

TRANSCRIPT

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL LEGAL AND SOCIAL ISSUES COMMITTEE

Inquiry into Homelessness in Victoria

Shepparton—Wednesday, 11 March 2020

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Mr David Limbrick

Mr Edward O'Donohue

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WITNESSES

Ms Catherine Jefferies, Client Services Manager, and

Ms Laura Harris, Business Development Manager, BeyondHousing.

The CHAIR: I am going to declare the Standing Committee on Legal and Social Issues public hearing for the Inquiry into Homelessness in Victoria open again. Thank you all for coming. Just in case you have not heard me say it 27 times, please make sure that your mobile phones are on silent. We have got Hansard here. I have just got a couple of formal words that I need to say before we get into this.

All evidence taken at this hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege. That is provided by the *Constitution Act 1975* and the standing orders of the Legislative Council. This means that any information you give today is protected by law. However, any comments that you may repeat outside may not have the same protection. Any deliberately false evidence or misleading of the Committee may be considered a contempt of Parliament. As you can see, we are recording today. You will receive a draft transcript of that. Have a look at it and make sure that we have not misrepresented you in any way, and eventually and ultimately that will be on our website. It will form part of the Inquiry and, I have no doubt, part of our solutions and recommendations. If you would like to make some opening remarks, that would be wonderful, and then we will open it up for questions.

Ms HARRIS: Thank you for having us. My name is Laura and I am the Business Development Manager at BeyondHousing. My colleague here is Catherine Jefferies, and she is the Client Services Manager. We will both be giving some information today.

A bit about us: we provide a full spectrum of housing and homelessness services, not only in Shepparton but across a much broader region that we will be speaking to today. We provide crisis services; housing support services to people in social housing; private rental support services, both to get people into private rental and keep them there—as well as an advocacy service; and we are also a registered housing association. We operate across 13 local government areas, and as you can imagine that has its own challenges. We have four offices that we operate in the north-eastern and central regions of Victoria, but we also provide significant outreach to areas like Wallan, Cobram, Yarrawonga, Benalla, Myrtleford and Mansfield, so we cover both regional centres and more rural settings in the course of our work. We also provide inreach to two prisons in our area for housing support. We are the largest homelessness entry point in our area and we are also the largest locally based housing association.

Ms JEFFERIES: So what does homelessness look like in our region? Well, in the 2018–19 year we supported over 3500 people through our homelessness programs. That is an average of 61 households per week. We saw 1142 households across our private rental programs, the STAR program and the Private Rental Assistance Program. Our numbers have been consistent despite the addition of these private rental focus programs, but both general homelessness and private rental homelessness streams have remained consistent actually over the last five years.

Ms HARRIS: As I mentioned earlier, we cover 13 LGAs but four significant geographical areas. The Mitchell shire, for example, is a really interesting place to consider. We have seen more than 470 households through our homelessness stream, more than 100 through our private rental stream, but as a region it is geographically diverse. You have the growth corridor in Beveridge and Wallan through to Seymour, with a high number that have already got social housing in Seymour, then you have the small areas that sort of surround it. So it has both rural/regional and a metropolitan feel that we are providing services to. It also has a really high incidence of family violence in Wallan, and very high land prices in the new suburbs that are not appropriate for unit development, which can hinder what we are trying to do. The main reasons for Mitchell shire people presenting are financial difficulty and housing crisis, followed by inadequate or inappropriate dwellings, or the previous accommodation ended.

The CHAIR: But not family violence?

Ms HARRIS: No.

The CHAIR: Interesting.

Ms HARRIS: I think you might find that family violence agencies probably capture that. They go directly to a family violence agency for that, and that is a data question I could answer later, if you like.

The CHAIR: Yes, great. Thanks.

Ms JEFFERIES: Shepparton has one of the highest numbers of homeless within our catchment region, and on census night there were 372 people homeless. It also has a greater ethnic diversity, and one in five people that present are either Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

We have a greater number of accommodation providers for crisis accommodation; however, we also have seasonal workers and tourism that impact on that availability. The other thing we need to take into consideration in Shepparton is we have a high number of rough sleepers. The main presenting reasons are financial difficulties, inadequate or inappropriate dwellings, housing crisis or a family breakdown.

Ms HARRIS: Wangaratta is an area that we cover where, while we have a base in Wangaratta, we do significant outreach to areas like Myrtleford, Mansfield, Yarrawonga and Benalla. It is heavily impacted by tourism. That has a significant impact on our crisis accommodation access as well. It has the highest number of youth homeless out of all of our offices, and the main presenting reasons for that area are housing crisis, followed by inadequate or inappropriate dwellings and financial difficulty.

Ms JEFFERIES: The other office is located in Wodonga, which is a large area and it is also a growing area. We are also seeing an emerging ethnic population in that area as well. We have multiple accommodation providers; however, again it is affected by tourism in our area. There is more affordable land available in Wodonga, and we also see a slightly higher number—one in three clients—experiencing mental illness in that area. The main presenting reasons in Wodonga are housing crisis, financial difficulty and inadequate dwellings.

Ms HARRIS: Overall, people in our region experience homelessness through couch surfing, living in rental stress or inappropriate dwellings. You will also see people in makeshift rentals, old farming picker sheds and things like that. So you have some unusual old long-term private rental which probably would not stack up in looking at the Residential Tenancies Act, so you have some in the extremities of our region as well. It is a really broad spectrum that we are looking at. The number of people who are new to our service has decreased slowly. It is an 11 per cent decrease over the last six years, but we are still seeing the same number of people, which suggests that there are more return clients.

Also of note is that single-person households represent around 50 per cent of all of our clients. I am sure that has come up previously, but single-person or lone-person households is something we are always considering in our service development.

In terms of challenges faced by the sector, the current resourcing of the sector, both through support and housing outputs, does not meet demand and cannot meet demand. The configuration of services does not necessarily matter. The demand always outweighs our supply. We see more than 3500 households each year across our region. There are currently 209 transitional housing properties available, and they turn over, at best, every nine months. We are looking at a maximum of 262 households that get that resource each year, out of the 3500. As at December 2019—this is based on the DHHS rental reports—there were 1005 affordable lettings across the 13 LGAs. That includes all bedroom sizes. But if singles are the people that we see the most, there were only 31 one-bedroom properties that were affordable or available across our region.

We have just over 500 community housing properties that we own or manage. DHHS have more than 5000 properties, but these have a very slow turnover, and they are supported, but there are still a lot of people on the Victorian Housing Register waiting to get in. Our support partners can only service a portion of that 3500 as well, and they need support to do that. They have a 13-week support period, which does not allow for flexibility or service tailoring always, and there are not enough periods of support that are readily available so we can act quickly, so people either remain with an entry point or can just drop off the system because they cannot get the resource or the response that they need. Additionally, our clients are increasingly complex and all services need to be resourced to respond to that.

Private rental programs: and we have got three; two that are most relevant here, and they are the STAR program—Wendy knows about that—and PRAP. They are really successful. They get people into private rental; they give people opportunity and they also keep people in private rental. However, there is increased

competition for private rentals as people rent for longer to save for a house. We also have the STAR program, which is successful at keeping people in a private rental, not turning them over, and a drive through our PRAP pushing people into the private rental market. So it is a lot of concentration on one area, and those resources are still finite. There is a limited amount of affordable housing, and we are also at the whim of the market. If a real estate agent has a choice between someone on dual incomes and someone on Newstart, I imagine they are going to go with the people on dual incomes. So the competition is a really significant issue for us.

Social housing is often the most appropriate response for long-term, affordable, safe and secure housing, and it provides linkages to support. However, that has a slow turnover and there is a slow growth in supply, so the best way to address a lot of the issues we will be talking about today is to increase the supply of affordable housing in a range of formats. It is not one size fits all, but certainly outputs and housing outputs will help us solve the issue. It is very difficult to support someone—to help them go from surviving to thriving—without a safe place to be. Whether you are looking at a Housing First model or the existing support models, it is very difficult to engage and to support someone to be part of the community and to do all the things that they want to do in their life if they have not got a safe place to sleep at night.

Ms JEFFERIES: Another area that we would like to expand on is crisis accommodation in our area. We currently rely on caravan parks and motels to provide crisis accommodation, which is largely inappropriate, unaffordable, at times unavailable and not always accessible for people with disability. We are seeing that accommodation options are not tailored to people with challenging behaviours. Quite often people with mental health problems become what the caravan park people would say is ‘blacklisted’; they cannot go back again to that caravan park. There is no other option then. It is not appropriate—a caravan park—for young people, vulnerable people, women that may have experienced family violence and then they are in a caravan park. It is not appropriate.

Most options we have got are at the whim of the market. As was stated earlier, if there is an event on, the prices will go up. If there is some higher demand through seasonal workers, the caravan parks charge accordingly. So options are expensive and cannot be sustained for more than two weeks on average by a client. Most do not have cooking facilities, which then again impacts on your health and impacts on your finances, as you end up eating takeaway food.

The other part we find with the inappropriateness of the accommodation at caravan parks is it impacts further on the trauma the person has already experienced by being homeless. We rely on small business owners to house our most vulnerable when they are most in need. We provided nearly 6000 nights of crisis accommodation in 2018–19. We paid \$450 000 in crisis accommodation, so we are spending an average of \$80 a night. That would be for a single person, so a family would be much higher than that. HEF funding has not been re-evaluated; it has stayed the same and largely it does not meet the demand. Crisis accommodation has increased and the HEF has not increased accordingly.

The CHAIR: Yes, so what you paid for a caravan park five years ago—

Ms JEFFERIES: Is not the same now at all, and quite often in Shepparton you would be paying \$400 a week for a caravan park, which is a rental really, isn't it.

Ms HARRIS: We want to talk a bit out what is working. We have talked a bit about doom and gloom, and we do not want to understate that by any means, but there are things that are working. We talked about affordable housing as a primary solution to homelessness, and housing construction should be tailored to suit the cohorts in need. Based on our demand data, which talks about single people presenting, we are building more one- and two-bedroom units across our region. They are small, they are fully self-contained, they are affordable and they are affordable to run for our clients. This is largely funded by philanthropic and our own capital, but we are also hoping to access the Social Housing Growth Fund and the Victorian Property Fund. So these initiatives do help us build more and they help us drive what we are trying to achieve. They are helping us build housing that is tailored to the people that we are seeing in our region. It certainly relies on housing associations to put in their own capital and their own money, which we are prepared to do, but it also allows for seamless support from an entry point through to longer term options and linkages with support like the Tenancy Plus program.

Ms JEFFERIES: Another thing we run is early intervention, which came from the STAR program, but we also extended that into education, and that is around people upskilling and building capacity in people so they understand their tenancy rights, they understand living skills and they understand budgeting. So with that in mind we sought funding and were successful with the Helen Macpherson Smith Trust fund, and we have developed a program called Keeping Home, which covers off on those three streams. That will be delivered to the Ovens Murray region. It is delivered either one on one or in a group setting, and we are actually now trying to get it available online later this year. We recognise there is a real link to sustaining tenancy around education. The young woman spoke earlier today around having those skills. We recognise that because quite often tenancies fall over because people have not got the skills and do not understand how to manage a tenancy, so that was a key thing for us. We sought funding independently to get that.

The CHAIR: And where will you deliver that?

Ms JEFFERIES: It will be delivered across the region. Because we are funded through philanthropic, we have not got a great bucket of funding, so we will deliver it in the Ovens Murray area, so that is the Wangaratta-Wodonga area and outlying areas.

The CHAIR: Sorry, to whom?

Ms JEFFERIES: So that will be delivered to people that are at risk in homelessness now, young people and we are also delivering it to people that are going to exit prison, so we are delivering it to the Beechworth Correctional Centre at present.

Ms HARRIS: Our private rental support programs, as I mentioned previously, have been successful and they do work, but they are also appropriately resourced, and I think that is a significant point. A challenge we have faced with the private rental programs is that the private rental numbers are finite and they are capped. We need to see greater growth in investment in affordable rentals alongside social housing because there is no one-size-fits-all response to homelessness.

Ms JEFFERIES: Another area that is working is the Education First Youth Foyer, which provides a unique opportunity for young people to continue their education. It is for young people that are at risk. It brings services together.

The CHAIR: And you built that, didn't you?

Ms HARRIS: Well, we manage the tenancy.

The CHAIR: And they manage the building.

Ms LOVELL: They manage the tenancy side, so Berry Street manage the programs.

Ms JEFFERIES: And it has provided successful outcomes with 100 people engaged in education and 70 per cent having improved where they were either working or studying when they exited from that program.

Ms HARRIS: We have tried to collate our thoughts and opinions into recommendations, and the first one is the increase in the construction of safe, secure and affordable long-term housing. It will allow for immediate Housing First responses, and once they are built they do become a long-term resource for the community. The inclusionary zoning pilot is currently underway. We are interested to see how that works. That has not been finalised yet, but the idea, where there is a link between government, the private sector and housing associations, is one that we are keen to see succeed. It might a good option in the future, so that is a really positive—

The CHAIR: Is that Mooropna?

Ms HARRIS: No, so the inclusionary zoning pilot—there are currently six sites, I believe, that DELWP are responsible for, and bids are in at the moment. But that is where, generally speaking, government surplus land is provided to developers with a certain percentage of properties going to social housing. It is a partnership.

Ms LOVELL: So six sites locally?

Ms HARRIS: Not locally; across the state, as part of the Homes for Victorians initiative. But that has not yet been finalised.

The CHAIR: No, no.

Ms HARRIS: I think our early intervention and prevention programs, anything that can focus on that area is always a good thing. Keeping Home is an exciting prospect from us. It has come through years and years of applying for grants to do that, because we knew what we needed to do, but finding resourcing and using the philanthropic stream to do that—the challenge with philanthropic funding generally in this case is it is not ongoing.

Ms JEFFERIES: Harm minimisation—so for crisis—we would like to look at funding for trialling a dispersed model that is tailored to accommodation. We would like to develop a model that gives households time and space to consider housing options, that is safe, gives support and reduces trauma people are experiencing in this highly stressful time, allowing a time of six weeks; rather than a couple of nights in a caravan park and then it is on to the next thing, give some time in that six weeks and then you can start linking in with supports and then moving to an exit point.

We are looking at changing the social policies that impact on homelessness: so flexible, increased funding for support so all people who need assistance get it in a timely manner. That is another thing, especially with mental health; it is not provided in a timely manner.

We want a focus from all levels of government on poverty. Unless we talk about and put resourcing into reducing poverty, homelessness will continue to be an insurmountable problem.

Ms HARRIS: We have also included data collection, and this is really about having a common language and a common way of capturing information. Certainly across the state it would be better or it would be more beneficial for everyone if we focused some attention on to our current data collection, particularly around the primary reason. When someone comes to us and they talk through the narrative of their coming to us, it is because they are in housing crisis. That is the main presenting reason. The systemic issue might be something else, and I think we need to capture both of those things to really look at the issue. That is a challenge just in a very practical sense about how we capture data. That is the end of what we had prepared.

The CHAIR: Great. Thank you. Just before we move to questions I want to acknowledge Suzanna Sheed, the Member for Shepparton, here today. I know her great interest in this, and in fact we are fortunate that we are going to be hearing from her a little bit later. And Cr Kim O'Keefe is just walking in. Hello. Thank you for coming. Lovely to see you.

One of the previous witnesses—I think from St Vinnies—was talking about the cluster model and that you had been trialling that sort of cluster model for people experiencing family violence.

Ms HARRIS: Yes. So we have applied for a grant with St Vincent's and Marian Community here, as well as other agencies—the Centre Against Violence in Wodonga as well and Nexus in Mitchell shire, looking at a way of providing crisis accommodation to women and children impacted by violence. The model sees it looking like a house from the front with a secure garage airlock so you can park off the street. There are three interconnected units which can account for single people or families. There is support able to be provided onsite also. There is a meeting room. There are computers set up so you can look for private rentals and you can manage your banking. It is a safe, secure place women can be. There is storage for your belongings. We are trying to find a crisis response that is appropriate and safe. We have applied for that. But it was a good exercise to go through how you might do it, and we are also considering how that model might apply to a crisis model that is non-family-violence specific as well.

The CHAIR: Yes, because as you say, there is escalating increasing complexity with your clients.

Ms HARRIS: Yes, and having it dispersed may well suit a more regional or rural setting better than having 40 units in the middle of town for crisis accommodation.

The CHAIR: Of course.

Ms MAXWELL: Thank you, ladies, for presenting today and providing us with your knowledge and background at BeyondHousing. I am probably actually going to address an elephant in the room that has not been previously identified or discussed, and I think if we are going to look at homelessness in its entirety then we need to address all the issues that come with it. As a former youth worker having seen people being put into motels and caravan parks, how do we address—and I have had to go and clean up some of these motels after tenants have absolutely trashed them, then we start to obviously see the motels saying, ‘No, we can’t do this’. How do we mitigate those risks? If we are going to deal with—yes, we need more housing, but this is still a real issue with homelessness, and you can sometimes understand how businesses just say, ‘We can’t afford to keep paying to have these rooms redone’. How do we mitigate that? What steps can be put in place to better ensure that that is not happening?

Ms JEFFERIES: I think the first thing is, like we said, around us providing that crisis support, and appropriate crisis support, because for most of the people that access motels it all goes fine. But sometimes if you have got people that have got chronic mental health problems, and it is mainly mental health or other compounding issues, and they go into a motel and it all goes—like you said it can go—pear shaped, people are really vulnerable and then they cannot go back there. Then we cannot access that caravan park, so that is what we are saying: we need to be able to provide our own crisis accommodation because then we manage who comes in the door. It is the only way around it, and you will always need to have a crisis response; you always will.

Ms HARRIS: I think increased resourcing of the support agencies, be it us or our support partners, to the people who go into the motels and caravan parks too. Having the time, having the capacity to check in, I think that is the other aspect of it too. We need a bricks-and-mortar response that is appropriate and safe, and I think if you are in there for nine days and you are worried about the next spot, it is very transitional. It is very short-term, it is very hard to stop and think and breathe and make an appropriate decision. I have been in a hotel room with my two kids. That is not a fun time.

The CHAIR: No.

Ms HARRIS: It is hard, it is expensive, and then you are compounding it with other issues and not knowing where you are going next.

The CHAIR: That is right, and \$400 000 spent on that—surely we could spend that money in a better way.

Ms LOVELL: Where to start?

Mr BARTON: I am blown away. There are so many good people doing so much good work, and one of the reasons why I wanted to do this parliamentary Inquiry into this is because I have family involved in the sector and family issues within that.

There is this argument over, ‘We’ve just got to start building houses’. If it was up to me, you would begin the houses today; start this afternoon. But how do we transition? How do we start dealing with all of these issues now, because I still cannot accept the fact that we have got people getting turned away; women and their kids are getting put into places which are not safe or they are getting turned away and they are sleeping in their cars at football grounds and things like that? How do we start transitioning that now? How do we get these new homes? Do we have to have government support come in and say, ‘You know what? We’re going to sign the lease. We’ll take the risk on the lease and we’ll put these people in the house and, no matter what, Housing First will keep this family in this house. And if they have got issues and they fall over, then we’ll deal with those?’

Ms HARRIS: We have had success in keeping people in their private rental through the STAR program, and we have also undertaken some headleasing models. I think it is easier in theory to deliver headleasing than it is in reality, because you are still relying on a private real estate agent—not knowing what they know—thinking what they think about people we work with, that they may be hesitant to take that step. But there are a range of things that we need to do now to help stem the flow. It is continuing our work in the private rental space. For us it is continuing to develop appropriate, tailored long-term options. It is about the education and the capacity building in the schools to prevent people finding themselves in that situation. So I think it is a multifaceted approach. There is no one answer to the issue, but acting now we are doing some of those things already. We just want to do them at a larger scale to have a greater impact.

Mr BARTON: To scale up. You are doing great work, there is no question.

Ms JEFFERIES: Rodney, you touched on the Housing First model, which I think is a good model. You have got to have the houses. I think what we touched on was the timely response. If the person has presented and if their needs are not met, it is because it is under-resourced, so everyone that comes through our doors gets a service. Support agencies are not resourced enough. They do a fabulous job, but they need more resources. We are talking about being timely. It is someone coming through and getting appropriate crisis accommodation, or if you have got Housing First they can go in, but they need to be supported there as well. That has to be wrapped around.

Mr BARTON: That has become loud and clear to us, that this six-week model and the 13-week model we need to throw them out the window—whatever you need.

Ms JEFFERIES: You cannot have an arbitrary response to people.

Mr BARTON: And some will need more, some will need less.

Ms JEFFERIES: Correct; absolutely. It needs to be tailored. If we apply it across the board, it does not work.

Mr BARTON: We hear you.

Ms JEFFERIES: Everyone has got a different story.

Ms LOVELL: Laura, you might just like to explain to Rod what you do with STAR housing, what STAR housing is, because we have talked a lot about STAR housing but not in detail.

Ms HARRIS: Sustaining Tenancies At Risk—I will stop using acronyms. It is really a program that focuses on when people are in a private rental and things start putting that tenancy at risk. We provide support—as well as brokerage, but it is not only that—to keep that person in the private rental. It stops them coming through our entry point as a homeless client.

Mr BARTON: Sorry, can I just go back a step. Does someone say, ‘I’m in trouble. Help’?

Ms HARRIS: They might come to us, but largely it is the real estate agents, and that is the benefit of the model.

Ms LOVELL: The real estate agents go and say, ‘Look, we’ve got someone who’s falling behind in their rent’; BeyondHousing step in and work with them to sustain them.

Ms HARRIS: And it is a win for everyone, because the property owners and the real estate agency are not having that turnover. We provide budgeting support. The Keeping Home program is open to people who are in that program also. We have done MoneyMinded training targeting people in private rentals as well. So that is how it works, but we have really good relationships with our real estate agents.

Ms LOVELL: They love it.

Ms HARRIS: And we are getting onto things early, so it is not preventive but it is early intervention.

Mr BARTON: That is the key. And when you get involved, what is the percentage of success? Are you saving 50 per cent, 70 per cent, 80 per cent?

Ms JEFFERIES: No, it is closer than that. One year we had it sitting at 98 per cent.

Mr BARTON: Fantastic.

Ms JEFFERIES: We do not have a lot of people come back through the system. It is a point in time, and you engage with them.

Mr BARTON: They have a moment.

Ms JEFFERIES: That is right. Exact percentages I would have to—

The CHAIR: And that is certainly something that we could see expanding, and we saw that Wales has actually provided some legislation along that model. When someone is at risk of eviction, landlords are required to alert, to flag it, which allows that early intervention.

Ms VAGHELA: Thanks, Laura and Catherine. You provide affordable rental properties, so at times there will be a deficit in the rental income that you would get for a property?

Ms HARRIS: By and large we have a pretty stable rental income. We have low turnover. The rents are all tailored to the person who is in there, so it is a pretty stable, secure model that we find that we are able to manage, and we are increasing our portfolio now.

Ms VAGHELA: There would not be any deficit where you have to seek assistance, maybe, through government funding or some sort of community organisation or philanthropic?

Ms HARRIS: We have not had that experience, no.

Ms VAGHELA: And out of the 700 or so properties that you own or manage how many would be acquired through philanthropy?

Ms HARRIS: It has grown over time. If you think about our original base being a couple of hundred, then you had the Nation Building injection of capital, the Federal grant, and it expanded a lot. The Victorian Government put out the—we now manage properties like the youth foyer and the former Mooroopna nurses quarters, which is a DHHS property that we manage, through to, we have had the Victorian Property Fund fund growth and now we are working with a philanthropic and we are hoping to commence 71 new properties this year. So there is certainly appetite and energy to do it; it just needs to be funded correctly based on our rental model. We do all the forecasting for what rent you might get to cover any debts you may have. All community housing associations would be looking at it the same way.

The CHAIR: Just finally, you touched on data, and I think this is something that we struggle with every single time. I am just wondering if you could expand on the couple of words you mentioned.

Ms HARRIS: So we have a data collection system called SHIP, the Specialist Homelessness Information Platform, and by and large it works for transactions and recording information and case noting—all that sort of stuff, but it is about when a client comes in and tells their story and they say, 'I'm here for housing crisis'. Now, they may have been driven by family violence, but their narrative to us, because we are a housing provider and a homelessness provider, is, 'The reason I'm here is I need a house'. And that is their story to tell. So it is about how we capture the person's story but also their overarching principles or the overarching drivers in the system that have driven them to us and being able to make sure that is as equally represented as the main presenting reason based on the person—because they might come to see us and they have got a family violence worker, they have got a youth support worker and they are here to talk about housing. They may not want to share all the other details, and it is their right to do that. They have told their story already. It is about capturing that and making sure that we are consistently applying data definitions around why people are coming to see us, otherwise you might miss some of the picture, and I think it would be a shame, given we are all doing massive amounts of data entry, to miss the stuff that really is going to drive change at a local government level and a State and a Federal Government level. It would be a shame to miss that.

Ms MAXWELL: Just quickly, given that SHIP holds all that data and information, is it adequate software, because I know some organisations have at times had issues with SHIP holding the data that they have needed and losing data.

Ms JEFFERIES: Losing data?

Ms HARRIS: I remember there was one day, I think, once where they might have lost some information, but it does not stop us providing services to clients; it is about the back end of stuff.

Ms MAXWELL: No, no, I am just wondering if that is—

Ms JEFFERIES: The answer to that is no, we have not had any technical—I think probably the platform does not have—it is a homelessness platform, so some programs, say if the staff were looking to see where your referral is coming from, you would say, ‘From a private rental agent’, and that is not in there. So there are some add-ons that we could probably look for. And just probably getting our data from there is a bit clunkier.

The CHAIR: And to enable agencies to do oranges and oranges.

Ms HARRIS: We have four offices but one data entry point, so when we have to extrapolate information by location it is not easy. So we are doing things ourselves to find ways to better use our data for planning for the future.

The CHAIR: Thank you so much. I suspect we are going to get a submission from BeyondHousing.

Ms HARRIS: We can provide one on what we have talked about today.

The CHAIR: Maybe if you could send through some of the points just to help inform us when we are starting to write the report. But we really appreciate the time you have given us today and obviously the work that you are doing. So thank you very much. As I say, transcript coming.

Witnesses withdrew.