

Jackson Hills



Together, we can solve homeless crisis now



A tent and pitched on the Nerang River at James Overell Park in Southport.

AT a time when the need has never been more pressing, we are still searching for solutions to house the hundreds of people we see daily in our streets, under bridges, in cars, tents, and overcrowded dwellings. Local councils are under pressure in their communities; the latest examples are in Moreton Bay and Logan, but we are facing the same challenges here on the Gold Coast, too.

Hundreds of individuals and families are living in hotel rooms across the state, and thousands more are staying in boarding houses. These types of accommodation settings are far from ideal, and all of this reflects the housing emergency we are currently facing, which will only intensify as we approach the 2032 Olympic Games.

Homelessness is often viewed as a 'wicked' problem, meaning it is difficult or even impossible to solve. Others suggest it's simply a housing problem and the lack of housing leads to more homelessness. That is partly true, but in my opinion, it is more complex than that. Yet, there are existing, evidence-based solutions that, at their core, essentially break the cycle of chronic homelessness. They are called Supportive Housing models.

Last year, the Queensland government took a positive step in

developing the first-ever Supportive Housing Policy. This policy aims to clearly articulate what this type of housing looks like, how it operates, and how it should be funded and managed to achieve the desired outcomes we seek. For example:

- It provides security of tenure, even permanency, if that's what is required.

- Wraparound support for vulnerable people with complex needs.

- The need for separation between the housing and support providers, delivered in a safe and secure environment.

These features and others distinguish Supportive Housing from many other housing types and programs that are important but not the same. This is central because the expected outcomes may also vary. After all, this type of housing is fundamentally helping people with acute mental health issues, drug and alcohol dependencies, and various forms of trauma. People who would otherwise be reliant on the primary health and hospital system. For these people, home is only part of the solution; support is even more critical.

Last week, I attended an event called Supportive Housing: A Case for Change at Brisbane Common Ground. This Supportive Housing program has operated successfully in South Brisbane since 2012, boosting many great tenancy results and

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transition stories. The speakers, including Professor Cameron Parsell from the University of Queensland and a research team from Deloitte, confirmed what I already knew to be true: Supportive Housing is the most effective solution to chronic homelessness. Professor Parsell has confirmed this in the past, including in his studies in 2016 and updated in 2023, which highlighted that providing supportive housing for people previously chronically homeless has saved governments \$17,462 per tenant in the first year

immediately following homelessness. This is due to reduced reliance on emergency healthcare, justice systems, and access to other specialist services, resulting in significant cost savings.

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As we approach 2032, I fear more lucrative land values will further compromise the temporary housing solutions provided through hotels

and boarding houses in locations close to games infrastructure and major venues across South East Queensland and the Gold Coast. In the past, this has resulted in more displacement in the community on top of existing needs. Our most vulnerable are usually the most affected by this type of urban change.

In contrast, Supportive Housing models provide a compassionate, holistic, and sustainable solution to homelessness. They address the root causes of housing instability and offer individuals and families the support necessary to thrive. By investing in these programs, Queensland can make significant progress toward ending homelessness and fostering resilient communities where everyone can lead fulfilling and dignified lives. This approach saves governments money in the long run and enables many individuals to reintegrate into the community and make a valuable economic contribution.

Jackson Hills is the Acting CEO of Q Shelter, the state's peak body for housing and homelessness.

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