



READY TO WORK HOUSING

EVALUATION REPORT

2026

KEY IMPACT FINDINGS

01

Positive impact on the lives of people experiencing homelessness

Participants showed improvements in their lives including employment, housing stability and personal wellbeing

02

Increase in employment and economic independence

The program led to increased participation in the workplace with 82% of participants who progressed passed the initial 3 month stage, securing employment.

03

Reduction in homelessness

The program led to positive transitions out of homelessness. Prior to joining, participants were in temporary accommodation due to homelessness. 62% of all participants exited into stable housing.

04

Reduction in Government Reliance

The program led to reductions in reliance on government support such as jobseeker for those securing employment and reduction in homelessness services costs.

05

Positive impact on wellbeing

The program led to positive increases in personal wellbeing markers including health, achievements, safety, personal relationships and confidence levels to end their homelessness.

INTRODUCTION

Dignity's Ready To Work Housing program in Southwest Sydney is an evidence-based initiative designed to address the dual challenges of homelessness and unemployment. Launched in 2022, the program was collaboratively developed with Fantastic Furniture to empower individuals experiencing homelessness with stable housing and employment opportunities to break the cycle of homelessness.

SCOPE & OBJECTIVES

The overarching goal of Ready To Work Housing is to improve access to employment and housing for people experiencing homelessness, enabling them to increase their housing affordability and financial stability.

The initiative aims to:

- Provide 12 months stable housing to individuals who are ready and able to work.
- Facilitate employment opportunities through employment partners or independent employers.
- Deliver wraparound support including weekly support session and wellbeing check-ins, as well as financial literacy and tenancy education, and job readiness training.
- Increase housing affordability and reduce reliance on government support.
- Improve personal wellbeing and long-term independence.

The program is designed to ensure that homelessness becomes rare, brief, and not repeated, aligning with Homes NSW and Dignity's broader mission.



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THE IDENTIFIED NEED

The 2021 Census estimates 122,494 people are experiencing homelessness in Australia.

Barriers to employment experienced by people experiencing homelessness include mental health challenges, substance abuse and addictions, lack of vocational skills and independent living skills. One study (Muñoz et al., 2005 <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/16179773/>) found people experiencing homelessness are more likely to lack skillsets like stress management, social skills, and skills for vocational engagement, all affecting an individual's job readiness.

The Ready To Work Housing program is designed to break down these barriers with a focus on stable housing, wrap-around support, employment pathway case management, work readiness and education opportunities and support to secure employment within a period of 3 months.



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THE PROGRAM

Dignity Ready To Work Housing program is innovatively designed to drive lasting reductions in the number of Australians experiencing homelessness and unemployment. It achieves this by supporting individuals experiencing homelessness who are ready and able to work with 12 months of stable housing in a self-contained unit, employment opportunities with one of Dignity's employment partners or independent employer and onsite wrap-around, person-centred support.

Following an interview process, eligible participants are provided with:

- Stable housing for up to 12 months with subsidised rent
- Employment Support: including assistance with their resume, employment interview opportunity with one of Dignity's Employment Partners or employer of their choosing.
- Weekly support in maintaining housing and employment across the 12 month period including financial and life skills workshops.

OUR APPROACH

The guiding principles and evidence-based approach includes:

Meet Basic Needs – Once an individual's basic needs are met, including food and shelter, combined with appropriate support, they can begin to tackle greater underlying issues.

Person-centred, Trauma-Informed Support – Dignity's on-site support team empower our residents with tailored, person-centred support. Together, we create a roadmap that provides a path forward and includes achievable milestones.

Work-readiness & Employment Partners – residents are provided with work readiness training, resume assistance, interview opportunities with an Employment Partner or employer of the participant's choosing. Dignity's employer partners have completed Dignity's peer support training, ensuring participants are supported at work and home.

Education – financial literacy, tenancy management and life skills are fundamental to living independently and sustaining a tenancy and employment. A calendar of workshops is available for residents including Money Matters, Securing Employment, Creating Change and Securing a Rental Property.

Sustaining Tenancy – simulating 'real world' tenancy, residents sign an agreement and have regular inspections and at the completion of the program, residents are provided with private rental history and reference.

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WORK READINESS AND EDUCATIONAL WORKSHOPS

Both the work readiness activity and calendar of educational workshops and social events aim to build confidence in participants' approach to securing employment and long-term stable housing.

Educational workshops held quarterly included:

- Money Matters Budgeting Workshop
- Securing Employment
- Securing and managing a tenancy.



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EMPLOYMENT PARTNERS

Integral to the success of our Employment Pathways programs is the innovative support system Dignity has developed between Employment Partners and program participants.

How It Works

Employment Partners nominate the number of jobs they would like to provide and after consultation with Dignity's Programs Manager and/or Co-ordinator to discuss available roles, resumes of suitable program participants are provided for consideration. Interviews are then held with candidates and employment offers provided to successful candidates at the Employment Partner's discretion and as per Employment Partner's standard process.

Peer-support Program

Dignity works with each of our Employment Partners to introduce a peer-support program within the workplace and provides in-person Trauma-Informed Workplace Support training workshops.

"At AlSCO uniforms, we pride ourselves on the care we have for our people, our customers and our community and these values make for a welcoming and inclusive place to work. We have now employed our first employment pathways program participant and look forward to growing this number in the future."

Christopher Collins, Branch General Manager



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MEASURING IMPACT

Dignity uses its custom-built CRM system, DigInS, to manage program data and evaluate outcomes. The program was evaluated measuring participant surveys at key stages, tracking wellbeing, employment status, work readiness, and future affordability. This rigorous data collection as well as a process evaluation ensured continuous improvement and transparent reporting, reinforcing the program's credibility and effectiveness.

KEY PROGRAM OUTCOMES

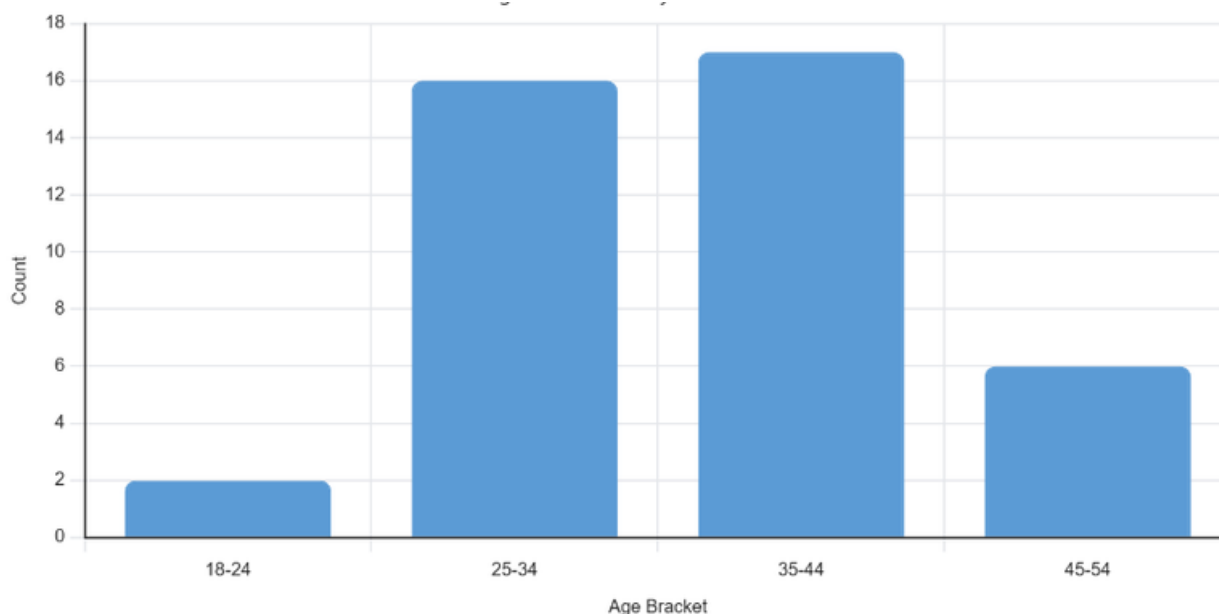
Over 12 months, 42 people experiencing homelessness have been supported in the Ready To Work Housing program in Southwest Sydney. Of the 42 people surveyed at the start of the program, 88% of program participants said that they believed their homelessness prevented them from gaining employment. On commencement 25% of participants had not been employed for more than 12 months.

A total of 80% of program participants remained in the program after the initial 3 month stage and of these, 82% of residents secured employment, increasing their housing affordability.

COHORT DATA

Participants ranged from 24 to 56 years of age, with an average age of 37. The program supported 6 residents who identify as First Nations people, 4 from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds and 1 woman joined the program who was experiencing homelessness due to Domestic and Family Violence.

AGE DISTRIBUTION



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PARTICIPANT CONFIDENCE & WELLBEING

Program participants were surveyed on entry and after 3 months in the program with participants asked to rate out of 10 how satisfied they felt with aspects of their wellbeing as well as confidence surrounding employment and housing.

Results showed significant improvements across wellbeing and confidence indicators. Average scores increased across participants' satisfaction with health (+0.7 points), achievements in life (+1.8 points), personal relationships (+1.3 points), and future security (+1.7 points).

Community belonging and safety also improved (+1.8 and +3.8 respectively), while confidence in securing a private rental property rose by +3.5 points.

Confidence in securing a job was relatively high at program entry. This may indicate that many participants perceived themselves as having the skills, experience and capability to work prior to entering the program and that barriers to employment were not necessarily related to job readiness, but rather to external factors such as housing instability, financial stress, health challenges, or the need for a stable living environment.

Wellbeing Improvements

Participants were asked to rate their satisfaction with:

- Their health increasing from an average of 7.0 to 7.6 (+0.7).
- Achievements in life rising from 6.1 to 7.9 (+1.8).
- Personal Relationships improving from 6.1 to 7.4 (+1.3).
- Feeling part of a community going from 7.1 to 8.9 (+1.8).
- Future security with an increase from 6.7 to 8.4 (+1.7).

Safety and Confidence

- Feelings of safety improved from 4.8 to 8.6 (+3.8 points).
- Confidence to be part of a workplace remained strong at 8.6
- Confidence to secure a job remained high, increasing slightly from 8.6 to 9.2 (+0.5).

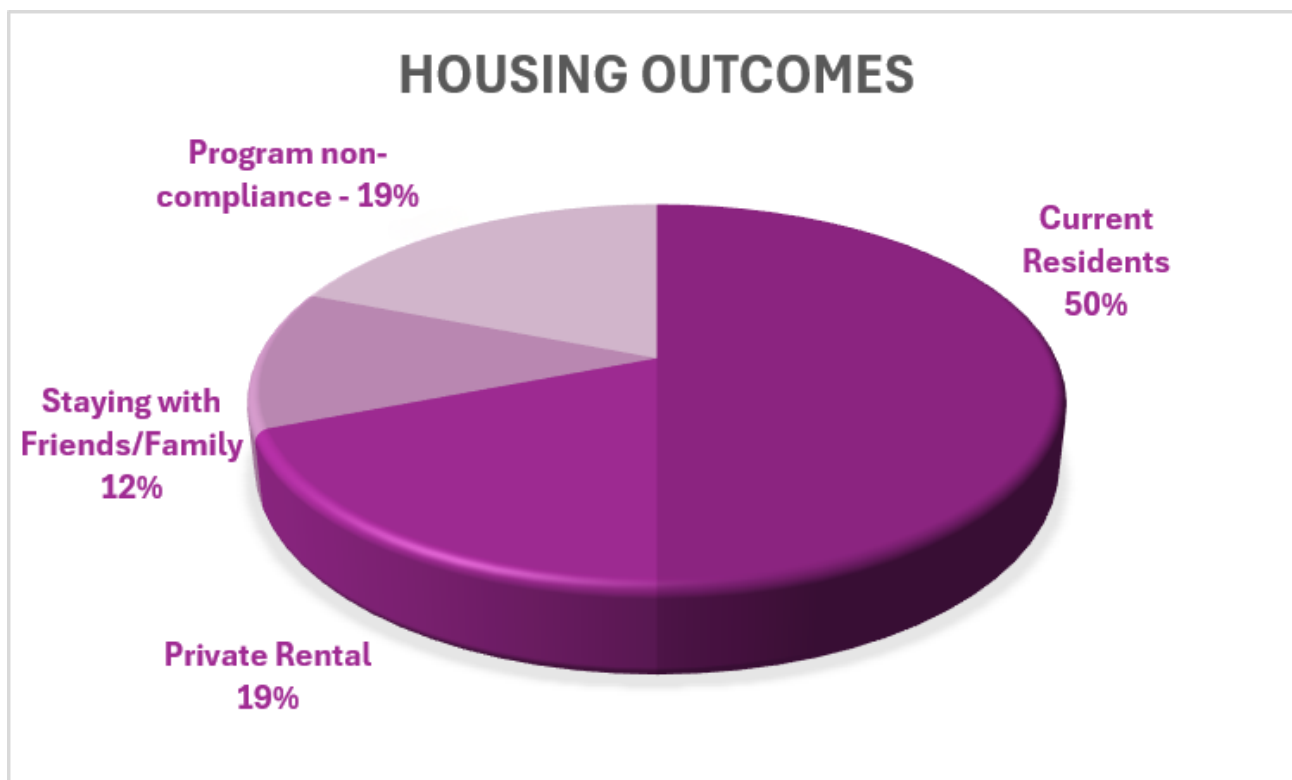
Housing Confidence

- Confidence to secure Private Rental jumped from 3.5 to 7.0 (+3.5), indicating a strong impact on housing empowerment.
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Housing Outcomes

Many of the Ready To Work Housing participants have moved on from the program, with 38% of residents who have left securing their own private rental and 23% reconnecting and moving in with family and friends.



Reduced Reliance on Government Support

For each participant who secured employment as a result of participating in the program, there is an estimated cost saving to government through avoided costs (Jobseeker) of \$665,600 for the program year and future years that the participants remain in employment.

In addition, it is estimated that the program reduces the cost of supported temporary accommodation to the value of \$142,800 (based on 20 days average stay for the 42 participants who secured housing or remain in the program).

CASE STUDY



MATT'S READY TO WORK HOUSING JOURNEY

Matt, a 26 year old man found himself experiencing homelessness when he was asked to leave his family home after a relationship breakdown with his parents. With minimal savings or knowledge of what support was available, Matt spent the first few weeks of homelessness living in his car.

After arriving at Dignity's supported temporary accommodation, Matt was referred to the Ready To Work Housing program. By providing Matt with stable housing and wraparound support, the new Ready To Work Housing resident was able to focus on finding employment and within a few weeks had secured a job trial in warehousing and successfully secured the job.

During his time at Ready To Work, Matt expressed an interest in moving away from warehousing and into a role within community services and secured work as a support worker, which he felt was aligned with his interests and values.

As Matt progressed through the program, focus shifted to securing his own private rental and with the support of the Ready To Work program coordinator, which included attending the Securing a Private Rental workshop, Matt was approved for a rental in the local area.

'I've learnt how to do things to live by myself like paying rent and shopping and I'm sad to be leaving Ready To Work but also excited about having my own place.'

CONCLUSION

Ready To Work Housing is more than a transitional housing program, it's a transformative model that redefines service delivery for people experiencing homelessness.

By combining stable housing with employment pathways and person-centred support, Dignity empowers individuals to build sustainable futures. The program not only improves lives but also contributes to broader social and economic outcomes, reducing long-term reliance on government support systems and increasing community resilience.



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