustment in LAHC owned properties is with the property lessee. 	<p>Long-term project extending beyond December 2023</p>
<p>3. a) In consultation with the SHS sector, develop comprehensive and consolidated policy and contractual requirements on access, exclusion, eviction, and withdrawal of services for eligible homeless people. The policy and contractual arrangements should clarify the scope and process for allowable conditions of access, exclusion, and eviction, including in relation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • client risk, characteristics, and circumstances • client codes of conduct • participation in case management • commitments to address specified behaviours 	<p>Accepted with qualification</p>	<p>Work with the homelessness peaks and service providers to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review current and previous SHS Program Specifications and any related guidance • Identify elements of good practice • Draft a policy and accompanying practice guidance <p>Publish the notifiable policy and accompanying practice guidance by December 2023. A notifiable policy under the Human Services Agreement requires six months between issuing the policy and implementation.</p> <p>Support service providers to implement the policy.</p> <p>Embed the policy in SHS Program Specifications underpinning SHS contracts from July 2024 onwards (current SHS contracts are in place to 30 June 2024).</p>	<p>From December 2022</p> <p>December 2023</p> <p>January to June 2024</p> <p>July 2024</p>

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<p>3. b) Undertake regular auditing of SHS policies and practices in relation to access, exclusion, eviction, and withdrawal of service to ensure they do not allow for exclusions, evictions or withdrawal of services that are not supported by Specialist Homelessness Services Program requirements.</p>	<p>Alternative proposed</p>	<p>In the context of the Funded Contract Management Framework, discuss the implementation of the policy with providers and review any available service level data. Note the available data will partially depend on proposed changes to the national data collection (see actions against Recommendation 5b below).</p> <p>Allowing a full year for providers to embed it in practice, include the policy as a key focus area in the Annual Accountability process for 2024/25.</p>	<p>October 2025</p>
<p>4. a) Introduce in the Rentstart Assistance Policy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • criteria for decisions about the duration of exclusions from Temporary Accommodation • a requirement that access to Temporary Accommodation is not contingent on a client's ability to contribute to accommodation costs or their citizenship or residency status • a requirement that people excluded from Temporary Accommodation are not exited into homelessness. 	<p>Partially accepted</p>	<p>Make changes to the Temporary Accommodation Exclusion Policy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • remove references to 'exclusion' • focus on making an assessment each time a client presents • escalate client cases to a Manager for review, where the client has been declined multiple times • reduce time limits for not adhering to client responsibilities, property damage and antisocial behaviour so the Department can intervene earlier to support clients whose behaviours are keeping them in a cycle of homelessness. <p>Undertake activities to implement and embed the approved changes to TA Policy. Work includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • implementing changes to TA processes • identifying and planning IT systems updates • communication strategy to stakeholders about changes to policy and processes 	<p>April 2023</p> <p>April 2023</p>
<p>4. b) Publish information annually about exclusions from Temporary Accommodation, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the number of people excluded against each of the Rentstart Assistance Policy criteria, • the number of people subject to more than one exclusion, and • duration of exclusion per person. 	<p>Unable to accept</p>	<p>There are no actions in response to the recommendation. DCJ provided the following advice to the NSW Ombudsman in October 2022: <i>"DCJ Housing does not collect the specified data on exclusions."</i></p>	

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<p>5. a) As part of the SHS Outcomes Framework, collect and report publicly on the number of homeless people subject to exclusion, eviction and withdrawal of services, reasons for these, and the outcomes for those people.</p>	<p>Unable to accept</p>	<p>There are no actions in response to the recommendation. DCJ provided the following advice to the Ombudsman in October 2022: <i>“The SHS Outcomes Framework identifies outcomes in the domains of Safety, Housing and Wellbeing for individuals and families to which homelessness providers contribute through purposeful design and delivery of services.</i></p> <p><i>At this point in time, DCJ is not intending to undertake to shift the focus of the Framework from the outcomes a provider aims to achieve for their clients to include outcomes and reporting on exclusion.”</i></p>	
<p>5. b) Set a timeframe for public reporting on outcomes data for homeless people.</p>	<p>Alternative proposed</p>	<p>Raise with the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) a proposal to amend the Unassisted Person collection data on ‘Reason(s) service was not provided’:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Propose that ‘Person was refused service’ and ‘Person did not meet criteria’ be collected and reported as separate responses under the ‘Reason(s) service was not provided’ question. <p>Note that changes to the national SHS data collections administered by AIHW require agreement by all jurisdictions.</p> <p>Table the change to the Unassisted Person collection at the Advisory Committee for Housing and Homelessness Information (ACHHI), seeking agreement from all jurisdictions to the proposal. If agreement is reached, further actions by the AIHW include data development activities to identify the impact of the change.</p> <p>Subject to agreement, implement the change in all data collection systems accredited to meet the national SHS data collection requirements, including the Client Information Management System (CIMS) in NSW.</p>	<p>Complete</p> <p>November / December 2022</p> <p>Dependent on national agreement and AIHW priorities</p>