

## Case Study

### Exploring options to make private rental assistance fairer and more sustainable

Through this 90 day project, the project team sought to understand some of the complexities behind providing private rental assistance. The team explored a range of factors at the macro level (for example, supply and demand disparities for rental housing) and at the micro level (for example, different ways of providing sustainable support for people who rent).

To better understand the topic, the project team examined research by the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI). This research helped shape a project plan and generated key themes to guide the project forward. National and international research into best practice and challenges of private rental assistance were also used to define the project approach and scope.

The input of diverse stakeholders across sectors was a key ingredient to progressing the project. The project team aimed to engage widely and not limit consultation to subject matter experts. The team benefited from the expertise and perspectives of representatives across government, service providers, advocacy groups, industry bodies and academia. Housing SA senior leadership also helped to facilitate debate from a systems perspective and the Minister for Social Housing attended key project events.

The project methodology was underpinned by a strong focus on customer engagement, including interviews with tenants in the private rental system. These interviews generated important learnings about the barriers to accessing private rental and ideas about improvements. Engagement also included surveys through YourSAy and focus groups with stakeholders, including real estate bodies and landlords, in order to provide a multifaceted perspective of the issues. This customer engagement enabled the team to apply some of the preliminary research and theories to frame real life stories and case studies.

The scope of the engagement strategy deepened the project team's understanding of the topic. It also validated the theory and research methodology used and grounded the project around the key issues involved.

The project highlighted the growing budgetary pressure of Housing SA's Private Rental Assistance Program as demand for the service increases. To address this pressure, the project team considered ways to make this service

fairer and more sustainable, taking into account the complexity and inter-dependency of the broader system.

On reflection, there were some areas for improvement in the execution of the project. Specifically, the governance arrangements for the project were not maximised, mainly due to a lack of clarity about the roles of the steering group and the working group. Clearer terms of reference around governance arrangements would have enabled the team to better leverage and maximise stakeholder contributions. The project team could have also planned engagement activities earlier in the project cycle, which may have helped to improve the coverage of the topic within the 90-day timeframe.

The project was completed with integrity, in line with generally clear terms of reference and used an extensive engagement strategy targeted towards relevant stakeholders. Particular strengths of the projects were its customer focus, broad consultation approach and the targeted research conducted. The findings of the project were evidence-based, using both qualitative and quantitative analysis.

Ultimately, the project determined that making private rental assistance fairer and more sustainable is a whole of government issue. The solutions are not isolated to one agency as many of the underlying issues are systemic and require an integrated response to maximise the benefits for the people in the system.